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PEDAGOGY OF ACCOMPLICE:
NAVIGATING COMPLICITY IN
PEDAGOGIES AIMED TOWARD SOCIAL
JUSTICE

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PEDAGOGY OF ACCOMPLICE: NAVIGATING COMPLICITY IN PEDAGOGIES AIMED
TOWARD SOCIAL JUSTICE

By

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A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration with a
Concentration in Higher Education

Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education
In the Graduate School
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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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TOWARD SOCIAL JUSTICE

By

Robyn Stout Sheridan

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy

in the field of Educational Administration

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Robyn Stout Sheridan, for the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration, presented on *October 28, 2016 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: Pedagogy of Accomplice: Navigating Complicity in Pedagogies Aimed Towards Social Justice

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Saran Donahoo

In this study, I introduce and analyze the role of complicity in discussions of social justice pedagogies to determine how teachers, who teach social justice oriented courses, navigate complicity. Through an in-depth review of social justice education literature, I show that teacher/scholars rely upon four context-dependent discourses of complicity: (1) responsibility, (2) consciousness-awareness, (3) relation to world, self and others, and (4) inevitability and implicature. In order to understand how these discourses impact pedagogies that seek to make connections between people and social systems, I selected teacher/scholars who are widely published, read, and assigned in social justice oriented fields. I used the method of elite interviewing and interviewed the following eight people: Kevin Kumashiro, Barbara Applebaum, William Ayers, Lynn Fels, Marcelo Diversi, Cris Mayo, Mark McPhail and Deanna Fassett. I applied the conceptual framework of the discourses of complicity to our interview transcripts and three further discourses emerged: (1) nonduality/nonbinary, (2) choice, and (3) imagination. I found that by discursively marking complicity within the context of social justice pedagogies, teachers and students have new tools of understanding at their disposal. Rather than relying upon discourses that keep us “stuck” in conceptualizing relationships as limited by the choice of being either/or complicit or not, pedagogies that center complicity enable teachers and students to recognize themselves as both/and implicated and resistant. A pedagogy of accomplice, one that centers complicity in any understanding of relationality, works towards justice as a means of highlighting what Gloria Anzaldúa called the “invisible threads” that connect us all. Once these threads are made visible, it is what teachers and students do with this understanding that matters.

A pedagogy of accomplice provides the potential to open new spaces of resistance and action and bring the unimaginable into the imagination of the classroom community.

DEDICATION

To Donald Stout Sr. aka the Road Runner: You have been with me every step of the way. I see you in the stars and feel your presence always. You will always be one of my favorite teachers.

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This dissertation would not exist without the help of the following individuals:

Michael Sheridan, Della Sheridan, and Coretta Sheridan: You have sacrificed so much in your support of my work and I will always be grateful. I promise to work to create a just world for us all. I am nothing without my family and will continue to grow these roots for our ancestors, us, and the future generations.

Dorothy Schadt, Diane Stout, Tara Stout, Ciera Gillespie, and Caila Gillespie: Three generations of strong women. I am always indebted to you for your love and support and for keeping me grounded and on the real.

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Kristin Dade: You are my comrade and sister. You have been with me through the thick of it and I will always be grateful for our friendship and the support you constantly give to me. We did it!

My teachers: You have shaped and inspired me and helped me understand that the struggle of teaching against oppression requires that we recognize our own role in oppression.

Saran Donahoo: Thank you for your guidance and for always pushing me towards the finish line.

Kathy Hytten: Your love, pedagogy, and hope in this world inspires me always.

Kevin Kumashiro, William Ayers, Barbara Applebaum, Lynn Fels, Marcelo Diversi, Cris Mayo, Mark McPhail and Deanna Fassett: Thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to interview you for this study. I have long admired your work and I am inspired by your insight and wisdom.

To all those who suffer as a result of disembodied learning, may this be a testament to what happens when we recognize our bodies and do the messy work of marking ourselves as complicit, thus connected.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I begin class by asking my students to check their clothing labels and call out the countries listed on their shirt, coat, or pant tags. Calls of “Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, China, Ecuador, and Vietnam” ring out as I write the country names on the dry erase board. A student struggles with pronouncing the country on his shirt label. Spell it, I ask. M-a-l-a-y-s-i-a, students giggle and I pronounce the country name: Malaysia. The class looks at the names on the board, and I ask if students know where the countries are located. Many say “no” amidst laughter and whispering. I ask the class to describe, “Who do you think made your clothes? Under what conditions and for what pay?” (Bigelow, 1997; Hase, 2002). I stop and sincerely ask the students, “Who are the people who made the clothes literally on your backs and backsides?” The students guess that the people are poor, mostly women and perhaps children who work for “pennies a day.” I describe conditions of factories with locked doors, overpopulation, no breaks, and excruciating hours.

Discussion ensues and students imagine what it means to work for less than a dollar a day in conditions so horrible that they are almost beyond imagination. A student speaks up and rationalizes the pay by placing the class in the context of a country where the cost of living is vastly different than in the United States of America. Students nod and agree. I ask the class, knowing that they somehow participate in oppressive systems through purchasing clothing made in sweatshops, what can they do about it. The class is silent. One student asks, “What are we supposed to do, make our clothes?” Another student joins in and says, “Maybe we should not wear clothes.” The class laughs and then a student points to my coffee mug and asks where it was made. “Great question,” I say, and I walk over and nervously pick it up. “Made in China.”

I look up at the class. Implicated. The students sigh in frustration and ask, “Do we even have a choice?”

“No matter what we do, we somehow participate directly or indirectly in systems of oppression.”

“There is no way out.”

I call this practice “shirt on my back” and it is inspired by Michiko Hase’s (2002) exercise “Where were your clothes made?” and Bill Bigelow’s (1997) “global clothes hunt” taken from his chapter entitled “The Human Lives Behind the Labels.” Hase employs her exercise in an attempt to center complicity and accountability in conversations regarding feminism and globalization. She comments that “this exercise...enables students to see in a very tangible way the connections they have to the world beyond the borders of the United States” (Hase, 2002, p. 99). Through this exercise, Bigelow (1997) requests of his students to “see that every time they put on clothes or kick a soccer ball they are making a connection, if hidden, with people around the world... and these connections are rooted in historical patterns of global inequality” (p. 28). Every time I have employed this exercise in my classroom practice, there is a moment when the “out of sight, out of mind” mentality that many if not most of the students have (including myself), abruptly shatters as we contemplate whose hands, whose intense labor, made the clothes on their backs.

I attempt to do what Gloria Anzaldúa (2009) requests: “To touch more people, the personal realities and the social must be evoked-not through rhetoric but through blood and pus and sweat” (p. 34). My hope in using this exercise is to evoke the personal and social realities that entangle us as people living in this world. That is, I want to engage in contemplating complicity. I want the students to feel, even if for a second, the fingers on the stitches of their

clothes. I want them to sense a needle prick and drops of blood, a wince, exhaustion, other feelings that though not in the same vein, they might share with the strangers whom they are connected to through their material possessions and ultimately through histories of colonization, racism, sexism, classism, and beyond. In each course section over the several semesters, I have tried this, a moment of encounter between the students and the human lives who endure often excruciating conditions in their labor occurs and can be viscerally felt in the classroom; it is a heavy tangible feeling. It is this moment of encounter where we realize a connection; however, this moment quickly fades to exclamations of helplessness—everyone suffers in one way or another, I cannot possibly do anything about “them” over “there”—and the encounter is lost, the connection quickly disrupted. In this dissertation, I want to challenge this sense of helplessness and uncover what it might mean to work for social justice even amid complicity.

Reflexive Pedagogy and Complicity

In a call for a reflexive pedagogy, John Warren (2011) asks that teachers as researchers and people living and engaging in the world take “our labor in the classroom as a vital site for investigation” (p. 140). Beginning by taking a step back and looking at why and how our pedagogies have developed the way they have, teachers can attempt to understand the roots and perhaps the fruits of our labor in the classroom. Asking ourselves important questions such as why certain texts, whether literal or cultural, have prominence in our classrooms, why we choose particular research paths and subjects, what issues we center in our teaching, and finally, pondering what this all says about ourselves and our pedagogies, is a crucial step in “being accountable to the journey” that has brought us to the classroom (Warren, 2011, p. 140).

For me, Warren’s charge is extremely personal and unavoidable. Teaching any class dealing with issues of social injustice, oppressions, power, privilege, difference, and indifference

is enough to make a teacher stop in her path and constantly employ a reflexivity that at times (in my own experience), is haunting and ultra critical. I seem to always ask myself what could I have done here, who am I to be teaching this or that, and the ultimate question of significance: how am I implicated or connected to these issues, these peoples, our human lives? This last question, in my own quest for a reflexive pedagogy, is the one that has often brought me to a gut-wrenching stand still. When I raise this question, I must face my own implications in systemic oppression and recall my own experiences with oppression and immediately, I become entangled in a web of sticky humanity. In these moments, I come face-to-face with my own complicity and must reckon with what this means to pedagogies of resistance and action.

The issue of complicity saturates my own attempts at a reflexive pedagogy because it surfaces in every instance of the teaching and learning I engage in, especially in my experiences of teaching an educational foundations class called “Schooling in a Diverse Society” and an introductory Women, Gender, and Sexuality course entitled “Women, Images and Realities.” With the central focus on teaching students about power, privilege, and difference, both courses deliver one pedagogical sucker punch after the other, leaving my students and I disoriented and bruised by the potentially paralyzing awareness of our own complicities in systemic oppression. Complicity is the constant shadow figure lurching in my reflexive endeavors in thinking about a pedagogy that resists systems of oppression as I work within one of those systems: public education. I have found that complicity is an omnipresent force, yet drastically understated in much of the research and discourses on systemic oppression.

I have experienced so many pedagogical moments where students and I recognize complicity, but experience great difficulty moving beyond discourses of paralysis. Many times, students rely on dominant discourses of “it’s always been this way and is never going to change”

or “I am just one person and cannot possibly change a world that is so messed up.” In these moments, I hear myself teaching resistance and change, telling these students that of course, they find it difficult to act and resist if they believe these myths of helplessness. As the words pour out of my mouth, my heart sinks and somewhere in my body and mind, I too wonder if the problems are too big and complicated to resist.

I am struck by the complexities of my own lived reality and think about my students’ lives, their own complex realities and wonder what dominant forms of education do with such complexities when they offer such simplistic approaches to teaching, as “If you do this then these are the results,” “This is how you teach amid diversity,” and “This is how we define diversity.” Personally, I think about my Brown-skinned grandfather and my life growing up in the intersections of race in my family, how systemic Whiteness implicates me, but my skin does not tell the full story of who I am. I think about my experiences of growing up in working-class communities and how I am the only one in my family to have a college degree and reflect on how particular knowledges are privileged more than others. Others tend to value my college education more than the street smarts of my sister and brother, more than the wisdom of my grandfather who has an eighth grade education, and more than my father’s blue collar sensibilities. Yet, I recognize somewhere in our distress of how to account for such complexities and what to do to act against systemic oppression, particularly in education, there is a space, a point of departure. I believe it starts with understanding and navigating complicity.

Grappling with complicity in the social justice classroom, in the critical classroom, breathes life into the space. Conversations regarding how complicated life is, how our realities are complex and not always in “the way” the textbook says they are, are important to pursue. I find that instances of acknowledging complicity and struggling with what it means, what to do

with it, how to work through it, make embodied learning okay in institutional spaces that often resist emotion, love, and excruciating pain. I also believe that through the power of dialogue, through narratives, we as humans of difference can find a space between labels and binaries, to actually sit down and talk out our complicity. Through these conversations and difficult work, we can become accomplices to each other's joys and pains. Moreover, we may be able to more productively navigate the challenges of complicity with and outside of pedagogical spaces.

Purpose

When I set out on this project, my focus centered on what I called the “mess.” Mess seemed an appropriate concept for what I felt and experienced as a White, able-bodied, female teacher and student, teaching and learning about issues regarding power, privilege and difference. The mess happened when I entered classrooms with the intent of “doing” critical pedagogy only to struggle against what Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) describes as “key assumptions and assertions of current literature on critical pedagogy and straining to recognize, name, and come to grips with crucial issues of classroom practice that critical pedagogy cannot or will not address” (p. 303). The mess is part of what I believe critical pedagogy does not address and as I have worked to unpack this mess in my own pedagogical experiences, I finally understand what makes it messy: the inevitability of complicity in the very systems that many of us who teach critical courses try to disrupt. As I work to disrupt systemic social injustice while simultaneously participating in such a system, I have come to realize that complicity has pedagogical significance. I believe that more research and dialogue are necessary in order to understand ways to navigate complicity and avoid skirting around it as if it were the proverbial elephant in the room. It is there, but few researchers have recognized it as fundamental to conversations on oppression.

Although many critical scholars name the messiness of doing critical work, they rarely name issues of complicity. Ellsworth (1989) points out how the literature of critical pedagogy neglects to address the paradoxes of its own praxis, and claims that for her, in order to address complicity, she must “enter into the encounter in a way that owned up to my own implications in those formations” (p. 308). What I hear underlying Ellsworth’s (1989) words, especially in the powerful use of “implications,” is the naming of complicity. Many scholars who consider themselves critical or social justice educators, have yet to engage complicity on an in-depth level, particularly involving a deep interrogation of how they deal with their own complicity in the world and in their classrooms.

In this study, I insert complicity into discussions of pedagogies that deal with issues of social justice and explore the role that complicity plays in these pedagogies. One of the most important purposes of this research is to name complicity in critical work and move beyond the naming to suggesting strategies and narratives of action and resistance, even in the face of complicity. I want to push against, and speak back to, the paralyzing discourse that stops in the inevitability of complicity, and deeply examine how complicity affects pedagogy.

Research Questions and Approach

The overarching question of this research is: how do teachers in higher education classrooms, who teach social justice oriented courses pedagogically navigate their own complicity in systems and structures of privilege? I want to know the role complicity plays or can play in constructing classroom spaces that seek to decolonize or deconstruct systems of oppression. How can one move from the paralyzing discourse of complicity as inevitable towards a discourse of complicity as a point of change and action?

I am employing a qualitative methodology for my dissertation because I feel that dialogue regarding complicity is important to broader conversations of social justice and because I am concerned with learning about how teachers deal with issues of complicity in their own pedagogies. My hope is that through conversations in the form of in-depth interviews, a dialogue will be created that brings issues of complicity to the forefront of a critical pedagogical consciousness. I interview a select group of professors around the country who not only teach towards social justice, but also research, write, and act in the name of a socially just world through educational practices.

Defining Complicity

As this is a study of complicity, I dedicate the remainder of this first chapter to an extended discussion of how scholars have defined complicity. Discourses regarding complicity span disciplines and demonstrate the applicability of complicity to a wide range of topics. Such discourses are located in art, anthropology, education, communication, geography, business, medicine, and law. The definitions of complicity vary depending upon context. Contextual significance is important because it suggests that the meaning of complicity shifts; therefore, one set definition of complicity inadequately represents the broad range of perspectives and voices on the matter. In order to provide a definition that takes into account the many discursive strands of complicity, I look to these disciplines and examine the multiple definitions and discussions regarding complicity. Margaret Little (1998) observes, “meaning emerges... as a function of a broad context” (p. 173) and it is my goal in this section to examine the broader context of discourses of complicity as a way to explicate meaning and establish a multidimensional definition. An overview of multiple descriptions helps me to construct an overarching

understanding of complicity that when applied to education for social justice, reveals the broader implications of schooling on society.

The fields of medicine and law have largely influenced the theorization of complicity across disciplines. In both disciplines, complicity is an issue of relation and liability. In her discussion of plastic surgeons and complicity, Little (1998) defines complicity as bearing “some improper relation to the evil of some practice or set of attitudes” (p. 170). She claims “one is complicitous when one endorses, promotes, or unduly benefits from norms and practices that are morally suspect” (Little, 1998, p. 170). Robert Orr (2007), also a scholar of medicine, defines complicity as a moral act. He suggests moral complicity implies the point an individual “is accountable for involvement in an action that he or she believes to be immoral” (Orr, 2007, p. 23). In both cases regarding medicine, complicity involves an act, choice, or decision, whether direct or indirect, that has moral implications.

Complicity is of great importance to law and legal theory. The “doctrine of complicity” states one is complicit when they “are liable for a crime committed by another” (Kadhish, 1985, p. 323). Alex Obote-Odora (2002), a legal scholar concerned with cases of genocide, utilizes this doctrine in his understanding of complicity. He says, “complicity applies in circumstances in which a person, an accomplice, incurs criminal responsibility for the criminal act of another, the perpetrator” (Obote-Odora, 2002, p. 375). Complicity in legal discourse connects to issues of responsibility, accountability, and guilt and requires a relationship in which there is an accomplice or accomplices to a crime. In the context of law, determining one’s complicity is a complicated matter because it entails determining the intentions of the accomplice. Obote-Odora (2002) asserts, “In the prosecution of persons charged with crimes of complicity, the central issues are...intent and knowledge of an accomplice” (p. 376). The criminalization of complicity

in legal discourse and law has significance in other fields such as education. How people connect through relationships as well as how knowledge and intention play out in those relationships, are important questions to consider in multiple contexts beyond the fields of medicine and law.

The fields of art, anthropology, communication, and cultural studies have much to offer to educational discourses regarding complicity by providing a nuanced and dynamic understanding of complicity. Within these discourses, complicity is not only about relationships involved in criminal or oppressive behavior; these fields also provide discussions of complicity which regard encounters in general as relationships of accomplice and this presents possibilities of action and justice alongside those of inaction and injustice. Art discourses involving complicity typically center the artist and the audience/consumer as complicit. Johanna Drucker and Jerome McGann (2004) suggest that “complicity comes...like the society it engages and reflects, in many types and forms” (p. 209). The assertion that there are many types of complicity is very important when defining complicity. Drucker and McGann define complicity as the involvement “in the guilt of the whole society” (p. 212).

When looking at media and art, Jay Bolter (2007) also focuses on complicity in broad terms, moving beyond the focus of the individual or accomplice and towards a focus on the collective society. He defines complicity as “involvement in the consumer culture of global capitalism” which directly connects people/society in “the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, state-sanctioned torture, the suspension of habeas corpus and the like” (Bolter, 2007, p. 115). Although Drucker and McGann and Bolter situate themselves in the field of art, their analyses of complicity goes beyond discourses regarding art and highlights the interconnectivity that issues of complicity bring to the table. Although complicity occurs at the individual level, it

cannot occur through the individual alone. An individual must have someone to be accomplice to, and this points to the relational nature of complicity.

In an article regarding anthropological fieldwork and ethnography, George Marcus (1997) observes that there are “different senses of the notion of complicity” (p. 104). He elaborates on this point by providing two distinct definitions. The first definition of complicity is “being an accomplice; partnership in an evil action” (Marcus, 1997, p. 85). The second definition considers complicity a “state of being complex or involved” (Marcus, 1997, p. 85). These definitions illustrate different meanings; yet, they share the necessity of involvement or relationship as central components in defining complicity. Issues of intention are also important here as an accomplice to an evil act implies a conscious intention while a state of being complex or involved suggests a more ambiguous sense of involvement. It is also important to note that the perception of complicity in the context of anthropology is potentially positive. Marcus discusses how the anthropologist Clifford Geertz used complicity as a way of establishing rapport. He observes that “many fieldwork stories of achieving rapport are in some way entangled with acts of complicity” (Marcus, 1997, p. 87). Geertz’s complicity with the Balinese culture (participating in an illegal cockfight) helped him to establish a connection that granted him significant access to people and information. Marcus defines complicity in this context as “having a sense of being here where major transformations are under way that are tied to things happening simultaneously elsewhere...but not having a certainty...of what those connections are” (p. 96). Therefore, complicity does not always imply a relationship involved in a crime or evil act and in fact, as Marcus demonstrates, can produce something positive such as rapport. Ultimately, a key component of complicity is connections to others.

In communication literature, conversations regarding complicity often center on systemic oppression. Mark McPhail (1997) employs complicity theory to focus on “how racism and sexism are products of a conceptualization of language peculiar to essentialist epistemology” (p. 162). This conceptualization, that complicity occurs “when individuals fail to resist discourse that privileges some groups over others” (Orbe & Kinefuchi, 2008, p. 138), is unique in the sense that it considers complicity a discursive act. Through his complicity theory, McPhail (1997) “posits that when critics concerned with racism, sexism, and other languages of oppression oppose hegemonic discourses that subscribe to this rhetoric... they become complicitous with those discourses” (p. 163). The field of communication offers a very important understanding of complicity as an interrogation of how particular discourses produce and perpetuate systemic oppression. McPhail (1994) focuses on the importance of implicature in understanding and working through complicity. He asks that people concerned with issues of complicity “go beyond indictment and name calling to consider...the often subtle texture of social issues and social change and the larger cultural horizon within which both are implicated” (McPhail, 1994, p. 175).

McPhail (1994) further contends that implicature provides spaces for change because it requires that people recognize their relationships to others and the world. This recognition and awareness that “we are all, to some extent complicit in symbolic and social systems;” thus, we are always implicated, highlights complicity as inevitable (Orbe & Drummond, 2009, p. 452). Understanding complicity as inevitable provides a space for examining how particular relationships produce or perpetuate systemic oppression, while at the same time, recognizing how people, in relation to each other, have the potential to act against systemic oppression (in the

case of communication, looking at how relationships produce discourses of complicity or challenge these discourses through implicature).

Scholars of literature and cultural texts such as film and media regard complicity as multi-layered. For example, Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (2007) defines complicity as “both an act and as a concept” (p. 65). In the existing definitions, complicity is an act that a person or group of people directly or indirectly commits and a concept that when applied to communication, emerges through discourse. Both conceptualizations of complicity, in Probyn-Rapsey’s perspective, construct complicity as a methodology useful for engaging in the analysis of interrelationships. Probyn-Rapsey considers complicity a “condition of relations and encounters between Others” (p. 65). This understanding connects to Marcus’ (1997) in that complicity is not always evil or criminal. Another important distinction Probyn-Rapsey makes is that “complicities are not equivalent; being complicit as colonizers, as migrant, as Aboriginal, as man, woman, queer, classed, these are all differently negotiated and mobilized” (p. 72). Here she highlights the impact of power and privilege on determining one’s complicity and calls attention to the fact that identity matters. Probyn-Rapsey’s conceptualization of complicity as an encounter of interrelationships leaves room for those relationships to produce a range of results. The understanding that complicity is dynamic and multi-layered resists dominant ideology’s reliance upon binary thinking. A person’s own complicity is a complex matter that the good/bad dichotomy fails to capture.

Defining Complicity in Education

Naming and defining complicity as an issue that educators ought to reckon with in order to work towards social justice in education is fundamental to my work, yet the majority of educators and scholars who grapple with issues of injustice and oppression rarely name

complicity explicitly. If they do, they often do so in a way that leaves the meaning of complicity unexamined unless in conjunction with an identifier, such as white complicity or colorblind complicity.

Establishing a “type” of complicity connects to the previous definitions that conceptualize complicities, denoting that there are different forms and ways of being complicit. Barbara Applebaum (2004), a scholar of complicity in education, is one of the only ones who offers a broad definition of complicity in addition to a particular type or way of being complicit. It is clear that legal and medical doctrines of complicity influence meanings made in the educational context, particularly by theorizing complicity as a concept of relation and this is evident in Barbara Applebaum’s (2007) definition of complicity as “being a party to or involved in a wrongdoing” (p. 60). Applebaum (2007) builds on this definition and interrogates what she calls “white complicity,” which “connects individuals to systems in which the privileges of some are relationally predicated upon the unjust exclusions of others” (p. 456). Her definition of complicity centers on intention, identity, power, and responsibility as necessary aspects of understanding complicity within the context of relations.

Applebaum (2007) examines complicity in the spaces of educational discourse and practice and questions the ways white complicity affects student teachers’ perceptions of whiteness and how that impacts pedagogy, knowledge construction, and relationships within the classroom. She understands white complicity as an “unintentional and indirect” form of complicity as opposed to a calculated form, in which there is “premeditated involvement (whether direct or indirect) in wrongdoing” (Applebaum, 2007, p. 60). Defining complicity specifically as it connects to race suggests that complicity is interconnected to issues of race and racism.

Applebaum (2007) not only makes this important connection in her definition of complicity, she highlights the importance of relationships by placing complicity on the spectrum from individual to larger social communities and structures. She asks that those who desire to understand complicity pedagogically, specifically white complicity, must connect “individual intention” to the “social structures that constitute individuals” (Applebaum, 2007, p. 70) while marking the social politics of identities. Making these explicit connections between complicity, identity, and social injustices such as racism, marks the importance of examining complicity within institutions of education through the frames of relationships because issues of involvement and relationships are at the heart of any dialogue regarding education.

Conceptualization of Complicity

In summary, the multidimensional definition of complicity that I will use throughout my study is that complicity is intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect involvement in the lives of others. The nature of the involvement depends upon power and privilege. Recognizing complicity as inevitable requires acknowledgement that we are all, through relationship as people in the world, implicated in systems and social practices, including injustices. At the same time, recognition of complicity necessitates awareness that while implicated in systemic oppressions, people through relationships also engage in various forms of resistance and work towards social justice.

Although associations of wrongdoing and evil largely encompass understandings of complicity, complicity does not always connote negativity. Instead, discussions regarding the relational nature of complicity have the potential to reveal connections between people, their connections to systems, and finally, how these connections either perpetuate or disrupt systemic oppression. This overarching understanding of complicity has great significance to education for

social justice because establishing such connections is one of the fundamental purposes of any social justice oriented pedagogy.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study serves as a foundational exploration of complicity in pedagogies aimed towards social justice and as such, I have excluded certain factors, which I intend to consider in my future research. One of the main limitations of my study is that I am specifically looking at the higher education classroom. The professors whom I interviewed teach at colleges and universities, which automatically exclude teachers in K-12 schools. Another limitation is my geographic location, which prohibited in-person interviews with my participants. Amanda Holt (2010), in her work on the method of elite interviewing, which I used, suggests that telephone interviewing grants access to participants that I would not have had the opportunity to interview in-person and I found this accurate. Several of my participants were located in other countries and most of them were located on different coasts, therefore, scheduling a phone interview provided us with a flexibility in time and space that otherwise would not have been possible.

Significance of My Study

John Warren (2011) writes that “calling out something is not just repeating it, but hopefully repeating it with a difference that allows one to see it outside its common, taken-for-granted, invisibility” (p. 24). I build upon this idea in my study because by calling out complicity, I make it visible. The significance lies not only in its visibility, but also in the request to do something with complicity once we recognize it. It is my hope that the narratives of teachers who work in classroom spaces for social justice move beyond naming complicity to providing ways to act within complicity. Complicity in oppressive systems may be a complex and inevitable reality but that does not mean that one surrenders to discourses of helplessness

and inaction and stops trying to make change. My study contributes to the larger conversation on social justice-oriented pedagogies by providing new possibilities of creating movement towards social change through education via recognition and engagement of complicity as a pedagogical tool.

All too often, social justice educators fail to recognize complicity as a major presence in their work. In this study, I center complicity and mark it as a crucial concept that must enter into the critical consciousness of those who practice social justice oriented pedagogies. Much of the work in education that explicitly marks complicity in the text, does so with the assumption that the reader understands what complicity means without any in-depth examination of complicity as a concept. I argue that complicity is multidimensional and how educators employ complicity as a concept matters in very important ways; therefore, a significant contribution I make with my study is providing an understanding of complicity that I believe is useful in navigating pedagogies that are anti-oppressive in aim.

One of the most important conceptualizations of complicity that I find most useful within the educational context is understanding complicity as “the complex involvement of individuals at multiple and connected levels” (Probyn-Rapsey, 2007, p. 69). This understanding of complicity as relational is significant because conceptualizing complicity as a point of relationship rather than as solely an association to oppressive actions creates a more heterogeneous approach to understanding how relationships complicate our understandings of each other and our own involvement in systems of oppression as well as movements aimed at resisting oppression. By bringing a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of complicity into one’s teaching and classroom (and ultimately their everyday lives), teachers for social justice have the ability to recognize complicity as something more than inaction, inevitable, or criminal.

They might begin to see themselves as connected in ways they did not consider before and only in ways that a concern of issues of complicity makes possible. This is where I feel my study is most significant.

By reframing how social justice educators conceptualize complicity, from looking at complicity only as criminal to understanding complicity as a spectrum of multiple types of involvement, I open up a space to engage with what it means to be an accomplice. I ask what it means to recognize that while we may be complicit in systems of oppression we also have the ability and power to be accomplices in challenging that oppression. Kevin Kumashiro (2000) writes about the “stuck” places that teachers and students often find themselves in, when challenging oppression pedagogically. These stuck places emerge when students learn “about their own privileges and complicities with oppression” (Kumashiro, 2000, p.6), but lack the tools and pedagogical strategies to move through the crisis that inevitably results. The significance of my study and one that builds on Kumashiro’s work (2000b, 2001, & 2004) by looking at complicity as a pedagogical tool that has potential to dismantle normalizing myths of association and relation and dominant narratives of helplessness, hopelessness, and disassociation by revealing the complicated connections that only an in-depth examination of complicity can confront. By situating complicity as a point of crucial consideration, and by introducing the concept of accomplice to pedagogies and discourses of social justice, I call attention to how we are connected, in multiple and complex ways, to people and systems.

The concept of accomplice provides a way of “becoming unstuck” and creates the potential to move from immobility and inaction towards a dynamic existence that is always struggling with complicity but simultaneously moving towards change within it. I believe that a deep exploration of complicity offers a way to get “unstuck” and move within the crisis that

stems from recognition of complicity into a space of embodied “accompliceness.” I center complicity in an attempt to resist the refusal “to name the forces that produce human suffering and exploitation” (Kinchloe, 2004, p. 11). If educators refuse to name themselves in this production of human suffering, they neglect the connections between themselves and students, and classroom and world.

Naming, however, is not enough and through my interviews with social justice educators, I offer strategies of working within the contradictory spaces of education towards social justice by creating room for accomplices to exist within and beside complicity. This feature of complicity, which it can have despite and because of both a perpetuation of oppression as well as a perpetuation of democratic citizenry, is significant to any anti-oppressive pedagogy.

Overview of the Dissertation

In this chapter, I have outlined and established the purposes of my research, provided the questions that drive this study, and constructed a multidimensional understanding of complicity. In the chapters that follow, I expand upon this multilayered understanding of complicity as it applies to classroom practice and social justice education. In Chapter Two, I establish a definition of social justice and build upon this definition as I construct social justice education as my theoretical framework. Through an in-depth review of literature, I provide a space to insert complicity in these social justice discourses by connecting complicity directly to pedagogies of resistance. I look at the limitations of how scholars engage with the issue of complicity in social justice education literature.

In Chapter Three, I introduce my conceptual framework which looks at the discursive nature of complicity through four themes found in discourses of complicity: responsibility, awareness, relation, and inevitability and implicature. Based on this conceptual framework, I

employed the method of elite interviewing with professors who I recognized as elite in the field of social justice education and gathered their narratives in order to gain understanding of how educators navigate complicity pedagogically through an in-depth analysis.

I introduce these scholars in Chapter Four. Interviews with educators regarding their own experiences navigating complicity is at the heart of my research, therefore the findings and analysis of these conversations will make up Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. In Chapter Eight, I synthesize my findings and analysis with my research questions and raise further questions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION

Complicity is a matter of relationships and connections with others. Whether these relationships exist on a spectrum from direct connections, between teachers and students in classrooms, to indirect connections such as purchasing clothes made by a woman in Sri Lanka, these relationships ultimately connect us all to each other. Gloria Anzaldúa (2009) highlights that “we’re connected by invisible fibers to everyone on the planet and that each person’s actions impact the rest of the world” (p. 309). This reminder of the “invisible fibers” that connect us also includes an acknowledgement of our complicity. Because I ultimately want to understand how we, as educators, navigate complicity pedagogically, I situate complicity within the realm of the classroom and in the practice of pedagogy. One of the best places to engage in navigating complicity is in the classroom, as it is in the classroom where teachers and students learn to work towards social justice.

When I think about my own process of teaching towards social justice, teaching towards the creation of “a more just, equitable, and recognizably human society,” I cannot do so without thinking about those who taught me to teach (Ayers, 2010, p. 61). I am lucky to have experienced teachers who imparted their knowledge and inspired my thinking about the dynamics of a classroom where teacher and students grapple with issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, capitalism, and globalization. Although my teachers had their own unique pedagogical practices and strategies, derived from their lived experiences and standpoints, they all shared a common theoretical foundation, one built upon the broad landscape of critical thought and practice. Sande Grande (2004) aptly reigns in the capaciousness of this landscape

by breaking down the goals of critical theory and practice as it applies to education: the goal is to define “schools and societies that are free from oppression and subordination and stand for justice and emancipation” (p. 6). I desire to understand how educators navigate complicity in social justice pedagogies and it is important that the foundation from which I build my theoretical framework considers that classrooms and schools “are sites of struggle where the broader relations of power, domination, and authority are played out” (Grande, 2004, p. 6). My framework highlights complicity through a pedagogical lens that centers relationships and how particular relations work towards or impede a social justice aim. Because complicity is ultimately about relationships and critical and anti-oppressive pedagogies aim to make connections by examining relationships with the goal of social justice, the foundation that I build my study upon is social justice education.

In this chapter, I aim to tie the vision of social justice to the practice of teaching in order to build a framework that acknowledges complicity and offers a way of understanding the role of complicity in pedagogies that are contingent upon making connections between relationships of people, systems, and institutions. First, I explain what I mean when I evoke social justice in the context of my study. Second, I explore the role pedagogies play in examining complicity by looking at what it means to teach towards social justice. Finally, I explain how the goal of social justice through the practice of critical and anti-oppressive pedagogies creates a space for the examination of complicity and an understanding of why navigating complicity matters in the broader landscape of education for justice and humanization.

Defining Social Justice

In the first chapter, I discussed my struggle with what I call a mess: being complicit in the systems of oppression that many of us who use teaching as a form of activism work hard to

disrupt. Educators aligned with the philosophy of teaching as activism aim to disrupt systemic oppression as a way of working for and towards the vision of social justice. Social justice, this elusive and often used concept, seems to be on the tip of the tongues of many educators who select particular pedagogies aimed at creating a world without suffering and oppression through classroom practice. Social justice has become a popular catch phrase in communities of educators to the point that if one marks themselves as social justice educators, they make a statement that they assume others understand and conjure in the imagination a community of like-minded social justice warriors all in it together, one for all and all for one. Yet, as Kathy Hytten and Silvia Bettez (2011) observe, “the more we see people invoking the idea of social justice, the less clear it becomes what people mean, and if it is meaningful at all” (p. 8).

Due to the contextual nature of social justice work, the variety of meanings associated with social justice, and the recognition that “the phrase itself... risks being reduced to a slogan without substance” (Ayers, 2010, p. 61), I desire to articulate a meaning that is clear and tangible. My intentions here are not to perpetuate the discourse of “this is the only meaning” or even claim that the meaning I make is the best and only one. Instead, I aim to distillate a meaning of social justice that includes consideration of complicity as an essential component of any exploration of social issues.

When I invoke social justice claims, I ground my meaning in two previous definitions that fuel my own conceptualization and provide space for the consideration of complicity within a pedagogical framework. I draw upon those who defined beforehand, those who set something in motion by establishing a “static” definition. If there is anything that I want to emphasize strongly, it is that social justice and the desire for social justice constitute a movement. Although my conceptualization is trapped in Times New Roman, the ideas behind it and what comes after

are dynamic and involve action propelled from theory. When I invoke social justice here and elsewhere, I am presenting yet another example of building upon the momentum of what others set in motion before.

Social Justice: The Process and Goal

One of the most commonly cited definitions of social justice and one that I take inspiration from is Lee Anne Bell's (2007) definition of social justice as "both a process and a goal" (p. 1). The goal involves having a vision of a world where people have "full and equal participation" (p. 1) in all aspects of their lives, which I interpret as being fully human. The process is making that vision become reality through developing actions that resist oppression and have the power to transform social relations into just and equitable ones. One of the main reasons this definition acts as a sort of scaffolding for my own is that Bell conceptualizes social justice as "both/and," a process and goal. Understanding social justice as both/and a process and goal is crucial to formulating a conceptualization that resists binary thinking, which stifles movement and limits our understanding into two camps, this or that.

Discussions of complicity tend to fall into the binary trap, and this has limited the ability to move within conversations reflecting upon our own actions and how they might affect others. Such conversations fall privy to a quandary of immobility: how can one act if one cannot escape the seemingly inevitable injustice of certain relations? I have experienced this sentiment within my own life, and I have seen people just throw their hands up in the air and give up without a fight, without any sort of resistance, (I myself have flailed my metaphorical arms in helplessness). By understanding social justice as both/and a process (the movement) and a goal (ending oppression), we have the potential to open spaces where people are not stuck between the choice to act and the choice not to act. We create what Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira

(2009) call “between” spaces, spaces where we delve into the complicated layers and confluence of differing realities as a means to develop more possibilities of being and even more possibilities of acting.

These spaces encourage a more nuanced thinking and strategizing regarding resisting oppression. Within these between spaces, we work diligently to recognize the limitations of binary thinking so that we can imagine new possibilities and actions that were not available to us within the confines of a dualistic paradigm. Instead, through Bell’s conceptualization, we understand that social justice is nondual, meaning that the process and the goal are not distinct parts but instead exist in a symbiotic relationship. Myles Horton (1990) considered this “unfolding as we go along” and explained that working towards social justice “grows out of what you do” (p. 7). In other words, the process cannot exist without the goal and vice versa.

Social Justice = Humanization

What does it mean to be more fully human? Warren (2011) defines social justice as recognizing that “we all deserve to be more fully human, to be subjects who act upon the world, rather than simply be acted upon” (p. 33). “To be acted upon” is a form of dehumanization and dehumanization is the ultimate outcome of any oppressive act. In order to understand dehumanization, I must first establish an understanding of oppression. To do this, I return to Bell and her definition of oppression: she states, “the term oppression encapsulates the fusion of institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that shade most aspects of life in our society” (2007, p. 3). Oppression is the outcome of relationships where power and privilege enable some to systemically define a level of humanity for themselves and deny or at least diminish the

humanity of others. Resisting and challenging dehumanizing acts on a systemic and personal level is part of the process of working towards humanization as justice.

Warren's definition is a powerful reminder that the things we do, our actions in this world, have consequences. We are inspired to reflect on how our own lives and experiences are shaped by the actions of others and question whether or not we are able to live up to our fullest potential as human beings. Social justice is about creating a world where there is no suffering and when you place this extraordinary task in the context of education, social justice means creating classrooms, schools, and communities that strive against oppression and that work towards humanization. How in the world do educators do this?

Tying the Practical with the Visionary

Myles Horton's grandfather used to say, "Son you're talking about all these ideas, and you got your wagon hitched to a star, but you can't haul anything in it that's not down on earth" (Horton, Freire, Bell, & Gaventa, 1990, p. 176). Horton (1990) reflected, "I know you have to have it hitched to the star, and he did too, but it's also got to be down on earth where something practical can be done. You have to tie the practical with the visionary" (p. 176-177). Social justice is a vision that requires a "down on earth" practice that works towards ending human suffering. Teaching towards social justice is a way to bring that vision down on earth, and it is specifically through the pedagogies that social justice educators employ, that the practice of teaching and learning can work towards realizing the vision of a classroom, community, and world without suffering.

The idea of hitching a wagon to a star elicits great hope for the impossible. I have this image of a radical and revolutionary cowgirl (perhaps somewhat reminiscent of myself), wrangling with a rope as she attaches it to her wagon and with great energy and strength, hurls

the rope mightily towards the sky. She believes that if only she throw it far enough, if only she has enough strength to catapult the heavy rope with all her might, she may just latch that rope onto a star. A vision of such a seemingly impossible task requires great conviction and hope. This vision requires a belief that whatever it is one wants to see happen, it will take believing in the unbelievable to make it work. Social justice is the star in this metaphor. Without the vision, the belief that humanity deserves a just world, one without suffering or oppression, there would be nothing to hold onto, no rope to hurl and no stars in the vast sky to which you can hook your wagon.

Social Justice Oriented Pedagogies

Developing a practice that works towards a vision as broad and great as social justice is no easy task and requires that we employ pedagogies aligned with the vision of a world without suffering. Pedagogy, without a social justice aim, is simply the practice and “interaction between learning and teaching” (Wink, 2005, p. 73). When educators ground their pedagogies in the belief that the practice of teaching and learning ought to aim towards transforming the world from oppressive to just, social justice oriented pedagogies arise. Although there are numerous pedagogies that claim social justice as their aim, they all draw from a common source, critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy is a “big tent” conceptualization, meaning it includes numerous pedagogies informed by critical theories, with an emphasis on the plurality of both pedagogies and theories (Lather, 1998, p. 487). It is not my intention or desire to establish a singular, fixed, or flawless conceptualization of critical pedagogy because there is not one. Rather, for the purpose of my study, I understand critical pedagogy as a broad collection of pedagogies

informed by multiple theories including feminist, post, critical race, queer, anti-oppressive, and multicultural theories.

These diverse theoretical and pedagogical practices differ in their strategies and philosophies but what links them together is the collective belief that “oppression is a situation or dynamic in which certain ways of being are privileged in society while others are marginalized” (Kumashiro, 2000a, p. 25). Further, practitioners of critical pedagogies locate this shared understanding of oppression within the context of education and recognize that “issues of education and social justice are fundamentally related” (Hyttén, 2006, p. 223). This belief, that education, social justice, and oppression are inter-related serves as the impetus for the belief that pedagogies have the potential to transform this world and as such, fit nicely in the domain of what I consider social justice oriented pedagogies.

Placing a vision as broad and grand as social justice within the context of the classroom and within the diverse practices of critical pedagogies, requires the existence of foundational common assumptions. First, schools and classrooms are “always implicated in relations of power, social practices, and the favoring of forms of knowledge that support a specific vision of past, present, and future” (McLaren, 1993, p. 187). Second, knowledge is a social construction and it is important to recognize the dynamics of power involved in knowledge construction and understand whose voices and stories are present and whose are absent. Third, schools as social systems perpetuate the injustices of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of human suffering through hegemonic means. Hegemony, according to Megan Boler (2004), is when “dominant ideology enforces itself, not necessarily through violent means, but through people’s agreement to abide by and value a status quo that benefits institutionalized powers” (p. 122). Pedagogical practices aimed towards social justice, must look at institutions of education as sites where

hegemony exists at the curricular, pedagogical, and administrative levels. Paulo Freire (1970) believed that one of the primary ways to challenge hegemony was to create a pedagogy which makes “oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed” (p. 48). This is the ultimate goal of any social justice oriented pedagogy and it is rooted in the belief that by making causes of oppression relevant for examination in classroom contexts, teachers and students can realize and produce actions aimed at challenging oppression. What if educators conceptualize complicity as an object of reflection?

It is in the spaces of education, through pedagogies aimed towards social justice that complicity materializes in very important ways. An important parallel that critical pedagogies share with the vision of social justice is that they are both/and conceptualizations. Critical pedagogy is both a theory and practice directed towards resisting and ending oppression. Traditionally, scholars and teachers understand theory and practice as separate from each other, as oppositional rather than conjoined. Practitioners of critical pedagogy challenge this dualism with praxis, “the complex combination of theory and practice resulting in informed action” (Kinchloe, 2004, p. 110). Freire (1970) believed that praxis enabled teachers and students to not only understand the situations and contexts of their own lives, but also allowed them to act in ways aimed at transforming their lives and the world in which they lived. Simply put, praxis is “action and reflection upon the world in order to change it” (hooks, 1994, p. 14).

The recognition that theory is not separate from action is important when considering how we navigate complicity in social justice pedagogies. Often, the recognition of complicity in dialogue regarding issues of oppression results in a feeling of inaction or helplessness, where teachers and students alike “feel emotionally drained and even paralyzed by not knowing how to create the conditions... necessary for social transformation” (Bettez & Hytten, 2013, p. 50).

Praxis enables us to theorize complicity pedagogically while simultaneously providing spaces to transform knowledge and relationships intersected by complicity in the classroom and beyond.

Joan Wink (2005) declares that critical pedagogy, as praxis, is “to name, to reflect critically, and to act” (p. 9). Because complicity often occurs in “invisible, naturalized ways,” critical pedagogy, through naming, critical reflection, and action, has the innate ability to make visible the frequently invisible contours of complicity (Applebaum, 2006, p. 350). How humans are implicated in each other’s lives, whether hidden or visible, impacts the world in various ways and an awareness of complicity, through the process of learning that we are connected and involved in a web of complex relationships, is a great start, but certainly not the stopping point. How does an educator, who aims to teach toward social justice, move through this recognition and towards action? This is one of the questions that drive my study and in order to progress towards dialogue regarding complicity in social justice oriented pedagogies, I must look at the nuts and bolts of such a pedagogy in the first place: what does it mean to teach towards social justice?

Social Justice Education: Teaching Towards Social Justice

Teaching is one way of acting towards social change. William Ayers (1998) passionately explains that “teaching must be toward something: it must take a stand” (p. xviii). He believes that teaching for social justice is taking a stand “that arouses students, engages them in a quest to identify obstacles to their full humanity, to their freedom, and then drive, to move against those obstacles” (Ayers, 1998, p. xviii). Teaching is not a neutral act; it is a political one and taking a stand is an essential aspect of recognizing the political nature of education. Freire (1998) adamantly expresses that “I cannot be a teacher if I do not perceive with ever greater clarity that my practice demands of me a definition of where I stand” (p. 93). A social justice standpoint

requires that teachers mark the political nature of education by “explicitly naming how power, privilege, and oppression operate” so that we may “see the complex interrelationships between power and privilege and illuminate the sometimes hidden dynamics of oppression” (Bettez & Hytten, 2013, p. 49).

Simultaneously, teaching and learning towards social justice requires a stand towards the cultivation of actions that create and sustain social change. Marking the interrelationships between power and privilege requires that relationships between and amongst people must also be marked. This is where navigating complicity in the social justice classroom creates in-depth possibilities to act and resist because recognizing how one is complicit means recognizing how one connects to others and how one’s actions or inactions impacts the lives of others. Bringing complicity into the social justice classroom through dialogue and critical discourses beckons one not to just focus on how people connect to people, but also how people connect to power and what this means in relation to human suffering.

Recognizing complicity as a vital consideration in the social justice classroom is a complex task, especially when the process of teaching towards social justice is not without complication or contradiction. In fact, complexity, contradiction, and paradox are part of such a process. Teachers must have the ability “to see how teaching is always a process that has in it the possibility for renewing our world in more just and humane ways” (Purpel & Shapiro, 1995, p. 109), while also recognizing that teaching can be a process which perpetuates systemic oppression through acts of dehumanization. Kumashiro (2004) affirms that “no practice, in and of itself, is anti-oppressive. A practice can be anti-oppressive in one situation and quite oppressive in another. Or it can be simultaneously oppressive in one way and anti-oppressive in another” (p. 15). Teachers who teach towards social justice must constantly reflect on this

tension and maintain awareness that who they are, their history, social status, race, gender, sexuality, etc. and who their students are matter. This reflexivity and awareness are important components of the larger understanding that “we can never teach in ways that do not involve hidden lessons, especially hidden lessons that reflect the oppressive norms of society” (Kumashiro, 2004, p. 37). Instead, teachers who teach from a social justice standpoint have to find ways to exist within paradox.

To exist within paradox means to recognize how we exist within multiple “sites of contradiction” (Shahjahan, 2008, p. 4). This means that we as educators and students must create spaces that mark paradox and contradiction as a part of the learning process. The creation of spaces such as Gloria Anzaldúa’s “nepantla” facilitate this understanding because people can understand themselves and others, as well as particular knowledges as more than this or that, beyond such dichotomous conceptualizations as either/or. Further, spaces such as this challenge the notion that all must be resolved in order to progress; disagreements, in paradoxical spaces, function as problems not to be fixed but to be troubled. Kumashiro (2004) considers this “troubling knowledge,” which “means to complicate knowledge, to make knowledge problematic” (p. 8). Knowledge needs to be complicated because it is socially constructed and produced. Understanding knowledge as a social construction within the social justice classroom requires that students and teachers

work paradoxically with knowledge, that is, to simultaneously use knowledge to see what different insights, identities, practices, and changes it makes possible while critically examining that knowledge (and how it came to be known) to see what insights and the like it closes off. (Kumashiro, 2004, pp. 8-9)

Troubling knowledge is important work because once we learn about how knowledge is constructed and produced, we then can work towards constructing and producing a more humanizing and anti-oppressive knowledge.

Troubling knowledge also creates the perfect space for bringing complicity into social justice discourses in the classroom because complicity is an inevitable outcome of working paradoxically with knowledge. Comforting knowledge is the knowledge that most teachers and students desire to construct and produce in the classroom. This knowledge “helps us to stay blinded to those aspects of teaching that we cannot bear to see, especially aspects that comply with oppression” (Kumashiro, 2004, p. 9). Comforting knowledge typically highlights relationships and connections that are positive or exist in the present tense. For example, histories of slavery are commonly taught as having no connection to the present moment; therefore, students are comforted in the knowledge that these atrocities are disconnected from their daily lives. What would happen if that knowledge were troubled through examining how we are complicit in such atrocities?

“Complicity highlights the individual’s proximity to the problems...rather than separation from them” (Probyn-Rapsey, 2007, p. 69), and I believe this is an integral outcome of troubling knowledge through the lens of complicity. By “teaching about the knowledge that we often resist learning, including the discomforting knowledge about our own complicity with oppression,” we can also learn how we can be accomplices to social justice (Kumashiro, 2004, p. 10). How do teachers teach and students learn within the context of troubling knowledge? How can we teach and learn towards becoming accomplices to social justice, even when the recognition of being an accomplice means understanding how we are complicit in systems of oppression?

The underlying assumption of the question how do teachers navigate complicity pedagogically, is that complicity matters and is inherently a part of any pedagogy that works towards social justice. Kapoor (2005) considers complicity “inescapable” and observes that complicity shows “up somewhere and at least part of the time” (p. 1214). Teachers who aim to trouble knowledge as a means to work towards social justice must somehow grapple with and make complicity an explicit part of their classroom practice because it is there regardless of whether they acknowledge it or not. How can teachers do this and why ought they concern themselves with complicity? In order to examine these questions and understand the role complicity plays in pedagogies of social justice, I look at the ways in which social justice educators have engaged with complicity in literature by illuminating the limitations of this engagement. By highlighting what I feel are limitations, I desire to establish the significance of my study in examining how social justice educators navigate complicity pedagogically.

Engaging Complicity

How social justice educators engage in the topic of complicity has major limitations. Social justice educators have engaged in the topic of complicity in very explicit and implicit ways. They tend to focus on complicity in regards to participation in systems of oppression and much of the work that names complicity, names it as a way of implication and connection. Social justice educators also name complicity as a way to mark schools as sites of the production and perpetuation of systemic injustice. Kumashiro (2000a) argues that “the role of the school in working against oppression must involve not only a critique of structural and ideological forces, but also a movement against its own complicity with oppression” (p. 36). By marking schools as complicit in and with oppression, Kumashiro (2000a) sets the stage for establishing a “movement” that requires educators for social justice to engage in and with complicity.

Discourses regarding complicity in social justice education have limitations and gaps due to the contradictory and ambiguous nature of complicity. Ilan Kapoor (2005) wisely suggests that it is crucial to “track these complicities...and scrutinize their accompanying slips, disavowals, contradictions, and ambiguities” (p. 1206). I have established several limitations that are in need of scrutiny not as a means to squash how social justice educators engaged with the topic of complicity, but rather as a means to expand on their engagement and apply these limitations to my own study and examination of complicity.

The main limitation that I want to discuss regarding current discourses of complicity actually overflows into a series of limitations. There is an over reliance on and fixation in binary thinking that is found in almost any discussion of social justice and complicity. Complicity is either/or, indirect/direct, intentional/unintentional, visible/invisible and those who are complicit are aware/ unaware, conscious/unconscious of their implication and role in complicity. Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira (2009) argue that it is important to create educational spaces that work “against ideological systems based on the dichotomous, binary, either/or, us/them view of the world” (p. 21). In so much of the literature regarding social justice and complicity, the focus centers on complicit individuals or complicit humanity/collectives. Either an individual is aware of their complicity and recognizes complicity as unintentional or all humans as a society are complicit, but perhaps unconscious of their complicity. Binary thinking perpetuates “hegemonic ways of knowing” (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 25) and aids in the process of dehumanization because humans are limited to either/or status without any understanding of the complexities of being. If complicity is ultimately about relationships, it is important to attempt to understand the “spaces in between” the binaries and see these spaces as integral to the relational character of complicity-as well as essential to the pedagogical process of humanization.

Conceptualizing complicity as what happens in the “spaces in-between” creates new ways of thinking about pedagogical practices and the role complicity may play in pedagogies aimed at social justice. This notion of complicity challenges the “ideologies of domination” that “depend on people accepting that humans can be summed up by essentializing dichotomies of self” and others (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 15). Hytten and Warren (2004) offer a way that social justice educators can move beyond this binary thinking towards a deeper and more nuanced understanding of complicity especially in relation to race. In their discussion of the “Critical Democrat,” Hytten and Warren (2003) suggest that one must recognize the paradox of whiteness as a liminal space. A liminal space is “the margin between- it is the space of contradiction that is neither this, nor that, but somehow both” (Hytten & Warren, 2003, p. 330). At this moment, social justice educators are often limited by thinking in binaries, yet these binaries do not allow for paradox or contradiction. Either one is aware or unaware, conscious or unconscious, and this thinking neglects the fact that people might have different degrees of awareness or consciousness that does not necessarily relegate them into the either/or spaces. It has already been established that there are varying degrees of complicity so why should social justice educators neglect to examine the varying degrees of being? Diversi and Moreira (2009) employ the metaphor of the hyphen in their understanding of liminal space. Hyphens represent the “spaces in-between” and “can become invitations to encounters that demystify the Other and Difference” (Diversi and Moreira, 2009, p. 107). Perhaps a reconceptualization of complicity as what happens in the spaces in-between is required in order to move beyond binary thinking and towards socially just encounters.

Freire (1970) also offers a way to work through the limitations of binary thinking in what he considers “limit-situations” (p. 99). Limit-situations are situations of the “here and now”

which determine people's understanding of themselves and the world (Freire, 1970, p. 85). If one understands their world through binaries, they are limited by this view because they perceive their world and themselves as either this or that or not this or that. Similar to Hytten and Warren's (2003) notion of liminal spaces, limit-situations require an acknowledgement of contradiction. Freire (1970) believes that once people maintain a "deepened consciousness of their situation," they are able to "apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation" (p. 85). Discourses regarding complicity in social justice education too often fix reality in the either/or state and deny the fluidity or dynamic spaces that exist in between people and their actions.

Another serious limitation in social justice educator's engagement with complicity in literature is the inability to deeply interrogate ways to resist or act within the inevitability of complicity. As I previously stated, complicity is inevitable and an extreme focus on this inevitability risks a paralysis or notion that action is impossible. Lyn Fels (2010) comments that it is "within the tasks and labour required of our sites of education, we often fail to take action" and she connects this to the inarticulation of complicity (p. 10). If we articulate complicity as inevitable and do not further articulate ways to resist or act within complicity, then we fail to create transformative pedagogies. Jenny Gordon (2005) discusses the problem of focusing only on the individual as complicit and observes, "seeing our own complicity is an important first step but that is all it is, for individual complicity remains on the level of individual disposition" (p. 150). Not only does Gordon problematize the limitations of binary thinking in regards to individuals as either/or, she also troubles the idea that acknowledging complicity is the only action one can take.

A major gap exists in the social justice literature in looking at how one can act within complicity, rather than simply acknowledge complicity. Many social justice educators stop short of acting within complicity by ending the conversation at recognition, naming, and awareness, as if recognizing complicity is enough. Additional research is required in this area because educators for social justice must move beyond recognition and awareness as the only actions one can take regarding complicity. How can one act within systemic oppression? How can teachers provide pedagogical possibilities of action within complicity while simultaneously recognizing the inevitability of complicity?

Fels (2010) draws upon the notion of “the stop” in her analysis of teaching as performance. This notion is relevant to discussions of complicity. She explains a stop is “a calling to attention; a coming to the crossroads” (Fels, 2010, p. 4). Such a stop is important to consider when thinking about what actions are possible amid complicity. While it might be essential for one to “stop” and call attention to complicity in their own lives as well as in connection to people’s lives in the world, we need to examine the spaces that one can “go” or move through recognition and do something with it.

The final limitation that I want to discuss regarding social justice educators’ engagement with complicity is the overwhelming focus of complicity as a bad thing or action. This connects to the limitation of binary thinking in conceptualizations of complicity as either bad or not so bad. It is quite rare to find conceptualizations that consider complicity a more complex force. George Marcus (1997) and Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (2007) open up possibilities for the exploration of complicity as something other than bad or evil. Marcus suggests that complicity is a form of establishing relationships and although he does not elaborate on the nature of the relationships, he does stress that complicity is a method of connection. Connection is the first step in

community building, which is part of social justice work. His more positive conceptualization of complicity also challenges binary thinking because he considers complicity as connection “more ambiguous” and “demands a mapping onto and entry of the ethnographic project into a broader context that is neither so morally nor so cognitively determined” (Marcus, 1997, p. 101).

Although he situates this understanding of complicity in anthropological fieldwork and ethnography, scholars of social justice education can apply this concept to their own work regarding complicity. If educators explored complicity as a method of connection rather than only as an act of systemic oppression, more possibilities for action and resistance could emerge.

Probyn-Rapsey (2007) also inserts complicity as method into the conversation and provides spaces for further exploration in education research. She observes, “complicity is used as a kind of charge or accusation” and argues that scholars must shift their perspective to understand complicity as an “ethical engagement” (Probyn-Rapsey, 2007, p. 70). Complicity in this sense is the vehicle of connection between people and their worlds. Although this connection stems from oppressive conditions in many instances, it can also stem from positive acts or exchanges; too much of the discourses regarding complicity in social justice education focus only on the negative aspects of complicity.

A common assumption is that an accomplice participates in negative acts or requires a partnership in crime. Rather than examining how an accomplice commits crimes whether indirectly or directly, researchers must broaden their understanding of what it means to be an accomplice in positive relations. For instance, if teachers and students take on a community project, they may be accomplices in the act of cleaning a park or raising money for aid. Additional research must take into account the various levels and degrees of complicity. What is

important here is that there must be an understanding of the simultaneousness of complicity, that one is complicit in systems of oppression while at the same time complicit in challenging them.

Summary

Social justice is a summation of a broad contingency of diverse visions and practices. Ultimately, the overarching vision that spurs all others into the collective periphery is a vision of the world without oppression and suffering. When looking specifically at a vision of social justice that includes consideration of complicity, understanding social justice as both/and a process and goal towards humanization is fundamental. It is within the between spaces of a simultaneous process and goal that illuminates the complexities of relationships in ways that push beyond a binary analysis and opens possibilities of not only recognizing and troubling complicity, but also presenting ways to act in resistance to that which makes one complicit in systemic oppression. This vision requires practices grounded in the belief that humanizing actions lead to ending oppression and recognizing how we are complicit in oppression is an essential step in the process and goal aimed towards anti-oppressive actions.

Complicity is a matter of relationships and connections and what better place to examine how one is complicit than in the classroom, a space politicized by the dynamics of the complex relational nature of people, systems, and power. Social justice oriented pedagogies, informed by and evolving from critical pedagogy, center these relationships and “enable teachers and learners to join together in asking fundamental questions about knowledge, justice, and equity in their own classroom, school, family, and community” (Wink, 2011, p. 89). The assumptions that knowledge is a social construction produced as a means of hegemony, which perpetuates the marginalization of people’s experiences and voices within schools, serve as the impetus for a critical questioning that troubles knowledge. When students trouble knowledge through their

recognition that knowledge is partial and potentially oppressive, they enter into what Kumashiro (2000b) calls a “crisis.” Kumashiro recognizes that “learning takes place only through crisis” and because of this, “educators need to provide a space in the curriculum for students to work through their crisis in a way that changes oppression” (2000, p. 7). When students and teachers learn about and grapple with their own complicity in the systems of oppression they trouble, crisis emerges. Providing spaces that allow students to trouble knowledge and work through the crisis of complicity requires that educators and students accept contradiction and paradox as part of the process of a pedagogy that seeks to humanize through challenging and ending oppressions.

Understanding the paradoxical nature of relationships is important when attempting to grapple with oppressions, specifically within the context of schooling. This is where recognizing and navigating complicity may be useful in understanding how connections and relationships exist on multiple levels, marking the ways in which power, privilege, and knowledge impact how we understand ourselves in relation to others. The limitations in the literature regarding social justice pedagogies and complicity highlight the areas where dialogue is lacking or limited concerning the role of complicity in social justice oriented pedagogies. There is an over reliance on using binaries to understand complicity and this limits our abilities to recognize the complexities and in-between spaces that are so crucial to constructing knowledge that accounts for multiple perspectives and experiences, that makes room for all voices and pushes back against hegemonic knowledge that often pervades our classrooms and curriculum. By drawing from Freire and his conceptualization of limit-situations, scholars can examine relationships via a lens of complicity in the hopes of recognizing how our own conceptualizations of self and other are limited by particular knowledge constructions and move towards deconstructing that which limits our understanding.

The limitation of the narrative that complicity is inevitable therefore we cannot change anything is another area where social justice educators must shift. This connects to the limitation of conceptualizing complicity as only bad and highlights the need for an articulation of complicity that exists alongside of action. Such an articulation has the potential to birth possibilities that lead to anti-oppressive relations and provide spaces for the possibilities of being accomplices. Finally, when we grapple with how complicity impacts our pedagogies we may recognize aspects of our relationships that were otherwise invisible and hidden. What would such an understanding and recognition do to pedagogies that center relationships as a means to work towards humanization?

This is what I desire most to learn in my study. How do teachers, who teach towards social justice, navigate complicity and what can this teach us about our own pedagogies and selves? The paradoxical nature of relationships and the limiting ways in which we are taught to see ourselves, through binaries and helpless narratives, are in need of major deconstruction. Not for the sake of deconstructing to no end, but for the sake of marking how power impacts our knowledge of self and world and further how we are implicated in what we often teach within and against: systems of oppression. The insertion of complicity in dialogues regarding social justice pedagogies is necessary and vital.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The introduction of Ruth Behar's *Vulnerable Observer* (1996) depicts a painful and antagonizing moment of complicity. She describes a scene where an avalanche in Colombia "buried an entire village in mud" (Behar, 1996, p. 1). Television crews, journalists, and photographers rushed to document this tragic event and while they were filming, they turned their lenses towards Omaira Sanchez, a thirteen-year-old girl who was stuck in the mud and dying. A photographer named Rolf Carle stood watching with the rest of the world until, Behar notes, "something snaps in him. He can no longer bear to watch silently from behind the camera" (1996, p. 1). He runs to the girl as her heart and lungs collapse from the weight of the mud, and he holds her until she dies. This powerful moment paints a picture of despair and helplessness as bystanders take snapshots of a suffering and dying girl. Although their actions did not cause the avalanche, their inability to comfort her or attempt to rescue her lingers in my mind. It took one person to throw his camera to call attention to the reality that he shared with all of those who were present and with those who were watching live on television. Rolf Carle felt responsible for Omaira in that moment and intervened in the way he could; though that meant holding her dying body, he at least did something.

Behar's (1996) example is important to include here in that it points to a larger phenomenon that requires deeper attention than it has received in the past in social justice education discourses. What do we, as people engaged in the world, do with our complicity in human suffering? Like the photographers and journalists who stood by and watched Omaira die, scholars who engage in research and teaching that attempt to resist and act against systemic oppression must somehow also recognize themselves as complicit in these very systems. In the

same vein as troubling knowledge, teachers must trouble “our own practices” and imagine “different possibilities for teaching and learning” (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 11). My desire to understand how teachers navigate complicity pedagogically arises from my own troubling of our practice and what I feel is a necessary shift towards teaching and learning that better account for possibilities of action amidst the complexities and contradictions inherent in our human lives.

In this chapter, I outline key discourses of complicity as my conceptual framework and connect these discourses to the qualitative methodology I employ. Qualitative research “always studies the process of meaning making in context” (Biklen & Casella, 2007, p. 3) and this is at the heart of my research. I intend, primarily through the method of elite interviewing, to understand how teachers navigate complicity; that is, how do they make meaning regarding complicity in the classrooms that they teach. bell hooks (2009) observes that “we lack a language that is complex enough” and “our task as people who love justice is to create that language” (p. 196). My use of discourses of complicity as a framework, centers language as a means to “make sense of the ways in which people make meaning in educational contexts,” specifically how they make meaning of complicity pedagogically (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 366). It is my hope that my analysis of interviews will create a better understanding of discourses of complicity so that we may engage in the creation of the language hooks speaks of, one that allows for complexities and contradictions, paradox and action, a language suited towards the pursuit of justice via a deeper understanding of complicity.

Conceptual Framework

How we talk about or do not talk about complicity in pedagogies of social justice matters. If, as Orbe and Drummond (2009) state, “complicity is subtly, but powerfully, reinforced through language,” then the best place to understand complicity is in language itself (p. 451). I have designed a conceptual framework that draws upon key discourses of complicity as they appear in literature largely focusing on social justice education and written by teachers. This framework provides an in-depth examination of how teacher/scholars conceptualize complicity through four themes: responsibility, consciousness-awareness, relation to world, self and others, and inevitability and implicature. Each of these themes highlights important ways in which teachers understand complicity through discourse and as a framework provides a reference point that will be useful for the analysis of the interview data.

I use these themes as analytical tools that focus on discourse in order to recognize “what specific version of the world, or identity, or meaning is produced by describing something in just that way over another way” (Rapley, 2007, p. 2). The something I am looking at is complicity and my framework provides a map so to speak that when applied to the narratives of the teachers I interview, marks their discourses in ways that will either highlight one theme over the other or reveal themes as they emerge through dialogue.

Discourses of Complicity

In contemplating discussions of complicity in discourses of social justice education, I consider four questions raised by Johanna Drucker (2004). She asks, do scholars “really acknowledge complicity” and “if so how? On what terms? What is meant by it?” (Drucker and McGann, 2004, p. 212). These questions provide a framework that allows for a deeper interrogation of the discursive complexity of complicity. I have found that education scholars

acknowledge complicity explicitly and implicitly via four overlapping themes: (1) responsibility, (2) consciousness-awareness, (3) relation to world, self and others, and (4) inevitability and implicature. Although I mostly look at these themes as they appear in education literature, I also draw upon literature outside the discipline in order to express the underlying issues of power and privilege present in any discussion of complicity. As I explore the implicit and explicit discussions of complicity through these four themes, I ask how complicity is discussed and on what terms? What is meant by the discussion of complicity as it relates to the themes? An examination of each theme provides answers to these questions.

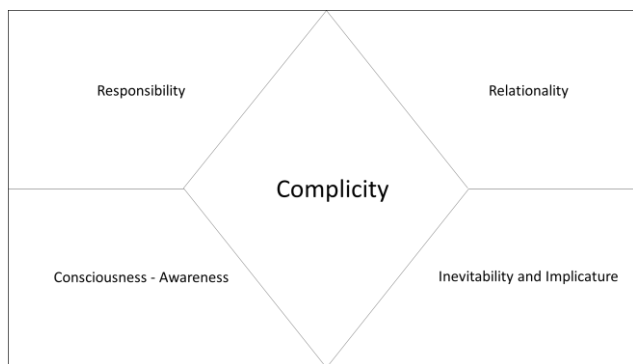


Figure 1.

Responsibility

Discourses of responsibility are abundant in explicit and implicit discussions of complicity. Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (2007) observes that the “main points of dispute” regarding determining complicity relate to “who and what is responsible and what forms that responsibility should take” (p. 67). In Megan Boler’s (1999) work regarding a pedagogy of discomfort, she implicitly discusses complicity by examining how privileged students typically do not take responsibility for their participation in systemic oppression. A critical reading of responsibility in this sense works through an underlying assumption of complicity because people must participate, whether directly or indirectly, in systems to make them work. The students are complicit through inaction and the inaction happens through a denial of responsibility. For

example, in discussions such as the one I provided in the introduction of this study, students denied their responsibility in supporting sweatshop labor by claiming they have no choice or control over how companies produce and supply their products. Boler that privileged students are allowed to “inhabit a position of distance and separation, to remain in the ‘anonymous’ spectating crowd and abdicate any possible responsibility” (1999, p. 184). Boler’s use of the metaphor of spectating connects this abdication of responsibility to students who have the power to “watch,” but do not feel the obligation or responsibility to act. When my students denied responsibility, they argued that they could not possibly know what happens because of their distance from the situation and from corporate policies and implementation.

Another way that Boler implicitly discusses complicity is by advocating for pedagogies that “avoid letting ourselves ‘off the hook’ from responsibilities” (1999, p. 187). This idea connects to Allan Johnson’s (2006) notion of being “on the hook.” Being “on the hook” requires recognition of complicity. Johnson stresses “if dominant groups really saw privilege and oppression as unacceptable—if white people saw race as their issue, if nondisabled people saw ableism as their problem—privilege and oppression wouldn’t have much of a future” (2006, p. 69). Being “off the hook” signifies not taking responsibility for complicity and “being on the hook,” as Johnson implies, means taking responsibility for complicity in systemic oppression.

Barbara Applebaum (2006) explicitly and implicitly connects notions of responsibility to complicity in her examination of whiteness, racism, and white complicity. She asks, “what does it mean to ask whether we are really responsible?” as a way to highlight unintentional complicity (Applebaum, 2006, p. 465). Her question reflects the definition of complicity in legal discourse because how one is determined complicit depends upon their intention and knowledge of the “crime” or wrongdoing. Applebaum argues that white complicity, in which white people benefit

from privileges that are denied to others, is often unintentional but that does not mean an avoidance of responsibility. Rather, it demands a “different kind of responsibility that is adequate to explain one’s complicity in structural injustice and that does not divert individuals from taking responsibility for what is wrong” (Applebaum, 2007, p. 463). Applebaum explicitly states that “complicity entails responsibility” whether the complicity is intentional or not (2006, p. 61). A discourse of responsibility then, as it connects to complicity, points to intention as important but also recognizes that one can be complicitous regardless of intention.

Consciousness/Awareness

In order to claim responsibility for complicity, one must first be conscious of the fact that they are complicit in systemic oppression. Allan Johnson (2006) claims that the “key to the continued existence of every system of privilege is unawareness” (p. 137). In this statement, Johnson implicitly discusses complicity through the lens of what it means to be aware or unaware of the consequences of one’s actions. Ilan Kapoor (2005) considers awareness in the context of complicity as confronting “the Real, which... is about recognizing and coming to terms with our complicities” (p. 1216).

What does it mean to recognize complicity and why is this important? Megan Boler (2004) explicitly “confronts the Real” in her discussion of “unconscious complicity with hegemony” in the context of pedagogy (p. 121). She asserts that the best way to deal with unconscious complicity is to “draw attention to the ways in which we enact and embody dominant values and assumptions” (p. 121). Boler does this by paying “close attention to those stories that naturalize themselves through common sense or familiar cultural myth” (2004, p. 122). She draws upon an example of students claiming that “if those children just worked harder, or if their parents made an effort to help them...they could get to college” and connects

this belief to the realities of children who do not have class, race, or gender privileges. The awareness of how hegemony is naturalized through common sense beliefs and narratives points to the unconsciousness of complicity and further demonstrates that though discomfort is bound to arise when students become aware of their role in hegemony, this awareness of complicity is essential to developing plans of action and resistance.

Humanization, the goal of most educators for social justice, requires a critical consciousness and awareness. Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira (2009) understand humanization as “the conscious search for justice, egalitarian social rights, individual sense of dignity and integrity, cultural space for the exploration of identities that transcend oppressive representations and ultimately, the search for conscientizacao” (p. 185). “Conscientizacao” is a Portuguese word that Freire (1970) used to describe what he considered a critical consciousness, explained as “the deepening attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence” (p.109). Awareness is essential to not understanding oneself as complicit, but also to developing a sense of what to do about it and how to change situations of complicity. Lyn Fels (2010) speaks to this when she explicitly draws upon complicity in her discussion of “being wide-awake” in which “we recognize we are not merely spectators but simultaneously complicit and responsible” (p. 8). Fels’ use of spectators connects to Boler’s notion of spectating mentioned previously. Spectating, in both Fels’ and Boler’s contexts, represents a distant observing, more like watching from the sidelines. Being “wide awake” as opposed to spectating requires a level of consciousness that not only sustains awareness, but also connects this awareness to action or the desire to act, moving one from the sidelines and onto the playing field.

Consciousness and awareness also go along with notions of blindness, invisibility, and unconsciousness. These terms often appear in explicit and implicit discussions of complicity, as stated above regarding Boler's notion of unconscious complicity. Drucker and McGann discuss "blindness to complicity" as a "denial of the ways...practice functions within, rather than outside of mainstream culture" (2004, p. 207). The practice of teaching in public systems of education, for example, happens and is informed and shaped by mainstream culture. Mainstream culture represents dominant cultural norms and within these norms, people are either privileged or disadvantaged. The idea that one can be blind to complicity suggests that one is complicit in perpetuating these norms whether or not they are aware of it. Applebaum implicitly draws upon complicity as she considers how teachers' complicities impact classroom practice. She argues, "because we cannot escape our social location, because we always work within social systems...we must continually interrogate our political practices for exclusions and omissions that may be obscured by our social location" (Applebaum, 2004, p. 66). This perspective is important in looking at complicity in classroom environments. If teachers are unaware of their own complicity, how do they deal with issues of social injustice without making these very important connections between themselves and the systems?

Relation to World, Self, Others

In discourses regarding complicity, establishing connections or relationships is important. Freire remarks that "our being in the world is far more than just being. It is a presence that is relational to the world and to others" (1970, p. 25). As previously expressed, complicity is a matter of involvement and relationships. Without the awareness of one's connections and relation to others and the world, people may deny or not recognize complicity. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) argues that in order for critical classroom practices to work, relationships must

happen in ways that show understanding of the knowledge of yourself in connection to others and the world. She engages complicity implicitly in her quest to change her “own relation” to oppressive social structures (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 308). In this instance, complicity is understood as the relationship to oppressive systems.

Ellsworth acts to change her relation to oppressive social structures through her continuous awareness and attempt to understand how her experiences are shaped and constrained by who she is and how her own histories and realities in this world relate to systems of oppression. For example, she discusses how her own “understanding and experience of racism will always be constrained by her white skin and middle-class privilege” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 308). She contends that one must “become capable of a sustained encounter with currently oppressive formations and power relations that refuse to be theorized away or fully transcended in a utopian resolution” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 308). In other words, one must recognize their own complicity in such structures by understanding how they relate to or are involved in them and at the same time, through this awareness, work towards changing them.

The notion of accomplice is essential in understanding complicity as relational. George Marcus (1997) suggests that complicity is a method of establishing rapport, which in essence is establishing a connection or relationship with another. “Complicity becomes the defining element of the relationship” between people (Marcus, 1997, p. 94). Complicity not only connects people to each other, but through classroom curriculum and critical pedagogical strategies, awareness of complicity ultimately connects students to the world around them. Marcus argues, “to think of how one is connected in each other’s lives and realities, is more productive when thought through the lens of complicity” (1997, p. 98). Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (2007) shares this productive view of complicity in her expression that “complicity connects us

to others, ideas, structures, and not least of all that which we might hope to keep at a distance through critique, through the distance of time, and through apology” (p. 69). This statement demonstrates the nuanced nature of complicity as a method of connection but the connections are not always “good” or “positive.”

Inevitability and Implicature

Discourses regarding complicity, specifically as they relate to social justice education, draw upon two main themes: the inevitability of complicity and the need to recognize how one is implicated in complicity. Ilan Kapoor (2005) discusses the importance of “self-implication” as a way of “owning up” to his own complicity in systems of oppression (p. 1204). Ellsworth also discusses “owning up” to her implication in complicity when she expressed that it was necessary for her to acknowledge her “own implications” in social structures and how they connect to systemic oppression (1989, p. 308). The idea of owning up acts as a bridge between the inevitability and implication regarding complicity and connects to the necessity of taking responsibility for one’s complicity.

Mark McPhail’s (1994) complicity theory centers implicature as a way of moving beyond complicity. Complicity theory focuses on “how racism and sexism are products of a conceptualization of language peculiar to essentialist epistemology” (McPhail, 1994, p. 163). McPhail defines complicity as an “agreement to disagree” which involves “using language that highlights differences instead of commonalities, and emphasizes division at the expense of unity” (Orbe & Drummond, 2009, p. 443). Complicity, McPhail argues, is created, sustained, and maintained through language and occurs “when individuals fail to resist discourse that

privileges some groups over others” (Orbe & Drummond, 2009, p. 443). According to McPhail, the key to grappling with complicity is recognizing “interconnectedness and commonality” [coherence] and then moving from this recognition towards implicature (p. 443). Implicature is “a basic acceptance of the belief that we are all implicated in each other’s lives” (Orbe & Drummond, 2009, p. 443). Implicature suggests that discourses of complicity, once recognized as such, can be transformed but not necessarily transcended; “transforming the complicitous nature of language is more feasible than attempts to transcend them” (Orbe and Drummond, 2009, p. 452). The bottom-line that McPhail (1994, 1997) and Orbe and Drummond (2009) draw is that complicity occurs in language and can be resisted-or perpetuated-discursively.

Coherence is necessary to move from complicity to implicature because “implicature can serve as the means through which individuals effectively negotiate movement between complicity and coherence” (Orbe & Drummond, 2009, p. 452). Most of the discourse surrounding the inevitability of complicity is implicit. These discourses usually mark the inevitability of participating in systems of oppression as a way that one is complicit. Applebaum (2004) does this when she observes that “there is no prediscursive subject who stands outside of power...the subject is constructed through power” (p. 63). Not only are people inevitably complicit, in some ways they are made complicit through these very systems. Allan Johnson (2006) argues, “all of us are part of the problem. There is no way to avoid that as long as we live in the world” (p. vii). Understanding complicity as inevitable seems an important feature of social justice work and “the problem” is an implicit way of naming complicity. Ellsworth speaks of the inevitability of complicity when she argues, “no teacher is free of these learned and internalized oppressions” (1989, p. 308). In other words, teachers are just as much part of problems as the schools are and vice versa.

The four themes of complicity commonly found in social justice discourses provide a frame that highlights how complicity is explicitly or implicitly discussed in relation to issues of oppression within the context of pedagogy. I recognize, through utilizing this framework, that “language, written or spoken, is never treated as neutral” and as such, what teachers/scholars say or do not say regarding complicity matters in very important ways (Rapley, 2007, p. 2). Discourses that highlight responsibility, consciousness-awareness, relation, and inevitability and implicature produce an understanding of complicity that is not without consequence.

I aim to use this framework as a tool of analysis, which will enable me to provide an in-depth understanding of what is produced in narratives via interviews with teachers who use pedagogies aimed towards a socially just world. Not only will I be able to recognize what is produced in particular conceptualizations of complicity within this particular frame of reference, I also recognize that this frame is not static, therefore I am open to themes that may emerge as a result of listening openly to what different voices, from different bodies of experience and practice, have to contribute to a more broad and complex conceptualization of complicity. Ultimately, this frame provides multiple discourse “maps” of complicity, marking the trajectories of understanding that fuel particular notions of how teachers, through their pedagogies, engage with relationships that are touched and impacted by complicity in one way or the other.

Methods

Anzaldúa (2009) writes “as a writer I can write about places after I’ve left them, rather than when I’m still there,” and this sentiment captures the process of how I came to my research question: how do teachers navigate complicity pedagogically (p. 187)? As a student who has read and “visited” with the ideas of various scholars, when I entered into the practice of teaching, I had to return to those places of books, chapters, and articles to reflect on how praxis changed or

abruptly shifted my perceptions and interpretations of what they (teacher/scholars) told me about teaching towards social justice. It took my own practice of teaching a pedagogy aimed towards resistance and anti-oppression to understand why Ellsworth (1989) wrote about her challenges in applying ideas of critical and feminist pedagogies to her practice. She reflected,

When participants in our class attempted to put into practice prescriptions offered in the literature concerning empowerment, student voice, and dialogue, we produced results that were not only unhelpful, but actually exacerbated the very conditions we were trying to work against, including Eurocentrism, racism, sexism, classism, and “banking education.” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 91)

It is “putting it into practice,” as Ellsworth describes, that creates the space for teachers to put their knowledge derived from articles, books, and courses into action. What often emerges is messy and different than expected or desired, which causes teacher/scholars, to revisit the words and thoughts that so influenced their work and ideas about teaching and reflect on what, whether different or more nuanced, those words mean to their practice now.

Elite Interviewing

When thinking about how I could try to answer the question of how teachers navigate complicity in social justice oriented pedagogies, the first thing I thought of was, “Wouldn’t it be great to ask Ayers, Kumashiro, Applebaum, and all the many others I have read and studied and learned from,” those whose writing and words influenced my own understanding of teaching, social justice, and activism? At first I assumed this would be impossible. Why would these widely published and cited teacher/scholars talk to me? So often, these works are assigned and the authors are just names on a paper or names that connect to particular ideas. Rarely are students given the opportunity to know the people beyond reading them. Somehow for me, this

disembodiment of author from person created the notion that they were not accessible. Even if they were accessible, how would I contact them and would they respond to my requests for interviews? If they did respond to my requests, would I be so intimidated to talk to them that it would impact our conversation? The fact that I even had these questions and concerns led me to the recognition that the status of the interviewee matters and impacts the context of the study in important ways. I thought of these scholars as elites, in that they were in the position to have the ability to shape how particular populations thought about an issue or phenomenon (Dexter, 1964; Nader, 1972; Richards, 1996; Kezar, 2003; Morris, 2009; Plesner, 2011; Mikecz, 2012; Darbi and Hall 2014). This simple desire to talk to scholars whom I considered elite and hear what they had to say, directed me to the elite interview as my method of data collection.

Sari Biklen and Ronnie Casella (2007), in writing about the qualitative dissertation, state that “the context in which you produce it is as significant as the topic you write about” (p. 3). The elite interview as method, recognizes like non-elite interviews, that the context is just as important as the topic. However, what distinguishes the elite interview from other interview methods, is the elite distinction of their participants and the recognition of the significance of this distinction to the topic and context of the interview (Dexter, 1964; Nader, 1972; Richards, 1996; Kezar, 2003; Morris, 2009; Plesner, 2011; Mikecz, 2012; Darbi and Hall 2014). Robert Mikecz (2012) further differentiated between nonelite and elite interviews by marking that “elite-oriented studies” provide a “flow of knowledge the other way. Whereas in nonelite studies the researchers have the position of ‘expert,’ in elite studies those who are being studied are ‘in the know’” (p. 483). Not only do the interviewees have knowledge regarding the study, often times they contributed to the construction of that knowledge.

The method of the interview, whether elite or nonelite, “is not a neutral tool, for at least two people create the reality of the interview situation” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 48). The researcher that selects elite interviewing as their method, recognizes the importance of the elite distinction to the interview situation and every step of the way, thinks about the impacts of this on the interview situation and analysis of data. The goal of the elite interview is to provide “an account by a major player in an event or issue of importance to the researcher’s work” and the researcher must understand that the interviewee plays a large role in constructing their own work (Richards, 1996, p. 204). Laura Nader (1972) highlighted why the participant selection of a study is political and recognized the consequences of selecting people who have influence regarding the topic of study. By selecting participants who hold important positions relative to the topic of study, the researcher will ascertain different meanings and interpretations of interview data. Nader called this “studying up” and asked researchers to consider how the positionality of the interview subject changes the types of questions asked (Nader, 1972, p. 7). The interviewee and their specialized knowledge on a topic is a central focus and it is their perceived “expertness” on the topic of study that guides the direction of the elite interview, including the questions asked.

Adrianna Kezar (2003) recognized that the overall goal of an interview is to “develop a fuller picture of multiple realities and to try to develop the most complex picture as possible” (p. 398). However, she goes on to highlight four qualities that distinguish elite interviewing as a method from nonelite interviews. The four qualities are:

- 1). the interviewee is known to have participated in a certain situation,
- 2). the researcher reviews necessary information to arrive at a provisional analysis,
- 3). the production of the interview guide is based on this analysis, and

4). the result of the interview is the interviewee's definition of the situation (Kezar, 2003, p. 397).

In the following paragraphs, I provide the four qualities of elite interviewing as operationalized in my study. The first quality connects to my participant selection and defining them collectively as elites. Though the second and third quality overlap, having an extensive understanding of my participants' scholarly work and their role within teaching, was an essential component of establishing access and rapport as well as in creating my conceptual framework thus, the creation of my interview protocol. Because each interview was shaped uniquely with the background research I employed for each person, the interview protocol was unique to each individual. Finally, in Chapter Four, I provide the outcome of the interviews, in which my interviewees share how they define and make meaning of complicity within a social justice pedagogical context.

Participation and Recruitment: Elite Distinction

Because I am concerned with understanding complicity in discourses, I interviewed scholars whose work I drew from in creating my conceptual framework. The situation in which they "participate in" is two-fold. They are all teachers and secondly, they write about issues of social justice. Thus, the participants I selected are not perceived as *just* scholars who write and publish about teaching and injustice, or *just* teachers whose scholarly work centers pedagogy, teaching and learning. Rather, I perceive them as "critical teacher/scholars," elites in their fields because they are people who I and many other students and educators read and study, assign and often cite (Orbe, 2007, p. 299). The 17 participants I identified and selected to recruit for my study are critical teacher/scholars that greatly shaped how I have come to understand complicity.

I have read their writings in multiple contexts but the main context is that of a student/teacher/researcher in a college of education.

Mikecz (2012) said that “what distinguishes elites from nonelites is not job titles and powerful positions but the ability to exert influence through social networks, social capital and strategic positions within social structures” (p. 485). In the context of my study, I conceptualize elite as those who exert or have the potential to exert influence based on their expertise in their respective fields, as it pertains to social justice and pedagogy. To name my participants as elite, is to highlight not only their importance to me as a student/educator concerned with injustice, but as important in the broader sphere of scholarship, institutions of education and activism. These critical teacher/scholars influence and shape the fields of education and communication. Darbi and Hall (2014) reflected that one important characteristic of elites is that they “tend to be... widely-read” (p. 838). In the case of my study and the participants I selected, they write about systemic oppression and teaching towards justice, they write about teaching as a practice and action, they write about the complex realities of pedagogies of resistance and are associated with social justice education. I have selected them as elite participants for this study because it is they whom I look to for a more in-depth understanding of navigating complicity in the social justice classroom as they have largely shaped the canon of social justice education.

One of the most important tasks required of the interviewer employing elite interviewing methods is knowing as much as possible about what the interviewees contribute to their topic of study (Dexter, 1964; Ostrander, 1993; Kezar, 2003; Mikecz, 2012; Darbi and Hall, 2014). Robert Mikecz (2012) suggests that “knowledgeability of the interviewees’ backgrounds” is crucial to many aspects of the interview, especially in creating interview protocol that best situated the topic of study in relation to their knowledge about the issue. In fact, according to

Mikecz, “the success of elite interviews hinges on the researcher’s knowledgeability of the interviewees” (2012, p. 491). Being able to speak with them while also being able to “read” them was crucial to my research method and analysis. My own “knowledgeability” of my participants served several important purposes. First, the in-depth literature review of their writings informed and shaped my conceptual framework of the discourses of complicity as I demonstrated in the first half of this chapter. Second, I was able to directly connect each participant’s work to my study in my initial interview request emails. Third, the background research I did on each participant largely shaped my interview protocol. Finally, I employed the knowledgeability of my participants’ work in the coding and analysis of my interview data.

In my initial interview request emails, I drew upon the work of each participant and connected their work to my study in my attempts to personalize the request and establish rapport. “Gaining access, trust, and establishing rapport are instrumental in obtaining the personal interpretation of events of elite interviewees” (Mikecz, 2012, p. 491). I sent interview request emails to 17 potential participants explaining the nature of my study and informed each participant that my study was shaped and influenced by their work. I designed each email request by citing the specific work of each participant and marked how their particular works and perspective shaped my own conceptualization of my study. Out of the 17 people I emailed, nine agreed to participate in my study.

I believe that the personalization and connection to their work helped in creating a point of access and at the same time established a rapport that let them know I “knew” their work and genuinely desired their perspectives regarding mine. The ability to directly point to specific passages and themes of their work allowed them to see that I was serious about this study and respected their perspective and time. Further, drawing from their work and connecting it to mine

in the initial interview request, expressed that their work was fundamental to the architecture of my study.

Once I received responses from my participants agreeing to allow me to interview them, I sent emails with informed consent forms that specifically requested that I use their names rather than aliases in my study. By employing elite interviewing as my method, I recognized that who I interviewed mattered and naming them was important to my study because they were selected based on their influence via their publications. This study could not have happened had I used aliases because naming them as connected to their work, thus naming them as elite in their fields, is foundational to this entire study. Out of the nine participants who agreed to the interview request, one declined the use of their name, therefore I was not able to include their interview data in my analysis. I share this because it shows how important naming them in conjunction with their work is to this study. Every aspect of analysis: the conceptual framework, the interview protocol, and coding of transcripts, rests upon the contribution of their writings thus their elite status, to the theory of complicity expanded upon in my study via interviews.

Data Collection

In writing about elite interviews, Holt (2010) declared that telephone interviewing was “considered more favorable” and offered “obvious advantages...because they are less limited by geography which can help to increase participation” (p. 435). I found that those who agreed to participate in my study, did so because of the ease of access that the telephone interview offered. I interviewed most of my participants in the summer, so the phone also offered flexibility in where they could be reached. They did not have to stay in one place to “meet” with me, and instead could determine what date and time was best for them without having the limitations of place or the necessity of a wireless connection (such as Skype).

I collected my data by recording the interviews on a digital recorder and as an extra precaution, I also used a second digital recorder to ensure that I captured the recordings without issue. Once I completed my telephone interviews, I immediately uploaded them to my computer and saved the files. I then sent the files to a transcription service. Once I received the transcribed interviews, I listened to the interview recordings while reading over the transcriptions to catch any mistakes or missed information. To ensure reliable transcripts, I repeated this process three times for each interview and edited accordingly.

Interviewing is a methodology in and of itself, but for the purposes of my research and for the broader goal of answering my research questions, I used the semi-structured interview as a site of the production of discourses regarding the discursive practices of teaching social justice oriented pedagogies. The semi-structured interview is an interview “with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 2007, p. 8). When placing the semi-structured interview in the context of elite interviewing, the researcher seeks to “provide an insight into the mind-set of the actor/s who have played a role in shaping the society in which we live” (Richards, 1996, p. 200). Interviewing allowed me to be in conversation with people who had a role in shaping not only my views and pedagogical practice, but the views and practices of others within the realm of education. While I will introduce my participants in great detail in Chapter Four, the critical teacher/scholars who I interviewed are Kevin Kumashiro, William Ayers, Barbara Applebaum, Cris Mayo, Deanna Fassett, Mark McPhail, Marcelo Diversi, and Lynn Fels. Their insight when coupled with their written work, allowed for a more complex analysis.

Understanding how we talk or do not talk about complicity in pedagogies aimed toward social justice is the driving force behind this study. My conceptual framework largely informed

my interview protocol and my knowledge of the interviewees' backgrounds was instrumental in this endeavor. In deriving the discourses of complicity from the literature of some of my participants, my goal was to engage deeply with their writing by interpreting how complicity is discursively produced. I looked to the interview as a vehicle to engage in conversation and have the opportunity to point to specific ideas and passages from their publications and ask them to expand upon them as they pertained to my research questions. Their written work in conjunction with the spoken word of the interview go hand in and hand regarding their significance to this study.

Each interview was undertaken with protocol specifically designed based upon the person interviewed. I took the literature review that informed my conceptual framework and recoded it based on the critical teacher/scholar's work. I designed an interview protocol that consisted of the same three questions asked of all the interviewees. I asked them to describe their pedagogy, tell me what they thought about the label of social justice as applied to themselves and their pedagogy, and I asked them to define complicity. From there, the protocol changed depending on the interviewee. For example, I looked at all the citations of Barbara Applebaum and went back to the articles and chapters I drew from and re-read them. I took extensive notes and read works that were cited within Applebaum's writings. I coded the notes and created question categories based on the questions about complicity and pedagogy that arose from a careful re-reading of her work. I then chose the questions that I thought were best suited in inquiring how Dr. Applebaum navigated complicity pedagogically and ensured that they were open-ended. By asking open-ended questions, our interview was flexible in that she could expand upon specific passages or ideas in the hopes of gaining a deeper understanding of the relevance of complicity within the context of her perspective. I followed this process meticulously, for each interviewee.

Coding

After I completed the interviews, received the transcriptions, and checked the accuracy of the transcriptions, I began the careful process of coding and analysis. The transcriptions were the literal texts of the interviews and I understand texts as “any instance of written and spoken language that has coherence and coded meanings” (Luke, 1995, p. 13). By listening to the recording, noting the silences and body language of my interviewees and other observations in memos from my actual interviews, and by transcribing the audio to written artifact, I was able to code the texts based on emergent themes. My conceptual framework acted as a “map in process” so that the established discourses of complicity guided my coding of the transcripts. For example, I applied the discourses of responsibility and accountability to my interview transcripts and coded based on this theme. By applying the framework to my interview data, I was able to recognize where these discourses appeared and most importantly, where new discourses emerged. The emergent discourses were evident only because they did not exist in the frame, and because of this, my conceptual framework was a crucial and significant tool of analysis.

Researchers must allow “political positions to arise from the data rather than being read into them” (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 384). This was very important to my data collection and analysis, particularly because I have a working conceptual framework constructed as a tool of analysis. I refer to my conceptual framework as a “map in process” as to purposively mark that the map is incomplete and in process. I point this out because I am aware that the discourses of complicity I yoked from the literature are not the only discourses that exist. In fact, those discourses emerged through a careful reading of literal texts and I had to take that reading with a grain of salt as I entered into the reading and coding of my interview transcripts as text. The frame that the discourses of complicity afforded my research, was as an initial understanding and

foundation of how these discourses exist and I recognized this frame as pliable, dynamic, and in process, thus the discourses that emerged are not static or concrete. I, as a researcher, recognized at the get go, that I must be careful of “the stabilization of knowledge claims and the slipperiness of language” (Rapley, 2007, p. 88). Therefore, understanding these critiques molded my need to be ever reflexive throughout every angle of my study.

Reflexivity and Triangulation

Researcher reflexivity is not just an inserted blurb lost within the pages of a bulky dissertation project. Rather, I embed reflexivity as tool, method, and theory in the research design, implementation, and analysis. Reflexivity is about “locating ourselves in relation to the phenomena we investigate” and in order to locate yourself within your research project, you must have awareness of how your identity, politics, life experiences, etc. shape your view of the world, thus shape how you enter and engage in your research project (Fasset & Warren, 2007, p. 50). I have made clear in the previous chapters how my identity as teacher, woman, White-multiracial, and now adjunct, have influenced not only my pedagogy, but also the questions I raise regarding complicity. This research is extremely personal, and my awareness of this is not just intellectual: I feel it, thus my identity viscerally shapes and informs my work. The key of reflexivity in research is to maintain a “check yourself before you wreck yourself” (Ice Cube, 1992, Track 13) mentality throughout the process of data collection and analysis. I must be aware of what to check in order to recognize the potential to wreck my validity and ethics in my pursuit of understanding how teachers navigate complicity pedagogically. How did I maintain this reflexivity and how did I apply it to my research?

One very important method of qualitative research that helps the researcher retain a critical reflexivity is triangulation. Triangulation involves “collecting information using a

variety of sources and methods” and reduces the risk “that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 93). For the purposes of my research and for the intent of creating valid and ethical analysis (my institutional version of checking yourself before you wreck yourself), I drew from two different sources, relied on participant validation, and used the method of analytic memo writing throughout my data collection and analysis process.

The two sources I included are: critical discourse analysis of literature conceptualizations of complicity (discourses of complicity framework) and conversations via semi-structured interviews with elite teacher/scholars. I provided my participants with the transcripts of our interviews and asked them to member-check (verify the accuracy) the transcripts and suggest changes or amendments as they saw fit. Finally, I used analytic memo writing as an essential component of my coding of the data. “Memos are seen as a way of theorizing and commenting as you go about thematic coding ideas and about general development of the analytic framework” and the memos ensured a constant reflexivity about my engagement with analysis of data (Gibbs, 2007, p. 30). By triangulating my data and research methods, I ensured a level of validity in my research methods and practice.

Summary

Bettez and Hytten (2011) recognize that social justice educators need to engage in a “genuine dialogue across various positions that helps us to build on each of their strengths as well as to better acknowledge challenges and reflect on the complexities of education for social justice” (p. 21). Interviewing teacher/scholars enabled me to center the discourses of educators who engage in social justice pedagogies. By listening to teachers draw from their own visceral experiences and insight regarding navigating complicity, I inserted a space for dialogue that

reflected these challenges and contributed to our practices. The following chapters introduce, in great detail, my participants, contain in-depth analysis of my interview data, and report my findings and offer suggestions for the implications of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTRODUCING THE ELITE PARTICIPANTS

Seidman (2006) reflected, “if the researcher’s goal...is to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experience, then interviewing provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient avenue of inquiry” (p. 11). The people I selected to interview are people who have impacted my understanding of pedagogical practices and who share concern for our educational practices at large, specifically in the United States of America. They have written, presented, published, and taught about systemic oppression within and beyond institutions of education. Why do their stories and perspectives matter to my own pursuit of understanding how to navigate complicity pedagogically? Why choose these scholars and not the many others who write and publish within the context of social justice education?

My participants’ meaning-making of their own experiences and the experiences of others in institutions of education are vital to my research because they have struggled in the same context many teachers and students struggle in: the classroom. They were once new to teaching and have made public through their writings, their own attempts of creating and applying pedagogies of social justice. It is through their publications that they have given voice to the existence of these issues and have offered their own insight and suggestions for years. I have traced their evolution in thinking and practice by reading their most relevant publications to this study, thus my desire to interview them stems from my desire to know what they think, what they would do or suggest in pondering our own and our students’ complicity within the context of anti-oppressive pedagogies.

A feminist argument popularized during the Women’s Liberation movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s claims that “the personal is political” (Hanisch, 1969). This simple, but

powerful statement reflects so much of how and why I came to the question at the center of this dissertation and why I selected to interview these particular scholars. Personally, the work of these scholars has impacted me in great ways. I remember the moments of encounter, my first reading or exposure to their thoughts and perspectives and how they awoke in me a reaction so visceral that I still feel the impact today. Lynn Fels (2010) describes this as “a lingering experience that reverberates, calls me again and again to its location of encounter-I am called to ask who am I, who are you, how might we be in the presence of each other? What is it I am to learn?” (p. 8). I have learned a great deal from these scholars and have created a pedagogical practice inspired and shaped by their work but there is still much to learn and this is where their personal impact on my life becomes political. Fels asks “how might we be in the presence of each other?” and this is a question that is fundamental in thinking about complicity in pedagogies aimed toward justice. Every classroom contains the same systemic issues present outside of the classroom and in fact, these issues are constructed, perpetuated, and maintained through the discourses that produce knowledge often associated with schooling.

When Black men and women are being shot and killed by police with no persecution of the one who pulled the trigger, when protests and the BlackLivesMatter movement is the trending topic on twitter and Facebook, when dominant discourses claim that we are postracial, posthomophobic, postsexist, etc., we must recognize that our teaching and learning are political endeavors. I argue here in this dissertation that raising the question of our complicity is integral to a pedagogy that seeks to resist systemic oppression, and the politics of this question is undeniable. Thinking about complicity requires that we recognize how we are in relation with each other and now more than ever, we must raise this question in classrooms so that our practices reflect the politics of our realities.

My study centers on eight people whose experiences and perspectives offer great insight into thinking about complicity in social justice pedagogies. Each participant is not just a Google Scholar search result or an author of a book or article assigned in schools of education. They are people who students, scholars, and community activists turn to in their own quest to think deeper about issues of identity and systemic oppression and they are the people that other scholars use in their own research; but most importantly as it pertains to this study, they draw upon in their own classroom practices of teaching and learning. The following scholars provide imperfect maps to their own pedagogical practices and thus, I look to them to help me understand how teachers, who teach with the aim of social justice, navigate complicity pedagogically.

Kevin Kumashiro

The first time I read Kevin Kumashiro was the first semester I taught, so it was the first time I understood myself as a critical teacher/scholar; it was his writing that helped conceptualize myself as such. His book, *Against Common Sense: Teaching and Learning Toward Social Justice* (2004), changed how I thought about pedagogy and there was something about reading his book about pedagogy while at the same time, learning how to teach while teaching, that helped me to embody quite literally, what the book was saying. I was teaching a foundations course in education and Kumashiro's reflections about teaching made me think about how scholars wrote about pedagogy, how they defined social justice in an academic context and what they, themselves experienced pedagogically and what it was that they wanted to teach teachers about teaching towards social justice through their work. The questions Kumashiro raises in *Against Common Sense* and in much of his subsequent writings, and his reflections on troubling the practices that we learn and experience as students, are crucial in thinking about issues of injustice in institutions of education.

When I started to think about how teachers navigate complicity in their own pedagogies, I looked to Kumashiro's work. I find him writing about complicity both explicitly and implicitly when he brings up "crisis" and "troubling" knowledge. Kumashiro (2004) talked about the crisis that occurs when students "learn that our ways of making sense of the world are not only inaccurate, but also complicit with different forms of oppression" (p. 30). Once students experience this crisis, knowledge is troubled and part of troubling knowledge, in my understanding and experience, is raising the question of what to do with my own complicity. Kumashiro's work looks at the role of the teacher in what he names "anti-oppressive" pedagogies and also, reflects on what happens with students in their process of learning about oppression in the classroom context.

Kumashiro (2000b) writes about the experience of the crisis and what this does in pedagogies of resistance. He reflects that as his students in a particular course were learning about oppression, "they were unlearning what they previously had learned was 'normal,' was not harmful, was just the way things are. And, as they unlearned what was 'normal'....they were learning about their own privileges and complicities with oppression" (p. 6). It is what the teacher and students "do" with this knowledge that Kumashiro has highlighted for me in my reading of his work and what they do is learn to "work through the resulting crisis" (p. 7). Thus, it is in the process of "working through crisis" that students engage with complicity. As you will see in my analysis chapter, Kumashiro offered a more in-depth analysis of complicity in pedagogies and discusses this process and the role this process plays in pedagogies aimed toward social justice.

William Ayers

The first time I came across William Ayers was in a documentary called *The Weather Underground* (2003), a film that traced the history and agenda of the leftist radical group in which Bill (as he instructed me to call him) was a member. I heard his name again in 2008 when President Obama was running for President and news broke that he had had dinner with a “terrorist.” The terrorist in question was Bill and the label referred to his involvement in bombings of public places including the U.S. Capital building. When I returned to school as a graduate student of higher education, I came to William Ayers as I did with most of my participants: through having read his work in several education graduate classes. Making the connection that here is this guy who was part of a radical organization, who was jailed for his involvement in bombing buildings to protest war and injustice and now he is a scholar of education, was an important moment in my work as a teacher/student.

Ayers made activism tangible in the world of teaching where so often teachers are told to remain neutral and apolitical. His lifetime commitment to resisting injustice and using the classroom to do so has taught me that the work we do as students and teachers is political and in fact, must be practiced in ways that resist the institutionally imposed boundaries of the classroom walls. Our work within classrooms does not stay contained within those walls any more than the experiences that we live outside the classrooms stays outside of the walls.

Ayers’ written work largely reflects his own troubling of the practices of teacher education and questions what purpose teaching serves in a democracy. In *Teaching Toward Democracy: Educators as Agents of Change* (2010), Ayers along with other authors (including Kumashiro), write about “how teachers can better humanize schooling for students” (p. ix). The task of humanization is a current that runs through all of Ayers’ work and is one of the main reasons that I feel his work and insight are important in thinking about the issue of complicity in

pedagogies aimed toward social justice. Oppression is an act of dehumanization and if schooling offers any means to act against that, it is through teaching and learning as acts of humanization.

One of the ways Ayers (2004) engages teaching as an act of humanization in his work is by thinking about relationality and recognizing teaching as a “fundamentally relational activity, an enterprise driven by human connection” (p. vii). Recognizing human connection as a fundamental aspect of teaching, means that we must think about what that connection means, the implications of that connection, and the role of the teacher in these connections. As I have outlined in my definition of complicity and in my conceptual framework, complicity is a matter of relations and it is only through relation that complicity arises. Ayers’ offers my study a very important way of conceptualizing the role of the teacher by highlighting their relationships to students, to the school administration and community, to the larger community where schooling takes place, and finally to the broader relations that encapsulate our society. He says

Becoming a student of her students, the teacher opposes the manipulative reduction of their lives into neatly packaged labels. She resists both the easy embrace of oversimplified identities—a reliance on a single aspect of a life to say it all—and the erosive gesture of fragmenting lives into conceptually crude categories. Her stance is identification with, not identification of, her students. Her approach is solidarity, not service. (2004, p. 42)

It is important to understand that Ayers believes in and fights for an education that humanizes people through their relationships to each other and to knowledge production. In his prolific writings about teaching, Ayres opens a door for us to think about the role complicity plays in such a model of education. Ayers inspired me to think of teachers and the act of teaching as a personal and political endeavor, one that requires us to think about how we are connected, to ask

questions regarding this connection, and to acknowledge the importance of relationality in schooling, all of which are fundamental in thinking about complicity and pedagogy.

Barbara Applebaum

Identities of the teacher and the students are an essential component in understanding how our pedagogical practices resist and/or perpetuate oppression in schooling. When I first learned about critical pedagogies and thought about how to apply them to my practice, my own intersections of identity as a White, multiracial, working class, able-bodied, heterosexual woman could not be dismissed as unimportant to pedagogy. In fact, my own thinking about complicity arose as I was teaching students about racism and wondered what I was to do with my complicity in systemic racism since I benefit from these systems.

Barbara Applebaum is a teacher/scholar who writes about the necessity of considering how our identities impact our teaching and learning, specifically through the lens of complicity. She was the first person to connect identity and complicity and center both in her research and within the context of teacher education. In Applebaum's article "White Complicity and Social Justice Education: Can One Be Culpable Without Being Liable" (2007), she raised the question "how do white people reproduce and maintain racist practices even when... they believe themselves to be morally good?" (p. 454). This question is extremely important to ask in the context of education, particularly when the majority of teachers in U.S. America are White. Connecting complicity directly to whiteness is crucial in understanding how our identities matter and calls into question how identities impact pedagogy in the sense of who is teaching what and how these issues are being taught. Applebaum also stresses the importance of recognizing relations in thinking about complicity and remarks that "social injustice is structural and is reproduced by the mutually supporting individual and institutional relations and practices that

enable or constrain certain social groups' actions while simultaneously privileging those of others" (2006, p. 350). I was excited when I read Applebaum's work because she confronts whiteness through the lens of complicity, which automatically shuts down denials of responsibility and accountability. If one is complicit, regardless of intent or "goodness," they are inevitably entangled in systemic oppression. There is no time to waste on trying to play the blame game or the innocence game, thus, Applebaum's work offers a way to get straight to the heart of the matter and not feed into perpetuating white privilege. She offers my study a way to connect our identities to our pedagogical practices while directly considering how complicity lives within us and our actions. Applebaum has created a space for these conversations within social justice pedagogies and I aim to expand upon them.

Mark McPhail

While Barbara Applebaum is one of the few scholars in education directly confronting complicity in our pedagogical practices, particularly as it pertains to whiteness, Mark McPhail has been thinking and writing about complicity as discursively constructed in the context of Communication for years. He developed Complicity Theory; without his knowledge and theoretical contributions, I would have no foundation to this study. I came to McPhail after I started to think about complicity and what to do with it in pedagogies aimed toward justice. Almost all of the literature I reviewed regarding complicity cited McPhail or authors who drew upon his work, so in essence, I came to McPhail via reverse citation. McPhail's Complicity Theory (1994) "highlights the various ways in which social agents are implicated in the positions that they contest and oppose" (p. 1). When drawing upon this in educational contexts, the social agents are teachers, students, and others involved in schooling.

Complicity Theory, as applied to the teacher who teaches toward social justice, offers a way to examine how teachers who teach against issues such as racism and sexism within anti-oppressive pedagogies, are implicated in the very systems of oppression they teach against. McPhail (forthcoming 2016) states, “while we may all, by virtue of the assumed character of discourse, be complicit in the perpetuation of such domains, we are not all equally implicated in the practices of oppression that circumscribe them” (p. 4). Therefore, in the context of pedagogy, the identities of the teachers and students will impact how they are implicated, which is a vital component of my analysis and findings.

McPhail’s work also provides a way to think about the role language plays in shaping our realities. This study focuses on how we talk or do not talk about complicity in social justice oriented pedagogies, thus at the core of this study is an inquiry into the discourses scholar/teachers use in talking about systems of oppression. The conceptual framework I designed is based on discourse as well as the method I used in analyzing my data. McPhail’s (1991) earliest work “explores the problem of complicity as it is manifest in critical discourses that converge at the juncture of gender, race, and rhetoric” (p. 2). Social justice pedagogies deal with gender, race, and other identities and social constructions, and the discourses that emerge from such practices are often named “critical”; hence critical pedagogies.

By building on McPhail’s focus on language, I am able to acknowledge the power of language in shaping how teachers teach about issues of injustice. McPhail observes that “the belief that individuals can respond to oppression without recognizing their complicity in its perpetuation fails to consider the political and linguistic complexities that circumscribe the system” (p. 3). His work has not only greatly influenced many scholars from various disciplines in their thinking of complicity, it has highlighted that complicity is a matter of relations that

language shapes into being. McPhail has taught me that we must “recognize that our complicity with hegemonic discourse begins with the very language we use to call that discourse into question” (p. 6). Therefore, in my analysis, I recognized that how I write about these scholars’ perspectives and experiences was also implicated in discourses of resistance, which according to McPhail, are complicitous by their very nature.

Deanna Fassett (and John Warren)

Deanna Fassett and John Warren’s, *Critical Communication Pedagogy* (2007) has been integral for my conceptualization of complicity, especially as it connects language and communication to pedagogies aimed toward social justice. They discerned “how our communication, our performances and our language creates who we are and defines our work as teachers and researchers” and recognized that as “a reflexive act” (Fassett & Warren, 2007, p. 49). Their understanding of the necessity of reflexivity in critical pedagogies calls an awareness to the teacher’s embodied experiences as important to the consideration of how they teach and think about teaching. Warren and Fassett, in much of their work (2002, 2004, 2007), consider the role of the teacher and ask what about their lives, their experiences has power to impact how and what they teach? In asking this question they center the body, they work to humanize those who do work in the classroom, and this notion of embodied learning and illumination of visceral experiences as valued, is tantamount to my own pedagogical practice, thus this study. By considering embodied knowledge in the context of communication, Warren and Fassett (2004) recognize that language “brings discourse in and through the body, shapes and fills us as educational subjects” and this is important in thinking about how complicity is discursively constructed in pedagogies that seek to humanize by drawing upon multiple types of knowledge, while placing the knowledge of lived experience at the center. Performative pedagogy, in

particular, provides an “approach to education that moves meaning to the body, asking students to engage in meaning-making through their own living and experiencing bodies” (Warren and Fassett, 2004, p. 414). My desire to understand how to navigate complicity in pedagogies aimed toward social justice, is rooted in the acknowledgement that relations, how we understand how we are implicated in each other’s lives, begins with our own visceral knowledge.

Understanding how our identities impact our lived experiences, thus how we embody knowledge, is another contribution that Warren and Fassett’s work offers to this study. While Warren and Fassett situate their work on identity mostly in the consideration of whiteness, they highlight how power and identity are discursively produced and examine how this plays out in the classroom. They ask students to “question themselves and their relation to whiteness” which offers a way to think about complicity pedagogically, via race (Fassett & Warren, 2004, p. 426). Applebaum (2004, 2006, and 2007) used whiteness as a “place” where complicity is relationally produced and both Applebaum’s and Fassett and Warren’s works provide this study a way of thinking about how identity, particularly whiteness, matters in how complicity is constructed and produced pedagogically.

I could not interview both Warren and Fassett for this study though I cannot tell you how many times throughout this process that I yearned to ask John Warren what he thought about complicity and question how he navigated complicity in his own pedagogical practice. Unfortunately, John passed away from cancer and his perspective and ideas only remain on the pages he left behind and with those that he worked and wrote with. I was fortunate to interview Fassett, as his co-author and friend, and gain insight into her and John’s collaboration and scholarly process. Fassett, outside of her work with Warren, places the body, identity, and

discourse as crucial components that educators must consider when thinking about how to create pedagogies aimed toward social justice.

Marcelo Diversi

If there ever was a book that changed my life in regards to how I understand myself in relation to others and what this understanding “does” in the context of teaching and learning, then it would be Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira’s (2009) book *Between Talk: Decolonizing Knowledge Production and Praxis*. I read this book in a class that John Warren designed called “Critical Communication Pedagogy” and all of the things that I mentioned that shaped this study in Fassett and Warren’s work, are present in Diversi’s work as they are rooted within Critical Communication Studies. Yet, Diversi and Moreira provide a perspective that exists outside of White, U.S. American bodies and this is a crucial part of their work as they challenge what they name is the “dominant discourse about the Other” that creates a colonizing education (p. 19).

I interviewed Diversi while he was visiting his homeland of Brazil. As a Brazilian who was a student and now is a professor in U.S. American institutions of higher education, Diversi writes of how shifting contexts impact how identities are perceived and constructed. This experience of being raced as White in Brazil, but not White in America, created this dissonance of experience and a theorizing of “being” that exists in the between spaces of people, lands, languages, and cultures. The work Diversi and Moreira do on identity frames so much of this study and how I understand complicity as a matter of what happens in-between people, thus as a consequence of relationships.

When I read the following passage, I understood identity in a way I had not considered before and it is worth quoting at length because this one passage changed my perspective and

opened a new way for me to think about how complicity exists outside of the binary frames so rampant in our epistemological and cultural conceptualizations. They write that “identities are not inside individuals but in the space between interacting individuals. Identity does not reside neatly and dormant inside people until truth can awaken and reveal its original design and plan. Instead, identity is forever mutant and relational (Diversi and Moreira, 2009, p. 20). Identity is what happens in-between people as they are in relation to each other. If identity is produced and constructed as people are in relation to each other, and is “forever mutant and relational,” then that means identities can be made, re-made, along with the situations within which identities are produced, thus, identities are never the same thing because as relations change so too do the contexts of which identities are understood and constructed.

Much of this thinking about identity impacts my study because pedagogies that aim to humanize, happen in educational contexts that rely upon understanding the world and the relations of self to other in very specific ways and through dominant perceptions. Diversi and Moreira’s (2009) work on the “decolonizing classroom” invites me to think about complicity as fundamental to decolonizing pedagogies because by contemplating what happens in the in-between, we create the spaces to think about ourselves in relation to others and vice versa. That inevitability requires us to think about how we are complicit in each other’s lives. To consider complicity is to have to consider how we come to know about ourselves and our worlds. We cannot contemplate this without thinking about colonizing relations.

Diversi and Moreira (2009) define the decolonizing classroom as a “place of peaceful revolution, where the oppressed and their marked bodies invade the institutional space not as objects of research but as experts of their own struggle” (p. 472). Creating decolonizing pedagogies within the frame of a decolonizing classroom requires that we consider the

knowledge of the body, the visceral. Diversi and Moreira mark the visceral as fundamental to a pedagogy aimed toward social justice. They claim that we must “start from the position of our bodies in relation to others in our world” (p. 31), for it is from the position of our bodies in relation to, that complicity arises and can be acknowledged.

Cris Mayo

I recently assigned my Women and Popular Culture students an article entitled, “Being in on the Joke: Pedagogy, Race, Humor” (Mayo, 2008). While this was not the first time I read Cris Mayo, it was the first time that I engaged in her work differently. Instead of reading Mayo, as I did as a student in many courses of Education, I had to teach utilizing her knowledge as currency in a classroom of students who rarely were asked to question their own learning in the context of pedagogy. Teaching an article about pedagogy to non-Education students highlighted the importance of thinking about how students and teachers alike, recognize our bodies in spaces where we are told to just sit still and let our minds do the work. In this article, Mayo (2008) draws from popular culture as she looks at humor as a matter of “rethinking and reembodying one’s relationship to the topics raised” and applies it to anti-racist pedagogies.

Humor is used to connect students to their bodies, through the acts of laughing, which aimed to disrupt the “passivity of the audience/class” so that the “spectators are not only taken to school, but they are turned out into the world with a demand for compensation for their participation/spectatorship at the sites and in systems of oppression that motivate the sites” (p. 251). Mayo’s connection of the body of the students (through their bodily responses, i.e. laughter, blushing, etc) to the topics they study and her request that they recognize how they participate in systems of oppression, made me think about the vital role that complicity can play in pedagogies aimed toward social justice. Mayo places the body of the student as a whole

entity, not just a mind to contemplate learning, but as a whole being that experiences learning with their whole bodies. This connects to Diversi and Fassett and Warren because here we see the importance of visceral knowledge and marking the body as a site of knowledge construction in the classroom.

Prior to reading Mayo's article about humor and pedagogy, I read her works regarding identity and educational policy. Throughout all of Mayo's critical inquiry into identities and schooling, she troubles what she sees as the efforts of schools to teach and demand civility. While discourses of civility conjure notions of equitable relations and getting along, Mayo (2001) observes that "while the purpose of civility is to enable relationships across barriers...instead it is a way people can maintain civil and personal distance in order to appear to abrogate the very social and political distance that poses the problem for their relationships" (p. 79). By looking at civility as kind of a guise to cover what happens in the between spaces, Mayo points to how students "as non-acting, non-feeling bodies are allowed to be present, but the actions and feelings that define their identities are not" (p. 80). Here students, and I would argue teachers as well, must disembody themselves from what it is that makes them who they are as they encounter and are encountered by each other.

I draw upon Mayo's work because how we navigate complicity in our classroom encounters, entails that we do what Warren and Fassett (2004) and Diversi and Moeria (2009) suggest: we bring the flesh to our learning. How we are complicit and how we implicate each other in complicitous relationships, can only be examined by thinking about ourselves beyond our identities in schools. We must think about who we are and how we came to be who we are as entangled in the web of our shared histories and realities, even when we do not recognize them as such. Mayo offers incivility as a way to not breach the distance that civility sets up, but to

highlight it so that we can “bring the distance into focus emphasizing the relationality of terms of identity as well as structural power imbalances that bring particular tensions to that relationality” (p. 86). Mayo’s conceptualization of incivility, provides my study with a way of seeing how we come into relation and marks how certain institutional discourses manufacture relationality as a means to cover the nature of our relations.

Lyn Fels

Lyn Fels’ background, prior to her becoming a scholar, was working in theatre. All of her work in thinking about and practicing anti-oppressive pedagogy, is grounded in performance and teaching performance, which offers my study a perspective that considers how we enact our identities and how pedagogical practices deal with this. The first article of Fels’ was “Coming into Presence: the Unfolding of a Moment” (2010), and it is as though she was in conversation with all the other scholars that my conceptual framework is built upon. Fels (2010) looks at pedagogy as a matter of relationships or encounters and directly troubles what to do with our complicity. So much of what Fels brings to the table in this article is extremely useful in thinking about how teachers, who teach towards social justice, navigate complicity pedagogically.

Fels (2010) asks us to think about our awareness in moments of encounter. As one of my discourses of complicity, awareness compels us to ask how we are in relation and what is our role in these relations. Fels proposes that “we must learn to be as aware as humanly and humanely as possible of the consequences that are embodied within our relationships and actions with each other and with those who come into our presence” (p. 10). An awareness of the consequences of our relationships points us to our complicity. Fels thinks about awareness as a “wide-awakeness” that is birthed through an encounter that causes a “stop,” and it is in the

“stop” that complicity arises. A “stop” is an encounter that creates mindful action. In this study, I think of the usefulness of the stop as the moment when you have to think about how you are in relation with someone else or with systems of oppression. Thinking about how one is complicit in systems of oppression, within pedagogies of social justice, may create a “stop” and this could be useful in thinking about how to navigate complicity pedagogically.

Fels’ (2010) work considers action and inaction in an educational context, specifically in teaching, and notes that “within the tasks and labour required of our sites of education, we often fail to take action, become inarticulate in our locations” (p. 9). This statement connects to not only what do we “do” in our pedagogies but also the power of language in shaping our understandings of who we are and what we do. Fels inspires me to think about what is left inarticulated in educational spaces such as the classroom, and to ponder how we can raise awareness of the that which is unspoken that will help us think about complicity as possibly an inarticulated encounter. Once we articulate complicity pedagogically, what happens? This is a question that has arisen from my conversations with these elite scholars. Lyn Fels is a scholar from whom I draw much inspiration from because she asks the questions that I often think about pedagogical encounters, particularly when thinking about my complicity.

Talking Off the Page

I was not prepared for what it would be like to talk to someone I have read and studied for years, whose work I build my own upon, and whom I admire for the inspiration they provoke in not only me, but many others. Knowing a person only through words on paper and then having the opportunity to speak with them, to hear them and know them through their actual voices, lifts the words off the page and changes the way I experienced them initially. In speaking about qualitative interviews, Gibbs (2007) observes that “you may find that hearing the

voice makes the meaning clearer and even suggests different interpretations” and I have found this to be absolutely true (p. 11). Speaking to the scholars I have introduced in this chapter gave life to their work and allowed me to recognize that each participant came to their research and desire to know via unique processes. Having access to hearing their voices talk about their ideas rather than simply read them, transformed the discourses from the page; I found that speaking to my participants provided an embodied experience, a way of viscerally learning about how these scholar/teachers thought about complicity and how they might navigate complicity in their own pedagogical practices.

Prior to interviewing my participants, I built a conceptual framework of discourses of complicity that largely drew from their work and the work of other scholars in the field of social justice education. In the following chapter, I apply this conceptual framework made from the printed words of my participants to their spoken words. Warren (1999) observes that “work becomes meaningful when it is brought to its feet and somatically engaged as a pedagogically enfolded experience” (p. 265). What emerges from conjoining an author’s published words with the words they speak is a different way of knowing something that you thought you knew. The data as presented in the next chapter literally speak volumes about complicity in pedagogies aimed toward social justice and create what I think is an enfolded experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

PEDAGOGY AND COMPLICITY

Introduction

The overarching question of this research is how do teachers in higher education classrooms, who teach social justice oriented courses, pedagogically navigate their own complicity in systems and structures of privilege? I decided to interview scholar/teachers who I read and whose work I used in building my conceptual framework of discourses of complicity because I wanted to know the role complicity does or can play in constructing classroom spaces that seek to decolonize or deconstruct systems of oppression. I desired to learn how can one move from the paralyzing discourse of complicity as inevitable towards a discourse of complicity as a point of change and action. In order to find answers to these questions, I decided that being able to ask those who shaped the way I came to learn about pedagogy, particularly practices that aim towards social justice, provided an amazing opportunity to engage in conversations that themselves, created discourses of complicity.

Pedagogies/Practice

At the core of this study is a concern for pedagogy, how we teach and learn within the context of resisting oppression. The research question that guides this study is how teachers, who teach toward social justice, navigate complicity pedagogically. In essence, I asked my participants how they thought of their role as teachers, what occurred in their classrooms, what pedagogical strategies did they find useful or not, and if they had not considered complicity in their pedagogies explicitly, could they reflect back on their practices and think about the places, discourses, experiences within their pedagogies, where complicity was implicit. All of my interviews were semi-structured, meaning I had a common set of questions and then for each participant, I designed questions unique to that interview, based on their written work. One of

the common questions I asked my participants was “how would you describe your pedagogical practice?” I also asked them if they thought of themselves as social justice pedagogues and if yes or no, what that meant to them.

Understanding how each of my participants described their pedagogies offers crucial information about how issues of complicity arise. What types of pedagogy call attention to complicity in the conversation, the curriculum, or the classroom? What is the link between social justice oriented pedagogies and discourses of complicity? My participants had much to say about their pedagogical practices and so much of what they said highlighted distinct issues that, at their root, were entangled with complicity. Their following perspectives and experiences regarding pedagogy help provide a way of beginning to answer my initial question of how they navigate complicity pedagogically. There are three areas that appeared throughout many of my conversations regarding pedagogy: social justice, teacher role, and types of knowledge. My participants provide the terrain of the map-pedagogy- and what proceeds this chapter-the discourses of complicity-provides the contours.

Social Justice

I did not select my participants just on the basis that they teach and write about their teaching. I selected them because they teach about issues of injustice and oppression and this shapes their pedagogical practices. In Chapter Three, I discussed and troubled what is largely labeled “social justice education” as a means to describe the complex endeavors of those who teach with the aim to transform and change our world toward a more just and less oppressive place. Although not all of my participants labeled themselves as “social justice pedagogue,” their work situates them inside the large canon of social justice education. If they write and teach about education as a humanizing process and they seek such a process as a means to end

oppression and work towards justice for all, then I have considered their pedagogies as social justice oriented.

Before I present how my participants think about their pedagogies, I wanted first to share how they reckoned with social justice. Some of my participants such as Deanna Fassett found herself questioning the label. Fassett reflected, “I find myself being cautious about how I use the term social justice. That is a misnomer anyways because it is not a thing as much as a process.” Fassett went on to connect her wariness regarding the term to her students.

I find that I have to push back against student’s ideas that they could if they simply followed, like if they read Freire and they did the right things, they would suddenly have a socially just class. Then, they would have a socially just world. It is like, no, I don’t think you ever get to the place where everything is just.

Social justice is a process, and I think this conceptualization and wariness of it as a “thing” calls into question how we work towards something that you never quite get to.

I believe that a consideration of complicity in pedagogies that aim towards justice, plays an important role of troubling social justice as a “thing” that one acquires. A recognition of complicity and the work that is required to move that recognition into action or new possibilities of knowing and being, is a work always in process. Mark McPhail told me a parable in his description of social justice pedagogy. While this parable is lengthy, I believe it is important to include here in its entirety. His parable alludes to the difficulties in teaching towards justice while existing in institutions among people who are complicit in injustice.

Let me tell you the parable of the ocean and the teaspoon. Doing social justice work and I include all critical pedagogies, any kind of transformative social justice work, like trying to empty the ocean with a teaspoon. You do it because you know it is the right

thing to do. You don't do it because you expect to succeed, but you don't expect to fail either. You do it because it's right. You stand on this huge ocean. Every once in a while, way, way, way down on the shore you'll see somebody walk up to the ocean for a little while and then they walk away. You think it's a hard thing to do. I'm not cut out for this. You're out there doing this and you can see the sand is getting wet and you feel like you're making some progress. Then one day, 10 yards away from you, someone walks up to the ocean and you think, "Oh, somebody I can talk to, a kindred spirit," and then they piss in the ocean.... Always remember that the ocean is huge and there are people all over the ocean just like you who are doing this for the right reason, but there are going to be a lot of people who tell you that they're doing this because they really believe it and they will be pissing in the ocean. Recognize who those people are, because there are people who call themselves allies, but in the face of an injustice, will turn their back on you... You know this, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try and empty the ocean.

McPhail's parable recognizes that educators work under the confines of institutions. Educators enter in the shared spaces of classrooms, departments, and schools with a desire to change the world, to fight injustice through humanizing students and the knowledge we construct and produce.

Similar to McPhail, Diversi shared his insight into how this reality impacts our students. He brought up Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King and said that students "feel overwhelmed by having to be a hero before they can actually claim to be doing social justice." How we talk about activism and justice in our curriculum, may in fact limit our students in their own agency. In our attempts at creating pedagogies that work against oppression, we create them within

contexts that by their nature, create complicit relations. As teachers, we have to enter into our pedagogies with an awareness of this, not as a hindrance to doing the work we desire to do, but as a recognition that the work never completely is done. In the following passages, my participants discuss social justice pedagogy in two distinct ways, the role of the teacher in social justice pedagogies and how we approach making knowledge in our pedagogies.

Teacher Role

How my participants saw themselves as teachers is instrumental in thinking about what they did and worked towards in their classrooms. Lyn Fels said,

I'd like to think that I'm a guide and a catalyst and someone who opens and holds a space where I don't know what's going to happen, but something will happen. Then what arises out of that, we then explore, reflect upon.

Fels' understanding of herself as a guide and not a "leader in charge" reflects that she believes that pedagogy is a participatory process, one in which her and her students work together. Fels' background in performance and theatre influences her practice and aims of her teaching. There is an element of creation, which Fels' pedagogy encompasses.

We're laying down just one of many possible worlds, which theatre does all the time, creating many possible worlds. Then bringing my work to go "Well we're doing this in our worlds, so what are the critical components? What matters?" Then once you identify what matters, you can start bringing those critical pedagogical lenses of visionality and attending to that, because that's what matters.

For Fels, her role as a teacher entails establishing what matters to her students and attending to that by responding through creation, having her students think about how there are many possible worlds. In teaching this way, when issues of oppression arise, the teacher can ask the

students about other ways of being in the world and in doing so, have to think about the relations that exist and how those relations must change in order for those possibilities to happen, for those possible worlds to exist. Kumashiro recognizes that the politics of identity influence his understanding of his role as a teacher. He described how he came to conceptualize his pedagogy as “anti-oppressive” and went on to raise the question of how to teach toward anti-oppressive aims:

I was really captivated by theories of intersectionality that really talked about two things: One, how different forms of injustice, inequity, and oppression overlap with another. How it's hard to disentangle for example, the way that racism plays out with the way that sexism plays out. They're not just parallel. They're actually intersected. They're interwoven, they reinforce one another. Then, on the flip side, the way that challenging one form, because they are so intertwined, if you're not mindful of those intersections, you can challenge one form while reinforcing other forms... I was really fixated on this question of what do these theories in intersectionality mean for teaching and learning, and how do we teach in ways that can address these multiplicities and these contradictions?... But really how can I in my classroom do multiple things, recognizing that my teaching will always be contradictory. It will always be working against itself in some way...that's my first entry into anti-oppressive pedagogy, and that's why I use the term “anti-oppression education.”

Kumashiro describes how complex dealing with oppression is in the classroom context. If teachers teach about racism, how are they reinforcing other forms of oppression? This really highlights how language is extremely important. How do the discourses we rely upon as teachers, in talking about oppression, matter? Kumashiro points out that it is extremely

complicated and contradictory and will always be that way; therefore, teachers must recognize that as they work towards social justice in their pedagogies. Kumashiro says that teachers must always ask themselves, “What’s the strategy I can engage in now? And, how do I constantly trouble that strategy so that I continue to move in an anti-oppressive direction.” This question is so important because Kumashiro, in asking this, suggests that practices must change.

Pedagogical strategies must evolve and in order for them to do so, we must trouble our strategies so we can continue to move in our teaching and lives.

Cris Mayo’s perspective on her role as a teacher, reflects Kumashiro’s in that she also struggles with the paradoxical nature of anti-oppressive pedagogies. She replied,

One of the things I’ve been trying to work on...and I think not well at all because I don’t know how to do this, is, the kind of simultaneous, non-synchrony of all claims about injustice. If we talk about one injustice we are not talking about another.

Here we see contradiction as discursively produced; for example, if we talk about one thing, we are not talking about something else and what happens as a result of this is potentially oppressive. However, because so much of the work on complicity must be done within a non-binary frame, perhaps there is potential, simultaneously and depending on context, to create anti-oppressive possibilities by the inarticulated, the not spoken.

Mayo also shares in many of my participants’ experiences of recognizing the process when she says she is “trying to work on,” she is someone who has taught for many years and the fact that she is still in process of working on, should tell us as teachers, that we do not get to some end point. We do not arrive at a pedagogy that is complete and in understanding this, we see the power to transform and shift.

How teachers see themselves as change agents varies and Deanna Fassett remarked that her perspective of herself as a teacher does not fit under the label “social justice pedagogue.”

I guess I don't see myself as a social justice pedagogue simply because I feel like I don't have students going out and helping in prisons. They are not marching on city hall....I do find that students I teach tend to become more humane in the world and they listen better. They ask different kinds of questions...I guess resilience is important here. They are resilient and more resilient in the face of the “damned if you do and damned if you don't” situation.

Fassett links action to pedagogy by thinking about how her pedagogy may not lead to direct action, but it does lead to humanization with her students and creates a space of resilience. I believe that it is in that “damned if you do, damned if you don't” feeling that our pedagogies can call attention to complicity. What about this space of contradiction, if I act, I perpetuate oppression, if I don't act, I perpetuate oppression, which beckons us to think about action differently? Perhaps this is why Fassett recognizes resilience as crucial in pedagogies that aim towards justice. We must be resilient as a means to keep on keeping on, to keep acting against oppression even if the actions simultaneously oppress. It is my hope that thinking about complicity in these instances can offer what Kumashiro said were new strategies for our pedagogies.

Barbara Applebaum's pedagogy drew upon the complicated nature of pedagogies aimed toward justice. She felt that her pedagogy, specifically a pedagogy within teacher education, “involves learning something that disrupts our common-sense understanding of the world.” She went on to explain how she does this with her students. She elaborated,

I try to make trouble and to encourage my students to stay, rather than evade discomfort of being troubled. I really think trouble and discomfort are the moments of learning.

Without them, you can't do this type of work.

Harkening back to Kumashiro's written work of troubling knowledge, Applebaum centers that troubling, which causes discomfort, as a space to learn. I think marking complicity, through a marking of our relations, can cause that discomfort, or what Lyn Fels says is a "tug at the sleeve." It causes us to stop and reflect on "what is making me feel this way? Why do I feel uncomfortable?" Hopefully in the questioning, students and teachers can start the process of thinking about complicity and tracing the threads that connect us.

Asking questions as a pedagogical strategy is how William Ayers described his role as a teacher within social justice pedagogies.

Pedagogically, one of the things that has always saved me as a teacher, is that I'm a huge believer in dialogue and in asking the next question. I don't actually believe it's my job to have the answer...I think that it is always asking the next question. What should we do? What step could we take? Where could we go? That, to me, is what good teaching is always about. Always about asking the next question.

Ayers, along with all of my participants' perspectives on their role as a teacher in pedagogies aimed toward social justice, shared several important things to think about. First, that teaching is contradictory, and teachers must recognize this paradox and somehow tend to it in their pedagogies. Second, teachers recognize that they must reflect on their pedagogies and think of new ways to ask questions, different strategies to create possibilities, and new ways to be in dialogue with their students. Finally, teaching anti-oppressive pedagogies, through the strategy of troubling knowledge, offers a great context within which to engage in complicity.

Knowledge-making

When I asked Marcelo Diversi to talk about his pedagogy, he asked, “What do we do with social justice? What do we do with knowledge making?” His questions, though seemingly separate, link social justice with knowledge and require that we think of them as relational.

What types of knowledge do we make in the social justice classroom? Lyn Fels asked,

What is knowing? Knowing is knowing, doing, being. If we ride a bicycle, how do we know how to ride a bicycle? Well we have to do it. We’re being in the moment of riding a bicycle and learning and doing... you can’t really give instructions about how to ride a bicycle...you have to get out there and do it, you have to be in it.

Fels reflected that knowing, doing, being are all part of the same equation and this connects to knowing as embodied. I think of learning to teach in the same way of learning how to ride a bike. Someone can say, here is a bike and these pedals move and the wheels turn, but in order to ride the bike you have to get on it and go. Teacher education can provide our students with a description and various strategies, but in order to learn how to teach you have to do it, be it. It is not something you can know until you do it. You can know about it, but you don’t come into a knowing until you teach. This recognition of knowing as something we do with our bodies is important in thinking about complicity pedagogically. What are the ways of “knowing” about complicity? Kevin Kumashiro offered a way of thinking about knowledge that I feel provides a space to consider ways of knowing about complicity.

Education is not simply about acquiring new knowledge...we are not a blank slate.

There’s already a lot of knowledge and thinking in our heads, so when we learn something it often involves unlearning something else, but when we unlearn something, when we question something we thought we already knew, that can make us

uncomfortable. The problem with education is that that's always happening, we are always entering into these dissonant spaces and it's uncomfortable, but because we don't help students work through their discomfort, what we are actually doing is allowing resistance to grow and get stronger. This is my other obsession... the role of crisis.

The role of crisis in pedagogies that aim toward social justice is fundamental in thinking about how we can "know" about complicity. Often the crisis arises when students learn about their complicities, in the moments that they must reflect on how they are related to an issue or act of injustice. The crisis, in this sense, acts as the tug of the sleeve or the "stop" and creates a moment, a visceral knowing, where students consider their implication. Fels described this by thinking about unknowing.

The question becomes do we have the courage to undo what we know, not knowing what will arise from that...its kind of...embodied knowing, yes, your body. It's kind of like when you walk into a room, you can sense it. You can read it before anyone even says something.

This type of knowing, that is unique to pedagogies of social justice, calls the students and teachers into an embodied learning situation. To know complicity, is to feel complicit and the task of a teacher working in a pedagogy aimed toward justice, is to bring this feeling into relation with how we think about it. The crisis of discomfort offers a space to do just that.

Defining Complicity

Understanding how one navigates complicity in the social justice classroom requires that I understand what is meant when the word *complicity* is uttered or applied to particular experiences and actions. Prior to this study, when I used the word complicity, it was a stand in for the word "implicated" or a way to articulate guilty behavior. Once I started examining how

complicity was used in different contexts and established my own conceptualization, the word and its meaning expanded beyond a simple notion of implication.

In my first chapter, I defined complicity as existing on a spectrum from direct to indirect involvement in people's lives. I understand complicity as a matter and marker of relationships determined by power. Our complicity might exist as involvement in oppressive relations and/or we may be complicit in each other's resistance to that oppression. In other words, complicity is a very complex conceptualization that is dependent upon context. It is not an either/or concept, one is neither complicit nor not complicit; instead, complicity is always relational and depending upon those relationships and the shifting contexts within the relationships, how one is complicit can change, but one can never avoid being complicit.

My own understanding of complicity was shaped by experiences in the classroom that made me "stop" and think about how I am connected to the issue at hand. As a White woman, when I teach about racism, I wanted to know what to do with my own participation in the systems that benefit me in complicated ways. Should I mark that awareness of my own complicity? How does my complicity shift based on understanding myself as intersectional? Do I use my complicity as strategy in teaching about these systems, as a story to bring more depth to conversations that exist in the discourses of the social justice classroom?

I ask, in this study, how teachers navigate complicity within their pedagogical practices. Part of my desire to understand this is due to my own struggles of what to do with my complicity in the systems I teach against. I looked to teacher/scholars, my participants, to see how they talked about complicity. How do they conceptualize complicity in discourses about pedagogies aimed toward social justice? I want to know how Kumashiro or McPhail, Applebaum or Fels defined complicity. What about their experiences in and outside of the classroom shaped their

knowing of complicity? I asked all of my participants to define complicity and by starting with their own definitions of complicity at the beginning of our interviews, they established a base of understanding to build upon.

Mark McPhail:

McPhail is one of two participants who writes directly about complicity in their work. (Applebaum is the other.) McPhail's published definitions and mappings of complicity are greatly cited. His definition of complicity, as published in the *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*, states that complicity theory begins with how "individuals or groups that are at odds fail to see how their positions are implicated in each other's" (McPhail, 2009, p. 160). While I will discuss complicity as a discourse of implication in my discourses of complicity section, it is important to think about how McPhail defines complicity based in the notion of involvement or implication. I asked McPhail to define complicity.

We are by virtue of the fact that we live in society shaped by racism and sexism complicit in those systems. Only when we can accept that complicity can we begin to understand and address its implications for language, life, and social interaction.

McPhail situated his conceptualization of complicity in the confines of language and said that we must understand complicity as a matter of rhetoric. He also reflected that one of the "issues that emerged in the early complicity work is that the people who were contesting oppressive practices where reinforcing those practices through the discourse that they were using." Thus, complicity happens through our language, how we talk or do not talk about something.

How we talk or do not talk about something creates the potential to do exactly what it is that we do not want to do, discursively. For example, McPhail (2009) writes about what he calls the theory of negative difference. This theory states that there are "subtle and sometimes

insidious ways that individuals are implicated in systems of domination by certain oppositional discursive strategies employed to critique those systems” (p. 160). McPhail’s understanding of complicity constructs complicity as inevitable, even when we create discourses of resistance and critique; we implicate ourselves through the very language we use to resist it. In our interview, McPhail repeated this notion: “This is the thing about complicity. You don’t get out of complicity.” McPhail’s conceptualization of complicity, as he spoke about it in our interview, situated complicity as first and foremost, a matter of language and secondly one of implication.

Kevin Kumashiro

When asked how he conceptualized complicity, Kumashiro said,

Complicity is living, and thinking, and navigating in ways that ... I was going to say comply, but that seemed redundant ... reinforce, that bring to life, that manifest, that allow to play off unchallenged these many forms of injustices that are already permeating society. So that way of thinking about complicity is that we are already complicit, or we are possibly already complicit, so the challenge of anti-oppressive education is to rattle that starting point really.

Kumashiro’s understanding of complicity connects to McPhail’s in grounding complicity as something that already is, something that we already are. Framing his conception of complicity as inevitable established the understanding that any thinking about complicity in pedagogies aimed at justice, must be rooted in the acknowledgement that complicity is always a matter to contend with. Yet, in his conceptualization of complicity, Kumashiro remarked that it evolves and transforms.

It’s actually the case that in different contexts racism can take on a different life. It can look and operate differently, so it’s ever-evolving. It’s highly situated, highly temporal,

highly context-bound. The same with, then, our complicity. Our complicity isn't about there is a racism, and we need to... challenge it. No. It's actually the case that racism or any ism is going to be evolving and taking on different life as we move through life, and as we enter these spaces. Challenging oppression in a particular state will actually mean that oppression will begin to transform and look differently, so it's [complicity] ever-evolving. It's very generative. It's very ... I don't know what the word is, but it's very much impossible to say that there is an end point.

Kumashiro's connection of complicity to racism and understanding how racism shifts and evolves depending upon how we talk about it or challenge it, also reflects McPhail's conceptualization in that it is discursively constructed. Complicity, in Kumashiro's opinion, is transformational and generative; it changes once it is named.

Lyn Fels

Lyn Fels also recognized the generative nature of complicity in her conceptualization, and conceived of complicity as “calling us to attention to values. Then that calls us to attention, well whose values? Then it just calls us right down to the heart of everything...which is how do we live together?” Therefore, Fels understands complicity as a marker of relations; complicity calls attention to values and in this calling of attention to, a connection or mindful action is generated with the aim to understand how are we to live together when we are connected in these complicated ways. Fels expanded her conceptualization of complicity as a “call to attention to” by thinking about complicity as “moments...that tug on your sleeve.” She goes on to raise the questions “how do we awaken ourselves to A) even notice those moments, then B) to attend to them and reflect on them because those tugs are arriving for a reason? We can blindly or boldly or complicitly walk by them.” I explore this further in my analysis and implications but it is

worth raising now: Can these “tugs” act as a way of navigating complicity in pedagogies aimed towards justice? Can we create those moments that cause tugs in our pedagogies and if so, is this “calling attention to” our relationships a way of pedagogically marking and dealing with complicity?

Deanna Fassett

Deanna Fassett understood complicity as

Kind of un-reflective complicity. Like, I imagine there are people out there who are intentionally supportive of causes and individuals, and policies that are harmful to people. I think most people are trying to be good people in the world. I don't think anyone sets out to be the villain of their own story. You know. So, I think that complicity in my case is a kind of unawareness of the consequences of your actions.

Understanding complicity as unawareness expresses the complicated and varied ways that complicity takes shape and form in our actions and discourses. If we are unaware of something then does that mean we are accountable to it? Fassett said, “the most common way I talk about it [complicity] is to talk about when we are implicated in something.” Therefore, if one is implicated in something, they may not even be aware of this implication. This creates an interesting dilemma or opportunity in pedagogies aimed toward justice. How do you recognize your own complicities and then, how do you recognize the complicities in others? In my conversation with McPhail, he stated, “Actually, you're always complicit. Only through recognizing your complicity can you realize that you are implicated.” Therefore, you must first have awareness of your complicity in order to understand how you are implicated.

Cris Mayo

Cris Mayo thinks of complicity in more than one way; therefore she asserted that there are different kinds of complicity.

There's a kind of complicity in how you view the world but I think there's something else going on too which is that we're just so shaped by institutions that whether you call it a form of knowledge or a form of complicity I think it matters whether you're trying to say, "Is it active?" And you have to take responsibility for it or is it so endemic that sometimes you can't see it. I do think that's where we get to it in our social justice classes.... because we're used to looking at complicities. We get students who have never even realized they are implicated in any of these systems.

In Mayo's assessment of complicity, she brings in the notion of an "active" complicity and also mentions that there are times that you are unaware of complicity. She went on to say,

I think there are other complicities that are much more subtle and I'm sure that ... the way I'm speaking is how a white, fairly well educated person speaks with a certain self-assurance, with a decision to make distinctions, with a willingness to go on at length. I think that's a complicity in the system that's given me a go-ahead to do that. I do tend to do it and maybe should be more reflexive about it... I think institutions play through us in ways we don't always recognize.

In recognizing how her identity impacts the ways in which she is complicit, Mayo marks how people are complicit differently based on who they are. Mayo also regards the importance of institutions as vehicles of complicity that we participate in. Lastly, Mayo connects complicity to discourse in commenting that "languages obviously plays with us in ways we don't recognize."

Complicity, as discursively constructed, is not always recognizable and this understanding really is important when thinking about complicities in pedagogies.

Barbara Applebaum

Barbara Applebaum, in her own contributions to thinking about complicity in the context of teacher education, declined to offer an explicit definition. Instead, Applebaum said that her understanding of complicity focused on

people who think “we are good”; whether it’s about whiteness or heteronormativity, it could be men who think they are good... then I have to try to expose how, even though they think they are good, they are still perpetuating injustice, even when they’re good. Even through the ways they are good, which is often shocking for them.

Applebaum’s focus on intentions in her conceptualization of complicity is important especially because she is drawing on discourses of “good” and “bad” that in her writing, she argues, is missing the point and falls prey to binary thinking. She said, in our interview, “I’m interested in teaching all my students... they’re all teachers, they’re all going into the world thinking that they’re not the problem. The idea of complicity is to start off showing them they are the problem.” This way of thinking of complicity as the problem that we all are or have, resists the good/bad dichotomy because it does what all of my participants observed, it implicates everyone in a complicity that is inevitable yet different depending on who you are. Applebaum went on to declare that “complicity is the starting point of ethics. It’s only the starting point. I don’t think it’s the end point.”

Summary

Recognizing complicity is the starting point of thinking about how we are in relation to. They all, in one way or another, inferred that complicity, or coming to understand complicity, is

an unending process that calls attention to how we are connected, thus how we are implicated in each other's lives. Their definitions of complicity, shaped by their own experiences, overlap in ways that I believe are important to note. First, conceptualizations of complicity are very context specific. Second, each participant remarked that complicity is inevitable, or as William Ayers describes it "I think it's [complicity] bubbling up all the time." Third, complicity is many things, an action, a marker or "tug," something that we are unaware of most of the time and when we are made aware of it, it brings us down a new path of consideration. Being made aware of complicity causes us to become aware of how we are connected and in relation to people, systems, and institutions. Understanding complicity as it pertains to social justice pedagogies causes us as teachers to think about these connections and draw upon them in our teaching. Complicity, as a calling attention to, offers us ways to teach about systemic oppression through the frame of relationality, starting with our students and extending out from there.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCOURSES OF COMPLICITY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Introduction

The conceptual framework I created, discourses of complicity, provided a comprehensive lens that allowed me to analyze my data. The conversations I had the privilege to engage in with my eight participants, when looked at in connection to their writing, illuminated how scholars make meaning of complicity through language and within the context of pedagogy. My goal in looking at how scholar/teachers talk about complicity is to understand how they navigate it, what they do with it in their pedagogies, and if there was a way to use complicity as a pedagogical strategy in teaching towards a social justice aim.

The conceptual framework, partially constructed from their ideas and words, is the skeleton of this study, that which gives the body support. The interview data (the transcripts of the conversations I engaged in with Lyn Fels, Kevin Kumashiro, Mark McPhail, Deanna Fassett, Barbara Applebaum, Cris Mayo, William Ayers and Marcelo Diversi) are the flesh that give substance to the frame. I cannot express enough how amazing my interviews were for me on a personal and political level. Personally, I had the opportunity to talk to people I admire through their written work and ask them about the things that “tug at my sleeve” in regards to complicity and pedagogy. Politically, I learned about how teacher/scholars teach, I learned their strategies and heard their stories of experience, and I want to share this knowledge because I believe the knowledge my participants shared in conversation is useful in thinking about how we navigate complicity in our pedagogies.

There are a couple of brief observations I want to share before analyzing my data based on the four discourses of complicity: Relationality, Consciousness/Awareness, Responsibility, and Inevitability/Implicature. The politics of analyzing whole, embodied conversations and

selecting what to include and what to leave out, is challenging to say the least. As our research shapes us, we shape our research. The difficulty of taking a conversation and shifting the contextual experience of it while attempting to remain true to the “heart” of it, was somewhat unsettling. I was just having conversations, right? Actually, I take the responsibility of having these conversations very seriously and what I do with the words spoken to and with me, is political. I only hope that I can share how powerful these conversations were and attempt to highlight what happens when we center complicity in conversations regarding social justice and pedagogy.

Another important thing to note is that the discourses of complicity, while conceptualized as separate, overlap so tightly, it was challenging to apply them to conversations where responsibility and implication could not be taken apart. Or where inevitability and relationality existed together, so tightly bound that I found it difficult to even find a language of analysis that functioned to express all the layers and depths. Please keep in mind that my conceptual framework is a map and like most maps, not all paths are clearly charted. Therefore, what emerged is only one path among many and what remains are the uncharted possibilities of direction.

Relationality: Relation to World, Self, and Others

Through the lens of relationality, the conceptual framework marks that complicity is a matter of relations. One cannot be complicit alone, complicity is relational; thus one must be complicit to another or with another. Complicity is a marker that when brought to the attention of those engaged in complicit relationships (I argue all relationships are complicit), marks that in fact, there is a relation and forces a consideration of how and why the relation exists. The discourse of relation to self, world, and others (relationality) illuminates complicity as a signifier

of the relationship (the signified). There are several ways that my participants talked about relationality and complicity. They spoke of encounters as a matter of relation where complicity arises. They spoke of betweenness as a space that emerges from acknowledgement of how one is related or connected to others and systems.

Relationality as Encounter

Lyn Fels spoke about teaching as “a risky endeavor, a risky encounter” and discussed that part of the riskiness of teaching is coming into relationships or presence. The encounter of relationships brings one into the presence of how they are related. This is a space where teachers can ask questions about how we are complicit and the role of complicity in this pedagogical encounter. Lyn Fels spoke of the encounter as a way to ask, “Who do I become in your presence? What learning arises for me in your presence?” If we are to think about this in the context of complicity, we become who we are in relation to someone else and how we are in relation is an extremely important part of the encounter.

Deanna Fassett reflected that “at the most gritty level, if you think about complicity it implies relationship.” She observed that there is such a focus on individuality that students do not have to think about how they are in relation to others. She marked the importance of relationships:

To think of yourself as complicit, you have to think of complicit in what.... You can try to divorce it from people by talking about a social system, but the systems are individuals working in concert, like ants in an ant farm.... The second you call that logic forward, you already have to think about, “Well, what are my actions when I buy an iPhone? What is that doing in China? What is that doing to the environment? What is it doing?”

Fassett expressed that complicity can happen on the individual level, for it takes individual ants to build the farm, but all of these individual relationships or encounters lead to action; actions connect us to others. Fels thought of how we are so interconnected, that it is hard to decipher the individual from the group, the group from the system, etc. She said, “I think we’re in relationship with everyone.... We’re all interconnected and it’s like a spider’s web. You just touch one part of the spider’s web like a dew drop and the whole thing responds.” The response is an important factor in thinking about complicity because in marking complicity through relationality, how one responds is consequential. In pedagogies, response comes from the visceral—the body—and this shows how a pedagogy that deals with complicity must start with embodied knowing. What does this response feel like? Is it abrupt, angry, full of joy?

When we stop to think about how we are in relation and we take time to think about how we respond, there is so much that we can learn from such an encounter with complicity. Fels said, “I think what matters... is what is offered. What is received, and then...where do you go now with this encounter?” When we recognize the role of how we respond viscerally in pedagogies that have us think about how we are related to systemic oppression, we may think about our complicity differently, from a more embodied place. Fels (2010), writes, “Our response and action require us to be present and wide awake. We must be wary and aware of our own locations and complicity” (p. 2). Complicity calls attention to our presence, by a visceral response that Kumashiro names as “crisis” and Boler named as “discomfort,” regardless of how the body responds, the body responds and this is significant to think about pedagogically.

Betweenness

Complicity, as a matter of relations, happens in a very particular space, the space of the in-between. Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira wrote about this space in *Betweener Talk*

(2009). They defined betweenness as “a rare space where all humans can find communality,” yet, more than communality happens in the in-between spaces (p. 25). By marking our complicity, we are able to think about how we are in relationships and what occurs between us and others or us and systems. We could be connected by oppressive relations and if so, what happens between us to make that happen. We must also recognize the spectrum or “continuum” of complicity because we cannot conceptualize relation via an either/or frame. We must look to the encounter and do as Fels suggests: “pay attention to the in-betweenness and what emerges in that moment of encounter.” The question is not so much is this an oppressive or anti-oppressive relation, but instead, what kinds of relations emerge between us and what are the consequences of those relations. How does power impact what we bring to the encounter, as ourselves? In other words, how do our identities and social locations emerge from/impact our encounters? Questions such as these have potential to arise in pedagogies that mark relationality and name it complicity.

Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira (2009) observe that identities are what happen between people. In other words, identities emerge as a consequence of encounters. While Diversi and Moreira recognize that betweenness marks a space of communality, it also marks the space of difference and according to Kumashiro, we do not handle that well pedagogically.

A lot of multicultural education and diversity training, especially when it's approached very simplistically, is based on the idea that I need to learn about other people so that I can see how at the core we are all the same... We all bleed. We all love, and in some ways, I appreciate that. There is a usefulness in this politics of sameness... However, that cannot be the only way that we think about it. Right? Because what that basically is saying is that the goal is to see how others are like me. What I actually need to be doing

is learning about others to trouble how I see me... When I bring this to complicity, part of this is about, yes, education needs to strive to get people to recognize how not only their ways of navigating the world, not only their ways of relating to other people, but even their sense of self and their self-identification can be very complicit with the many isms that are out there.

For Kumashiro, these between spaces of relationality not only mark what you have in common via the lens of how you see others, but more importantly, these spaces can also trouble how others see you. Discourses of complicity that use relationality as a means of marking connection, do so by calling attention to how one relates to others. This requires that you think about yourself as in relation and recognize what Kumashiro points out that one's "sense of self and self-identification can be very complicit." The discourses of my participants reveal that this type of awareness of relation is perhaps best thought of as a moment of encounter. They also suggest that relationality, when centered, calls us to the attention of complicity.

Awareness/Consciousness

Complicity is born in the in-between, as a consequence of encounter. Power influences our encounters, and thus impacts how we are complicit. The intersections of our identities and our social locations determine how power affects our encounters. If we are not conscious of how our identities and power impact our lives and how identities and power are a matter of discourse, we cannot have what Applebaum calls a "critical awareness of the ways in which we are implicated through our language and through our practices" (2006, p. 362). Awareness, as a discourse of complicity, highlights the dynamics of identity and power and calls our attention to relationships.

Both Lyn Fels and Kevin Kumashiro expressed that complicity exists in our language and in our use of particular discourses. They both used the word “script” to point to an unawareness of the power of language. Fels commented that

We’re just playing out the scripts that we have embodied and lived and been taught for so long, we don’t even see them. I’m the only person in the room, I’m a different color or a different sexual orientation and I’m not recognizing others in the room or I’m not bringing that critical component of who I am into the classroom.

Fels comments that we are so shaped by the language that we “embody” the language and don’t even recognize it. Not seeing how language shapes us, creates an unawareness. Fels links this unawareness to not asking the question “what matters?” She said, “I think once you identify what matters, you can start bringing those critical pedagogical lenses of visionality and attend to that because that’s what matters.” Words such as “identify,” “lenses,” and “visionality,” signify being able to see or not see and point to the necessity of recognition.

Fels also points out that people are unaware of what they bring into spaces; an awareness of this is critical so that we can mark connection. Perhaps the connection, or “encounter” as Fels described earlier, is what matters in pedagogies that deal with systemic oppression. Bringing awareness to language as script changes the way we mark those relations within the context of a discourse of complicity that centers what we “see” or do not see.

Kumashiro also brought up scripts in the sense that regardless if they are situated in oppression or even anti-oppression, the scripts will always be partial, there will be no “whole” story in a moment or complete understanding of that script.

I think the scripts, even the anti-oppressive ones, are partial and our terms. Even if you find the impartial or impartial ones, our challenge is to figure out how to dive into that

contradiction and say, if there will always be partiality, how do I work that partiality, rather than wish it away?

No matter if one uses language that attempts to critique oppression, by using that language they perpetuate it. Mark McPhail wrote, “the belief that individuals can respond to oppression without recognizing their complicity in its perpetuation fails to consider the political and linguistic complexities that circumscribe the system” (1994, p. 2). The linguistic complexities, as understood in McPhail’s use of the Theory of Negative Difference, exists in “the very language we use to call that discourse into question” (p. 6). Thus, Kumashiro says it is critical for us to have an awareness of the impartiality of our scripts, specifically in regards to those that we employ in the name of social justice. Kumashiro also posits that we must have awareness of the contradiction that arises from partiality and must work to maintain that awareness rather than “wish it away.” The script is a narrative that we do not write ourselves, thus it will always be partial because it will always be from another person’s point of view.

Fassett also spoke of the importance of being aware of language use. It is important to remember that Fassett defined complicity as “unawareness,” therefore, her conceptualization of complicity starts with not being able to recognize or have awareness of relations and actions. Fassett spoke of this in the context of teaching by remarking, “You should care about words. Nothing is ever just a word... Everything about it means something. Sure, there are spaces where you can turn off that kind of intense scrutiny, but I don’t think the classroom is one of them.” An intense scrutiny of language, specifically in the pedagogical context, is important because it has potential to connect teachers and students to the impact of their words, to a recognition that the language we use puts us into relation to not only each other, but to concepts and systems. These relations produce actions.

Fels spoke about awareness as a recognizing that creates action. She said, “What is really critical is...the recognition of complicity. If we don’t recognize it, we don’t name it. Then we won’t take action and then our willingness... to accept that we have a responsibility to take action.” Fels points out that we must first recognize complicity in order to take action against oppression. This recognition centers relation because one must think about how they are complicit through how they are in relation. One way that the recognition of complicity happens is through something called a “stop” and Fels explains this using the metaphor of sleepwalking.

Don’t sleepwalk through this. Wake up “You’re sleepwalking” That’s how David Applebaum’s ‘stop’ moment really speaks to me. Because there’s always those moments, right, that tug at your sleeve and so my work really is just like ‘how do we awaken ourselves to A) even notice those moments, then B) to attend to them and reflect on them because those tugs are arriving for a reason.

Awareness of complicity creates a consciousness about relationality through an awakening where one has to “stop” and respond to this awakening or recognition. The “stop” marks a moment of encounter that creates awareness of that encounter. Fels described a “stop” moment as a “moment of recognition of complicity.”

When Fels told me about the “stop,” I thought of how Kumashiro (2000b) writes about the crisis that students experience when they begin to trouble knowledge. The crisis is caused when the students become stuck in their awareness of their “own privileges and complicities with oppression” (p. 58). I believe, like the stop, the crisis is a “moment of recognition of complicity.” Though the word *stop* insinuates a moment of no action, Fels remarked that in fact, “There is never a non-action. We are always in action... People think, ‘Oh it’s a stop, so I stop.’

No, you're moving... It's a movement." The key to experiencing the stop or crisis as a moment of recognizing complicity is having an awareness of that recognition and deciding what to do.

Both Applebaum and Kumashiro spoke to me of the necessity of vigilance. Vigilance is a heightened sense of awareness. According to them, it is an essential component of not only recognizing complicity, but maintaining that recognition. Pedagogically, Applebaum centers a vigilance of complicity in her teaching. She said of her students,

What I do leave them with is the idea that they have to be always vigilant...Being vigilant is also a doing. It's not the end step, but vigilance is what I can leave them with.

Which is really like saying, but not saying, you're always complicit.

Applebaum stresses that a part of maintaining that vigilance in her work is going in with an awareness that complicity is always present. She stated that "I always assume my complicity is there, even if I don't see it. You see how there's multiple layers." The discourse of complicity that focuses on what we see or do not see also contains this necessity to maintain vigilance of the fact that though we may not see it, it is always there.

Kevin Kumashiro also speaks of the vigilance to maintain awareness, specifically in anti-oppressive pedagogical spaces. Due to the contradictory nature of speaking about our own relations to oppression while also teaching against it, he observed that

it's so hard for us to see that we might actually be making things worse, but that's the nature of the kind of oppression and activism, is that we are always working in these very, not only contradictory spaces, but these very generative spaces. That's why we need to constantly be vigilant and possibly rework the very initiatives that we are pushing forward.

Kumashiro also cautioned me that because these spaces are contradictory and generative, what one does see and does not see is based on one's relation to the specific oppression.

When I'm challenging racism, am I causing, am I contributing to not just the perpetuation of patriarchy, but the generation, the creation, the production of a new type of patriarchy, a new manifestation of patriarchy in this anti-racist state? I would argue that it is also always happening and maybe that's where we begin to miss, that's where we begin to overlook how oppressions stand out, because we look around and we say, "Oh, I don't see what I normally define as patriarchy in this space, and therefore it doesn't exist."

That's not actually accurate at all. My point is to say that you're not seeing patriarchy because patriarchy looks a little bit different in this space, and you're the reason for that difference.

The necessity of vigilance requires that one continues to question their relation to oppression. I believe this connects to what Kumashiro pointed out earlier regarding the partiality of knowing. One will not always be able to see or know every aspect of that relation but one must remain vigilant that complicity is always there.

One of the ways that participants spoke about creating awareness pedagogically and striving to instigate vigilance of complicity within teaching was by connecting the teacher to the students through their own experiences of complicity. Marcelo Diversi shared that teachers have their own "blind spots" regarding complicity.

I think in the framing of a classroom implication to imagine possibilities, is a way to begin to develop language for it and in the process of developing language, we have to confront our own, first of all, blind spot... We cannot see all of them, but our own business and our own exclusionary practices and our own ways to justify why... We all

can claim social justice while at the same time... justifying why you exclude some people.

Diversi suggests that one way teachers can create awareness of complicity is by marking themselves as complicit and using this as a space of inquiry within their pedagogies.

First of all, I make myself present. I take risks myself right away from the beginning and I care. Some of my own tensions and complicity with the systems, the advantages that I have, so being male, being heterosexual, being from an educated class, and my upbringing and so it's not that I try to stretch my conditionality on my students, that usually doesn't get the message across, but I use to show that I am both part of the system that I'm trying to criticize and I'm trying to change it. So that's the only chance we have. We are all part of this in some way, so we need to work at constantly, in the self-reflection, how we are complicit in the colonizing framework and how we can contribute with ourselves. So constantly trying to identify blind spots we have and continue to work and revisit them, but with always a target of trying to reach that place where we can talk about the other, whoever my other may be and then I give examples...who the others are and how I try to respect their own experiences while at the same time, I have to negotiate my own aversion to a lot of the message that it's tied to and a lot of the exclusionary practices in a sense that of okay, now you can see.

By making complicity visible, perhaps the students will work through their own blind spots and recognize their own while more importantly, recognizing that complicity connects everyone into relation.

Fassett also shared a similar sentiment. She remarked of her own teaching,

Helping them understand that I participate in those things, I still do even when I am aware of them, even though I am trying my damndest, I still fall into them. That is the thing. It helps them to know then a little bit about power and how Foucault talks about “Power aligns its own production. . . .” Institutions work in such a way that it is difficult to call out the complicity, I think. People don’t want to think about that and institutions don’t want you thinking about that either. Even when you do think about it, and get a hold of it, it can be easily corrupted back again. . . . So it is really trying to help students understand that in their engaging their process of understanding where their participation is, and the consequences of their participation, and understanding or complicity if you will. Understanding that you can’t act on all of the ways in which you are complicit all at the same time. I think that they find that deeply overwhelming.

Fassett shares that there is pedagogical significance in marking oneself as a teacher as complicit. She shares, however, that this is never an easy task because connecting one relation as complicit only marks another way, which is overwhelming. Teachers must consider the role that marking their own complicity can play within their pedagogies. “In teaching, what I would want to do is help people understand that everyone does that, but if you don’t understand that is happening then you cannot make any changes at all.” Teachers cannot stop at sharing their complicity as a means to recognize everyone is complicit. They must find ways to use their complicity as a marker or “stop” and then work towards action.

Cris Mayo shares an idea aimed at creating awareness via “mapping” complicities through mapping relations.

I think the problem is just the problem of linear time. I mean if you were to take a classroom. . . and I’ve thought about trying to do something like this and it would have to

be almost a physical sort of mapping project where everyone could sit in a circle, place their origins along trajectories and lines that crossed another. I'm really thinking like you would play with string and tacks. You would try to map out those histories which still wouldn't get you to the particularities of individual family, community, and individual experiences. Then try to have a conversation where you could say, "The land we're on was stolen from these people. Your people died in the mines under this land. Your people were stolen from Africa to make this happen on this land. The women in all your societies experienced differential relations to community power in ways that informed one another because people were in contact." You would bring out those differences.

Mayo, through conceptualizing a mapping exercise, attempts to create a strategy that marks complicity by raising awareness of how our relations intersect. After sharing this idea, Mayo raised a question that I think is important to consider when thinking about complicity. She asked, "Why are we so attached to some purity of trajectory?" Perhaps it is this framing of relation in our pedagogies, this attachment to a linear understanding of relations, which creates the blind spots. By literally mapping ourselves onto each other's lives, we might pull out these connections and make visible our complicity.

Awareness, through vigilance, through a recognition of what Diversi calls "blind spots" works as a discourse of complicity in that we must grapple with how our language is partial, thus how our recognition of complicity is always partial. This partiality is connected to how our relations shift and change depending upon historical, cultural, and social context. Yet, it is in understanding this partiality that we create possibilities of "seeing" how we relate through how we are complicit in each other's lives. Being aware of how we are complicit means understanding that our complicity is always there, thus, it is inevitable.

Inevitability/Implicature

The discourses of inevitability and implicature go hand in hand. In these discourses, complicity is inevitable; there is no way out and because of this, you are implicated in relationships that produce different issues of complicity. Inevitability and implicature are part and parcel of the other discourses of complicity. Often in my conversations with my participants, were used in conjunction with awareness, relationality, and responsibility. Teasing these discourses apart only serves the purpose of reiterating how these discourses work together, overlap, and are entwined. McPhail marked the interdependence of the discourses of inevitability and implicature when he said, “Actually, you’re always complicit. Only through recognizing your complicity can you realize that you are implicated.” A recognition of complicity must be present before one can begin the process of understanding that they are implicated and how. McPhail broke down both inevitability of complicity and implicature by offering an analogy using alcoholism.

The disease of alcoholism offers a useful analogy. It is only by recognizing and accepting that one is an alcoholic that one can address the disease. When applied to social phenomena such as racism and sexism, complicity theory posits that we can begin to address these conditions only by acknowledging that they always influence our language and behavior, even when we believe they do not. The notion to always be colorblind or gender blind, that’s a form of self-deception. We are by virtue of the fact that we live in a society shaped by racism and sexism, complicit in those systems. Only

when we can accept that complicity can we begin to understand and address its implications for language, life, and social interaction.

Implication is not only about how one is in relation to another but it is also about how we use language, symbols, and the meanings we assign to these different interactions. Fassett spoke of the way she used the word *implicated* instead of *complicity* but considers both terms perhaps too jargony.

The term I use is *implicated*, but *complicity* is a good word too. It is interesting. I would love to try with students to figure out quite a few different terms, and see what those carry forward for students. Like, what do they imagine? What is their reaction to the different terminology? I think one of those might resonate more than another. I also wonder if *complicity* and *implicatedness* or *implicature*...would be too heady. Too up in the head.

I think that using the term *complicity* is all encompassing of the four discourses of my conceptual framework. When you use the word *complicity*, relationships, implication, awareness and responsibility are all called to attention. Regardless, Fassett says the most important thing about *implicature* is that “*implicatedness* asks me to think about ‘Well who am I hurting and who am I helping.’” The discourses of *complicity* center that relation in which one is implicated in the life of the other and such awareness of that relation must consider what is emerging as result of the encounter of that relation.

Identity has everything to do with how we are implicated and Mayo suggested that we can't make a slippery slope...I think on the one hand you've got the Combahee River Collective statement to tell us not to hierarchize oppression and on the other hand...we're

probably going to need to have a conversation that says...you know, some complicities actually are considerably...

Mayo, although she did not finish her thought, was marking that how we are implicated in complicity is different based on power. Our identities and the language we use to construct the meaning regarding our identities, implicate us in relation to others in many ways. Mayo was alluding to the notion that there is no hierarchy of oppression, but when it comes to complicity, there is a hierarchy of how one can be complicit. Thus, complicity is inevitable, but how we are implicated matters.

Applebaum spoke about how there are often denials of complicity through claims of innocence. She said that “we’re never innocent, any way you turn, so just get used to it.” This denial of innocence represents a discursive move to mark complicity as inevitable. The inevitability of complicity takes us from the damaging frame of innocence and moves us into implicature. Applebaum went on to say that “our belief in innocence is what prevents us from staying in trouble and staying in the discomfort.” We must recognize the inevitability of complicity so that we may do what Kumashiro (2000b) does with his students: trouble knowledge and tend to the crisis that results from the realization that we are all implicated, though in different ways, in complicity with systemic oppression.

This understanding of complicity as inevitable is important in thinking how to work towards social justice even as we are implicated in injustice. Kumashiro talked a lot about this, specifically through thinking about complicity as contradiction.

The case is, we will always occupy contradictory spaces. As an anti-oppressive activist, I cannot help but to be complicit with other forms of injustice, and I also cannot help but to be a contributor to the generation of new forms of oppression. Again, there’s a

homophobia out there that I'm contributing to. It might actually indicate that as I challenge racism, I'm actually helping to generate a new manifestation of homophobia in a different activist's space. I do think that it's important for people to see that anti-oppressive teaching, anti-oppressive activism, it will always involve occupying different spaces, including complicity, including agencies, including liberation, as well as including resistance.

Kumashiro's observation is crucial in thinking about how we navigate complicity in pedagogies of social justice because we must deal with the fact that complicity is inevitable and produces contradiction. The contradiction arises from resisting oppression while simultaneously participating in it. This is a conundrum and it is up to teachers to think about how to use this contradictory space of complicity in their own pedagogies. Applebaum suggested that teachers question what she calls the "truth of the statement" by reckoning with the language we use to talk about injustice.

I'm not saying that the truth is not important...it's not always easy to find contradiction. It's really to bring them [students] up to the level to show them that it doesn't matter if there is a contradiction there or not. It's a matter of what are the effects of what you are saying? Which is a really different project. Then throughout the whole class, the next week we talk about colorblindness, and we already are beginning to have the tools...not from the level of "is it true, should we be colorblind" but "what does it mean to say I don't see color?" I keep doing that for every topic we hit in class. That's how I get them also to see their complicity. The discursive level is where a lot of their complicity and the micro-aggressions that they perpetuate. It's not their intentions, it's their practices.

Complicity is inevitable and it is through the recognition of complicity as such, that we begin to understand how we are implicated in each other's lives. What do our relations produce and how do we navigate the often contradictory spaces that we must occupy in attempting to resist an implication that is oppressive? These questions point to the struggle, the crisis, the trouble, that thinking about complicity often provokes but a consideration of complicity also puts us in a space where we recognize that we have agency and a responsibility to change how we are implicated.

Responsibility/Accountability

Implicature draws us into the recognition of how we are or can be accountable to our complicities. There is a certain level of responsibility that one must acquire in order to take those "stop" moments of the encounter and act. Action requires a belief that there is something to act in response to and it is the task of teachers to make these connections in their pedagogies. Out of the four discourses of complicity that make up my conceptual framework, responsibility is the most enmeshed with the others. Complicity marks relation, and this relation creates an awareness of how you are in relation or how you are implicated in each other's lives. Once this awareness of implication occurs and the recognition that complicity is inevitable, issues of accountability arise. What are you going to do about it? Mayo remarks

If we're going to ask people to take responsibility, they have to know what they're taking responsibility for, but they have to have a path into considering how to take that responsibility and that path is a pedagogical relation.

It is essential for teachers who practice pedagogies aimed towards social justice to think about how to create pathways of responsibility and accountability. Applebaum (2007) asked "what models of responsibility obscure white complicity in systemic racism and what models of

responsibility expose such complicity and encourage a fuller engagement with the fact of racial inequality in our schools and our social worlds?” (p. 34). The idea that there are different models of responsibility connects to the fact that how we are complicit differs depending upon who we are and the contexts of our relations. Mayo said that it is difficult to take apart how we embody different complicities simultaneously. She said, “Their [students] individual complicity...it’s so wrapped up in institutional complicities and institutional practices.” Complicity is complicated and this goes back to how we must recognize that we will always occupy contradictory spaces in our pedagogies.

Teaching and learning within the context of social justice pedagogies requires that teachers ask what ways can teachers offer our students to think about responsibility in the context of complicity. Mayo reflects

I think when you think about responsibility, you also have to think about what are the actions. Are the actions a change in attitude? Are they a change in the way that you’re going to teach about an issue? Are they literal direct action on the problem to help to come to a solution? Are they facilitating other people’s actions by fundraising for them?...I almost wonder if we need larger vocabularies for each of the sub-headings as the things we’re trying to do so that paralysis is not the first response.

Similar to Fassett’s earlier observation, Mayo recognizes that grappling with complicity within the context of responsibility is overwhelming, not just for the students but for the teacher as well.

How can the teacher use these moments of pondering responsibility to create actions? Ayers says

One of the things I learned as a teacher, and one of the things that drives my teaching still to this day, is the idea that I’m not standing above. I do have responsibilities to organize certain sayings, but once we organize it in a certain way, I’m shoulder to shoulder and we

are bringing a range of experiences to a problem, a question, a dialogue, but there is nobody in the room that has all the knowledge and is therefore dispensing it on the ignorant.

Ayers speaks about the role of the teacher as working with and alongside of the students in order to come to an understanding, a next question or action. Students and teachers are doing this together and there is no sitting back and watching your students do the work.

Complicity is relational, thus, an understanding of how one is responsible must emerge from a relational context and the classroom is a great place to do this. Fels used theatre as an example in how responsibility emerges from encounter. She said,

The spectator...you are not just sitting there watching. Same with the audience...You're not just sitting there watching. You're co-creating. Everyone is bringing their own experience, same with the teacher with the classroom. You've got 32 different possible understandings and co-creations of what you're offering. It's about space and holding the space and being responsible and the whole idea of responsibility and also the ability to respond because we're all at different places and abilities or even understandings.

Fels notes that even in thinking about accountability and responsibility, there is a responsibility in recognizing that everyone comes to their relations from different experiences and how we respond to those differences is important. If teachers desire to navigate complicity through an invocation of responsibility, they must do so with the understanding that each person, including themselves, brings different complicities, thus different ways to respond to their complicities, to the classroom space.

Fassett said that in her pedagogical practice, "part of getting at complicity with them [students] is helping move from actions of individuals, individual racist, individual sexist,

individual homophobic acts, and moving them towards systems.” I think the same could be said of responsibility. Moving students from notions of individual responsibility towards collective responsibility opens up possibilities of multiple actions and alleviates a bit of the “paralysis” that Mayo mentioned.

Summary

I constructed my conceptual framework from an in-depth literature review of how educators who write about social justice pedagogy, explicitly or implicitly talk about complicity. I found that there are four discourses where complicity exists: Relationality, Awareness/consciousness, Inevitability/Implicature, and Responsibility. After engaging in conversations with my eight participants, taking the transcribed interviews and coding them using my conceptual framework, and rereading my participants’ work in order to apply their written words to their spoken words within my conceptual frame, I found that my participants absolutely talk about complicity using these four discourses.

Our conversations considered how teachers and students think about themselves in relation to each other and the world and what this means to their pedagogies. Having to think about complicity created an awareness of relation and this in turn created awareness of implicature. How someone is implicated in complicity depends upon their identities and social location because how one is complicit has everything to do with power. As this is a Critical Discourse Analysis of complicity, language is central to understanding how we as teachers and learners think about and communicate complicity. McPhail’s Theory of Complicity sets the groundwork of any conversation by marking complicity as a matter of discourse. As Fassett said earlier, “words matter” and therefore these discourses of complicity matter because they shift the way we think about ourselves in relation to others.

The importance of the in-between spaces, the spaces of the encounter or the spaces that a “stop” makes visible, is that it is within these spaces where complicity occurs. It is up to teachers, as my participants shared, to mark themselves and their own complicities as integral to any pedagogy aimed at working towards social justice. Not as a confessional act, as Applebaum highlighted in her thinking about innocence, but as a connective act, one that creates a generative space in between the students and each other, the students and their teacher, and finally themselves and their worlds. Such a pedagogy demands that teachers and students conjure an awareness of their relationalities and a vigilance that leads to a responsibility to act.

My conceptual framework, as a tool of Critical Discourse Analysis, revealed that the way teacher/scholars talk about complicity matters to their pedagogies. Their written words were only fleshed out more through my interviews and I was able to hear in their voices, their thoughts regarding complicity. I was able to ask them questions inspired by reading their work, and listen to their responses, hear them think out loud and ponder complicity along with me. One of the most rewarding aspects of this experience is finding that there are other discourses of complicity to ponder and in the next chapter I will introduce you to three discourses that were illuminated during my interviews.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EMERGENT DISCOURSES OF COMPLICITY

The discourses of complicity that emerged from my initial literature review of social justice pedagogies, revealed that complicity is discursively produced in explicit and implicit ways. These discourses do not stand alone and in fact, they work together in ways that are sometimes difficult to disentangle. Awareness is a necessary component of relationality and implicature arises from both. It has been a challenge to separate these discourses for the sake of this study and “package” them as discourses set a part from others. However, it is important to recognize the language teacher/scholars use in talking about complicity in ways that largely leave complicity unnamed or unmarked. It is the goal of this study to mark complicity and think about how teacher/scholars navigate complicity in their pedagogical practices.

The discourses of my conceptual framework shape so much of our understanding of complicity in the context of pedagogies aimed toward social justice. The framework, as a tool, highlights where complicity exists at the discursive level through the discourses of awareness, relationality, inevitability/implicature, and responsibility. What emerged from applying my conceptual framework to the transcripts of my interviews was that there are three discourses of complicity not accounted for in my original conceptualization. These discourses are nonduality/binary, choice, and imagination. Just as the discourses of responsibility, awareness, relationality, and inevitability call attention to complicity and vice versa, these discourses also mark the discursive spaces where complicity exists. My participants relied upon these discourses in thinking about how complicity calls attention to how we are in relation and how we think and act regarding these relations, specifically in the context of pedagogy.

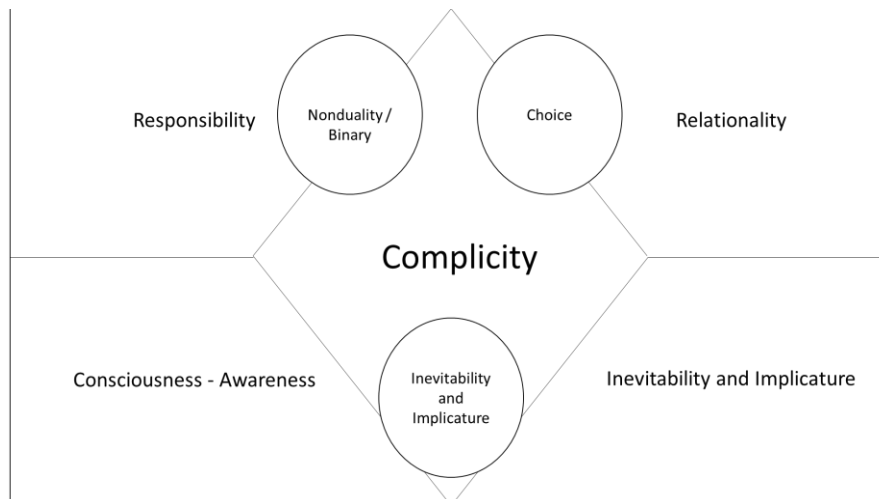


Figure 2

Choice

Fassett and Warren (2004) wrote of the importance of “the role of communication in shaping and constituting the conditions for the possibility of schooling outcomes” (p. 21) and I concur that communication shapes what happens in our school communities and in our classrooms. One of the discourses that emerged from conversations regarding complicity was the discourse of choice. This word and all that this word represents, shapes how we think about our role as teachers, our curriculum and even our relations with students and the broader school community. My participants brought choice up so often that I recognized that in order to contemplate complicity in our pedagogies, we must consider how we think about choice in our relations and actions. Lyn Fels shared how powerful the concept of choice is when thinking about how we navigate our complicity pedagogically. She said,

In teaching, the two big things is, I don’t have the choice. Right? This is the curriculum, this is what I have to teach, and then the other excuse is time. Rather by saying we have no choice, by saying we have no time... If I want to interrupt the script, and as the professor can I do this in a different way? Then there’s that moment... the choice of the

professor saying yes or no and then, Oh God, and then it gets complicated.... I don't think it's learned in teacher education. I think it's learned all the way through. Time, I think we are deliberately pressed for time so that we don't have time to make choices, to reconnect... We become complicit in our limitation of what might be called into action. Fels perceives choice as a "script," one in which teachers are limited by an either/or direction. What does teacher choice have to do with complicity? Choice, according to Fels, arises as a result of encounter (Fels, 2010). These encounters, the ones that are brought about through complicity, create space for those involved to contemplate how to respond to that encounter and this is where choice becomes tricky. If we are already given a script, as Fels mentioned, then we are given a limited set of choices. We can use this text or that one, we can choose this story or that one, we can respond to this student inquiry regarding race with this script or that one; yet, choice as agency is nowhere in these scripts and that, in many of my participants' opinions, is deliberate.

Deanna Fassett and I spoke of choice and how the notion of choice complicates our relations pedagogically and how we respond to these relations.

Choice is such a complex notion, right? ... So often people toss around choice like it is the solution to a problem and chances are, choice is sometimes the problem itself, right? Especially in educational context... Too much choice is not a better situation per say the incoming freshmen or in schools with school vouchers or things like that. Choice is really the problem. I think it is interesting... I guess maybe a way to think about it is to talk about agency... There is choice, but you can choose between Pepsi and Coke, right?.. Really where is agency in relation to choice? Seems like an important component.

Raising the issue of where is agency in relation to choice is important in thinking about complicity.

How can we think about complicity without recognizing the role agency plays in how and why we are complicit? William Ayers troubled the language of choice that many educators rely upon in their practices and in the policies that inform our practices and he, like Fassett, pointed to the importance of agency.

Choice is another one of those words that is lofted and used in a thousand ways. We talk about school choice today and what we are talking about is the creation of racist charter schools...In Chicago, Forrest Claypool, the superintendent, sends his kids to Francis Parker Progressive, a northside, beautiful private school. When he talks about choice, he's not talking about putting Francis Parker right next to DuSable, and saying to the parents "Choose which one you want." He's saying you can have a charter school that doubles down on the very qualities that fuck your kids up in the first place, or you can go to the shitty school that has the furnace busted and the windows broken. Word choice is important. You can't be a moral person or a free person unless you can see alternatives. IF you can't see alternatives, you can't make moral choices and you can't make free choices.

The way I often think about it with my teaching and social activism is that to be enslaved is to be controlled, judged, pushed around, measured, accounted for, or surveilled. All that is to be a slave. To be free is to break from all of that and the fundamental aspect of freedom that has to be foregrounded is agency. Now you can call that choice, although it's a little bit bigger idea...What I would argue to my students, again and again, is that to be a free person is to have agency and to exercise that agency.

It's not enough to say "I'm free because I can go home any way that I want to, but I'm stuck on this freeway because I freely chose to drive on the Eisenhower." That's bullshit. That makes no sense at all...In a sane world, how would we move ourselves around? How would we check one another? How would we become complicit in a sane world? That allows you to develop a deeper sense of possibility and the only time you can make amoral choice is when you can see a world, standing right next to the world as it is, that's a possible world...Otherwise, you can't make choices.

Ayers points to the limitations of choice and calls attention to the ways in which the word "choice" is used by those in power. Choice, particularly within discourses regarding schools and equity, becomes a limitation in that someone else determines for you what you can even choose from. This school or that one or this curriculum or that one, and nowhere in these choices, is a truly liberated space where people have agency to act in the way of their choosing. More importantly, the discourse of choice may veil that there are other options to begin with. Discourses of choice may even veil that people have agency within these complicities.

Mayo brought up that choice does not have to exist within limited frames. She commented that, "When I hear choice, I don't think it has to be neoliberal individualist choice. It can be the realization that there are options in which you might work with others to open other better choices for more people." How do we recognize options when we are so immersed in the limitations of the binary frame? This is where duality came up in my interviews regarding complicity.

Binary/Nonduality

If we are limited in the ways that we can think about our choices and this extends to the ways we think about our relations and the limitations of actions available to us, where do these

limitations come from? Discourses of complicity, particularly through the lens of the binary, offer us spaces to make visible these limitations and provide other possibilities in regards to complicity. Earlier in my study, I introduced Hytten and Warren's (2003) notion of the liminal space. A liminal space is "the margin between-it is the space of contradiction that is neither this, nor that, but somehow both" (Hytten & Warren, 2003, p. 330). In all of my conversations regarding complicity and the in-depth review of literature I have undertaken in this study, contradiction arises again and again as a central component of navigating complicity. Kevin Kumashiro made it clear that we will always "occupy contradictory spaces" and this is important because complicity exists and is the outcome of these contradictory spaces. Complicity exists in these liminal spaces; therefore, the teacher/scholars I interviewed claimed that we must address the liminal in order to navigate complicity pedagogically. The issue becomes that because we are so enmeshed in thinking about the world through binary lenses, it is difficult to teach something, to name something, to recognize something that does not fit in a dualistic frame. This is where the role of the "crisis" through encounter comes into play and where contradiction provides the potential of thinking about complicity as nondual.

Kumashiro had a lot to say regarding binary thinking. He commented that so much of what we learn in schools is taught under the guise of "common sense" and common sense "tells us that we should think about things in very binary ways." We are taught in the either/or's and the yes/no's but Kumashiro pointed out that "it's those binaries that are preventing us from doing the kinds of activist teaching that we all want to do." How does binary thinking keep us from doing activist teaching? Ayers believes that the issue with binary thinking has to do with contradiction. He said,

I think that it's very hard for human beings, particularly Americans, to think in contradiction or to think dialectically. It's very hard to hold opposing ideas in your mind. That's why the opposing idea that...I am the one and only and I am one of many, that's a very hard thing...I don't want to treat my class as a mob that I'm moving through the day, but I also can't say each individual is standing on a pedestal by himself. That's not possible. I think part of it is that we hate contradiction.

Ayers talked about seeing his students as both/and the one and only and one of many as a way to recognize the humanity of each person while also recognizing their collective humanity.

Although this seems to be contradictory, within the contradiction exists potential to see things as both/and not either or.

Complicity is illuminated by encounter, by having to recognize a relationship and the implications for that relationship. This encounter produces between spaces, spaces where our understanding of our complicity arises. Kumashiro spoke in great detail about how he understands the space between as a space that disrupts binaries.

When I think about disrupting binaries, I think about it in several ways. One is...that there's a space between these perceived dualities that can be the most productive spaces. It's like the space between being complicit and being challenging, with a space between teaching and learning...There's always extra things that I'm teaching, through the hidden curriculum, things I don't even realize I'm teaching when I'm teaching that's going to trouble what I'm teaching. There's always an excess.

The other reason that there's always a space between is because students are always looking through unique lenses. They're always interpreting things differently from one another because they're looking through their own childhood upbringing,

cultural background, educational experiences, idiosyncrasies, all that. It's why we can walk into a movie theatre and we're all going to have learned or reacted a little bit differently, because we're all looking through different lenses. The fact that teaching is always excessive is because of the hidden curriculum and partial, because of these unique lenses of the students, helps us to understand why teaching can never be the exact same thing as what the students learn... we think that successful teaching is when I close off that space. It's when I make what I'm teaching as close as possible to what students have learned... actually we should be diving into that difference and that space in between.

Disrupting binaries by "diving" into the between spaces of what it is you think you are teaching and what it is your students are learning create new possibilities of thinking about things. What if we think about complicity and dive into those spaces? Will new relations or possibilities of relations emerge? I believe that resisting the dualistic frame helps us to move towards these possibilities and I also believe that thinking about complicity in general, means thinking in ways that are nondual.

Kumashiro shared another way that he thought was useful in disrupting binaries and this involves a "third" way, so already it is clear that it goes against a dual either/or conceptualization.

Look, the space in between is one way that I think about disrupting binaries. Another way that I think about disrupting binaries is with what we might call the abject and that is like...the idea that...a binary works because of a very productive opposition. It's like, I can only understand "in" because there is a concept of "out." In fact these are productive binaries....I can only understand the good students because there are bad students, but that's a productive contradiction in a sense that when I define the good student, I'm

actually making all of these other students, or other ways of being a student, into the bad student. It's a productive thing...but there's another production that happens and there's another opposition and that is the opposition between the binary and a third party, which is called the abject. There can only be a black/white racial binary because there are all these other third ways of being raced, like abject ways of being.

The construction of the Asian-American identity within US race relations helps reinforce the black/white binary. It's not just that it's excluded from, it's actually defined in opposition to this third party. It's like you have male and female but you also have intersex and transgender, right? That's another way to think about how we deconstruct the binary. You not only look for those spaces in between, you also look for those necessary outside parties and it's when you dive into those that you can really begin to tease apart how the binaries are... hegemonic. They need them to exist in order for power structures to be maintained.

I never knew about the abject prior to this conversation, and this really shifted how I understood the spaces in-between. The irony is that even in trying to disrupt the binary, we maintain it. Nonduality, as a frame, cannot exist without duality, which ironically creates a crisis of contradiction. What Kumashiro suggests one can do in an anti-oppressive pedagogy is to remind students that we should not think about complicity in an either/or way. It can either be complicit or not. Maybe another framework that we could pose to students is there are multiple ways to relate to any form of oppression...in a very general way, we might talk about complicity, which is where you're going along with an oppression that already exists. There may be a counter step where you're intentionally trying to disrupt that oppression and I think that's the binary that people often see, I'm either with it, or

I'm not... Then we might say, can we imagine one, or two, or three other ways of relating to oppression?

A framework that allows for a more complex way to think about oppression as both/and instead of either/or, is a framework that utilizes complicity as a means to disrupt how we grapple with oppression in pedagogies of resistance. Marking complicity as a space that requires thinking about how we are connected or in relation to a person, a class, a system-disrupts the dualistic frames that often reduce conversations surrounding oppression to oppressed/oppressor frames.

The nature of liminality is nondual, meaning that one cannot use a binary frame to come to an understanding of complicity as embodied in our relations. All of my participants spoke about how they trouble knowledge and how the troubling of knowledge illuminates contradiction.

Students and teachers have difficulty dealing with the contradictory spaces of social justice pedagogy and partly that has to do with recognizing their implications in systems of oppression. Marking complicity as relational requires that we recognize that these relations are both/and and not limited to either/or. Marking that there are multiple ways, simultaneously, that we are implicated in oppressive relations while also implicated in humanizing relations may offer a way to move beyond binary thinking. By making complicity visible in our pedagogies, we create strategies of pushing against frameworks that limit us, that limit our perception of choice and agency and action. One way of challenging these limitations is by using imagination as a discourse of complicity.

Imagination

Naming complicity in our pedagogies aimed towards justice is a strategic move to connect our students to recognizing how they are in relation to others and what these relations

mean and do in the larger scheme of things. Asking a student to recognize how they are complicit, or implicated in each other's lives, often risks the students feeling overwhelmed in thinking that they cannot change the context of their relations, thus they have no agency to transform how they relate. As many of my participants have reflected, we work with scripts that limit us in thinking about choice as either/or, our relationships as either/or, and finally our actions as either/or dualistic conceptualizations. All of my participants, in one way or another, spoke of the importance of using imagination as a source of creating different ways or possibilities of being complicit.

My participants regarded imagination as a way to push beyond the limitations of what is set before us in school and in pedagogies that may teach towards justice, but offer no map of making that justice possible. The teacher's role in creating other possibilities was a crucial factor in how my participants thought about complicity pedagogically. Fels commented,

In theatre, we always say, "Yes, and.... as opposed to No, but." I also think about how the possibilities of the worlds that children can create are limited by the imaginations of teachers who are standing before them and their ability to say "Yes, and..." What I'm thinking here again is the teacher's role of opening up space...not being complicit in thinking she knows all the answers.

For Fels, the teacher's role is to open up space, not necessarily tell their students what is possible and what is not possible, but open up space where they can use their imaginations to see what other possibilities exist. Fels told a story about a student to illustrate the importance of the teacher recognizing that they do not have all the answers as crucial to making room for imagination. She said,

We asked a question to one of the students and he went “I don’t want to answer your question. You already know the answer, why don’t you answer it?” That’s kind of teaching to a script...then to understand I don’t know all the answers. Then to understand all the rich, unimaginable possibilities that can be imagined together.

Imagination, to imagine other than what is. Kind of how human beings have arrived at the point we have drones flying through the air, conducting our wars for us instead of, you know, me just picking up a rock and throwing it at someone I don’t like.

Fels described that a teacher’s role is to imagine together with their students what could be. Her example of the drone really struck me because it took someone to imagine that we could fly these little machines around and use them to kill, so why can we not imagine something other than that and attempt to imagine it into reality.

Another point that Fels stressed is that it is not the teacher’s role alone to open space but it requires that the teacher and the students take that space and use it. Marcelo Diversi spoke of this and commented that when “thinking a lot about how individually I don’t feel very optimistic, but collectively I feel more optimistic. Collectively, they [students] find more possibilities together than any individual alone can find.” The collective imagination is a powerful tool that has potential to grow from considerations of complicity. Thinking about how we are complicit raises a domino effect of questions that lead us in particular directions, one of which involves imagining what next or what kind of relation can we produce if we do this or that. Diversi reflected on the type of questioning that arises in thinking about complicity using a discourse of imagination. He said,

we need to have that imagination of how to get there, not just you mention the future where we get along, but actually how to get there, because when we do that, then we have

to face first of all where we have been and where we are now, so be very critical of the past and present. Then they [students] can imagine something more inclusive and positive.

When Cris Mayo spoke of her mapping exercise, I thought of Diversi's comments regarding imagination and complicity. Where have we been, where are we now, and what are the possibilities of where we can go?

Ayers suggested that "it's the exercise of your imagination that allows real choice and real agency to take hold" and this highlights how all of the other discourses are woven together. How can we think about choice, without recognizing the limitations of binary thinking? How do we think about agency to act without imagining all the possibilities of our actions? Ayers suggests that we have to challenge our students who discourage imagining because they think it is silly.

There's a way to go back at your students who find imagination to be frivolous. That is, to say that the schools in every educational system that society sets up...window and mirror into society itself...A free society, whatever else it does, foreground[s] initiative, courage, and imagination. That's what makes us free...You have to be able to see, standing next to the world as such, a possible world. You have to be able to be yourself as a work in progress, moving through a living history. History is dead if we reach the end of history...If you are a completed being then go to sleep. Every one of your students has things to do, every one of your students thinks of himself, or herself, or themselves as a work in progress. The funny thing is, I always say to my students, "You're a work in progress, right? You haven't done everything you want to do, right?"

You have things to do next year, right?” This will shock you because I’m 72, and I still have things to do next year too.

That’s what it means to be human. What it means to be human is to project forward and to understand that you are a work in progress. The more self-conscious you can become of that, the more you should find ways to exercising your imagination. For my purposes, it’s the social imagination, or the radical imagination, that I think needs the most exercise because that puts us into the realm, not just to be drawing castles into the clouds, but it draws me into imagining with other people what’s possible.

This quote from my conversation with Ayers floored me. I have experienced students finding “imagination” as a silly and frivolous exercise and I admit, even I sometimes found it difficult to think about imagination as something other than a “daydream.” Ayers’ expression of the need to exercise imagination, that imagination requires a constant practice in thinking about the possibilities of what could be, has great pedagogical significance within the context of navigating complicity. We cannot even begin to deal with our complicities pedagogically, unless we take the exercise of imagination seriously and work it into our pedagogies.

Not all of my participants thought of imagination in the same way. There were some who held a more skeptical view of using imagination as a pedagogical strategy. Cris Mayo says, I think we are awful futurists. Just think our imagination is always...there’s something hokey and weird about it. I teach technology...and when you look at the imagination about technology based learning, it has to do with flying cars. I mean we’re so far wrong when we start to imagine because we take...it for granted and we don’t do very well with it. I don’t know, my utopian leanings are not very strong...yeah I don’t think we can think our way out of this, not in the long term.

Mayo's reflection on imagination is important to consider in thinking about complicity because she expressed that perhaps there are different contexts where imagination does not work. I do think, however, there is pedagogical significance to thinking about how we can use imagination as a means to navigate complicity pedagogically. Complicity is already a complicated notion and one that does not include simple frames of being or simplistic ways of knowing. Therefore, perhaps imagination works to shape how we see ourselves as complicit. Complicity is relational and people use their imaginations all the time to think about how they can be in relation with others, they just do not recognize it as such. Kumashiro speaks to this in his own reflection of how imagination can create possibilities. He said,

I feel like how we engage in activism is shaped entirely by...the script or the stories available to us about what it means to be an activist. We're constrained by that, we can only imagine what it means to be an activist based on what stories we have access to about activism...until we are exposed to other stories. I think what's important to remind ourselves of, is that any story is partial. It's partial because it can only accomplish so much, and it's going to be problematic.

By linking the limitations of the script to the importance of imagination, Kumashiro challenges conceptualizing imagination as only a dreamy state of idealism. Instead, he said that imagination is about considering other stories, other ways of knowing as a means to recognize the partiality of even what we think is possibility.

If our students feel overwhelmed and helpless at the thought of being implicated in systems of oppression, perhaps along with their peers and teachers, they can begin a process of imagining other ways of knowing about their relations. Fels calls this "enlarging the space of the possible" which denotes a movement towards, instead of an arrival. Enlarging the space of the

possible includes a recognition that complicity is not relegated to oppressive encounters. There are ways to be complicit, or in relation, that work towards justice. I consider this the space of the accomplice, where there exists many possibilities of relationality. Complicity is not only a negative interaction or encounter, it is a both/and, it is a complicated implicature of relations that contain multiple ways of being, not just good or bad. Thus, I have learned from my participants that using imagination to “enlarge the space of the possible” provides our students and ourselves with ways to respond as accomplices, a particular type of agency that explicitly grows out of considerations of complicity.

When I began this journey of thinking about how to navigate complicity pedagogically, I did so out of an urgency to find ways to respond to my students’ and my feelings of helplessness. How can we act when we are so tied up in the implications of our different relations to and with systemic oppressions? I was searching for different pedagogical strategies that would open up new possibilities of creating humanizing classroom spaces and decolonizing pedagogies that saw each student as valuable and resisted the educational discourses steeped in dualistic thinking of good/bad and right/wrong. Fels “borrowed” the idea of enlarging the space of the possible from Dennis Sumara and Brent Davis (1997) who conceptualized complicity as an integral part of enlarging the space of the possible as a means to create more ways of being in relation.

Complicity alerts us to the fact that we are inevitably engaged in transformation: each and every act, however benignly conceived, seeps beyond its intent as it enlarges the space of the possible. We are always and already participating in culture making. What complicity adds is that we have a responsibility to consider our intentions and the events prompted by our actions in tandem. (Sumara & Davis, 1997, p. 309)

We have choices that are not limited by the scripts of institutions but are limited by our failure to imagine beyond them. As teachers, we have a particular type of agency that only pedagogical considerations of complicity engage, the agency of being accomplice to. An accomplice already exists in the between spaces which emerge from encounter. Whether it is through crisis of contradiction or a “stop” moment, marking complicity, marks our relationality and how we respond to that, requires a great imagining of possibilities.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of this study reflects what Lyn Fels said to me, “Robyn, there are no answers, only questions.” William Ayers also echoed this sentiment when he reflected,

I think pedagogically, one of the things that has always saved me as a teacher, is that I'm a huge believer in dialogue and in asking the next question. I don't actually believe that it's my job to have the answer to the question of "I can't buy this stuff because it's overpriced, and only available in the rich parts of town."

My challenge as a teacher is put that back on people and say, "What could we do to fight against corporate takeover? To fight against the lack of choice? To fight against that only the privileged have access to clean water and clean air? What could we do?" That doesn't necessarily have an answer, but it does provide a pathway.

That's what I've always believed. I don't believe that you have to, as a teacher, say, "Here's the answer to the dilemma that we've just identified." I think that it is always asking the next question. “What should we do? What step could we take? Where could we go?” That, to me, is what good teaching is always about, always about asking the next question.

This study is about asking the next question but doing so from the starting point of complicity. What I have learned in my critical discourse analysis of the ways teacher/scholars write and speak about complicity, is that marking complicity matters to our pedagogies. Warren and Fassett spoke of their own qualitative research as creating “the ability to hear something in a different way, to reimagine that sound with the urgency of possibility” (2002, p. 585) and by centering complicity in discourse and engaging with scholar/teachers through their written work

and via interviews, I now understand complicity with an urgency of possibility. By marking complicity in moments of the multitude of encounters that take place in teaching and learning, new possibilities, otherwise left in the realm of the impossible, emerge.

What I have learned is that there are ways to navigate complicity pedagogically, there are strategies using complicity, that mark relationality in significant ways that transform how we think about social injustice and our role in that injustice. The discourses of complicity, including those that emerged as a result of my interviews, suggest that these are concepts/spaces that we must explore in our pedagogies. Centering complicity within pedagogies aimed towards social justice, shifts the notions of possibility and moves us from a place of the imaginary to one that is bound initially by marking how we are in relation. Complicity draws us into that space because in the thinking about complicity, we are implicated in awareness of our relationships. Regardless of your opinion on that relationship, thinking about complicity calls attention to the fact that a relationship exists. Once the attention is called forth, then what is done with that as teachers is up to them.

Recommendations

In the opening of this study, I shared an experience of mine and my students' complicity when we were thinking about sweatshop labor and questioning what we could do about our own roles in perpetuating suffering. At that moment, we were "stuck" and felt that there was no way forward. Now, after in-depth, critical readings and conversations with my participants, I feel like there is a way to move in such a situation. I want to use this example and apply what I have learned from my research and my participants as a means to recommend how teachers and students alike can navigate complicity pedagogically. The following recommendations are pathways to the "next question," points of on-going processes that are dependent upon context

and relation. The recommendations I offer, though based in the context and relations of encounter within my own pedagogy, reflect a frame of questioning and consideration applicable to issues that arise from marking any relationship to oppressive encounters.

Setting the Mark

We must start first with ourselves and our own complicities. We must think about our experiences in teaching where our own complicity arises. This must be a practice that we incorporate into all of our lessons so that we become used to thinking about our relationship to whatever we may be teaching about. For example, Applebaum (2006) speaks of this when writing about colorblind racism in teacher education programs. She noted that the myths of colorblindness “ignore the consequence of systemic racism... and are particularly dangerous because they prevent white people from interrogating their own assumptions about race, and, thus, leave the normative assumptions about whiteness unspoken and unaddressed” (p. 347). Marking complicity in your own circumstances and political and social location, creates a necessary interrogation of relation. Thinking about yourself in relation to your students and curriculum is not a new phenomenon in social justice pedagogies but what makes this different is that it is rooted in an understanding of complicity as framed in this study. Therefore, marking one’s complicity entails understanding that you are in relation to and calls attention to the many ways your relation has impact in yours and in other’s lives.

The example I provided at the beginning of this study reflects the process my students and I began in marking our complicity. We recognized the many ways we were in relation through purchasing clothes made by people employed in sweatshop establishments who received poor pay and living conditions. We traced how our consumption was connected to businesses and how these businesses put us in relation to employees which put us into relation to people on

a surface level. Marking our own complicity helped us to arrive at the beginning of a process of humanization: from clothing label to woman/mother/child. I would recommend that we go further than this in our journeys to understand how we are in relation. I recommend that we do not stop in our “stuckness,” that we move to the next step which is highlighting how we learn to think about relationality within a dualistic paradigm.

Nonduality

Marking our complicity with our students as a pedagogical strategy is great but it cannot stop there. We do not mark our complicities for the sake of marking or naming; we do so in the attempt to understand how we are in relation to others and call attention to the ways that our realities intersect. This moves us to the next several questions of our relationships: How do we think about these relationships? How are we taught to think about relationships? What are we not taught? I believe by asking these questions within our pedagogies, we begin a journey with our students about knowledge construction and this follows in the footsteps of Kevin Kumashiro and troubling knowledge. We mark how we are in relation and then we begin a deep interrogation. This highlights how our complicities do not easily fit into the either/or, right/wrong frames. For example, in the sweatshop labor moment, I asked my students what we are to do to change these relations. When we started thinking about how we could transform the relation in order to make it more just, we recognized several dilemmas. One issue, affordability, illuminated that class plays a large role in our options of what we can and cannot do. If my family cannot afford to purchase my clothes at the eco-friendly, fair trade store, then what am I to do? This line of thinking is trapped in the binary which absolutely limits our understanding of options in this scenario. We felt “stuck” and did not recognize a way forward because we were thinking about the movement in a linear sense, as in forward or backward. Thus we must ask

our students to consider how we think about our relations and change. As I shared earlier, Kumashiro suggested, “maybe another framework that we could pose to students is, something like, there are multiple ways to relate to any form of oppression.” He said that instead of thinking about our complicity as we are either complicit or not, “can we imagine one, or two, or three other ways of relating to oppression?” When we apply these questions to the sweatshop example, the question of “what can we do to transform these relations” must change and we must instead ask “what other ways can we relate to this form of oppression?” We also can ask “what are the circumstances in your own life that limit your choices in how you are in relation to?” These questions are vital in highlighting how complicity is not a matter of either/or but more so a matter of inevitability.

One of the discourses of complicity, that complicity is inevitable, also helps us to think beyond the binaries and more towards nonduality. If we rephrase our understanding of relationality to counter dualistic conceptions, we create a way to mark dualistic thinking. For instance, we could ask our students to think about how they are either complicit or not complicit. Perhaps they would bring up the contradictions of being poor and not having options in where or from whom they purchase clothes. This contradictory space is a space of nonduality because they are neither complicit nor not complicit. Instead, the teacher and students can think about what it means to be both/and complicit. A rephrasing that counters the binary could look like this: “I am both/and complicit and these are the ways that I am in relation to this form of oppression while simultaneously in resistance to this oppression.” The students and teachers have the opportunity to dive into what it means to be both/and which creates way more possibilities. This thinking also challenges the notions of responsibility and choice.

Choosing to be Responsible, Responsible for Our Choices

Either/or thinking limits us in how we perceive our options to change and act. If I think about my complicity in sweatshop labor and decide that I cannot afford to purchase clothing made by a fair trade company, then I may say, well I can't do anything about this issue. I have no choice because I am disempowered by the realities of my class identity. I cannot tell you how often the "I have no choice" response comes up in my teaching about issues of systemic oppression. White people say they have no choice over how they benefit from systems of racism; straight, cis people say they have no choice in how they benefit from systems of homophobia and transphobia; and U.S. American students say they have no choice in how they benefit from global imperialism.

Prior to this study, I would become stuck with my students in the "I have no choice" discourse but after centering complicity in the context of pedagogies, I no longer succumb to this rhetoric. What is choice? How are we taught to think about choice? What are we doing when we place choice within the frame of either/or? Thinking about complicity as foundational to thinking about what our options are in acting against systemic oppressions, means that we must recognize that the either/or frame limits us and limits our perceptions of choice.

I recommend that we place choice within the frame of complicity which automatically highlights the either/or as limiting our vision in what we see as our options to act. It also helps us to navigate the paradox that often arises from recognizing our complicity as inevitable. I want to fight global warming but I have to drive to my job. If I take the bus, I am still participating in the use of fossil fuel. Maybe I quit my job so I no longer depend on fossil fuels, but I use electricity, UGH, there is no way out. See how this line of thinking situates the either/or? I

believe by mapping our thinking in the either/or with our students and then thinking about how we are both/and complicit compels us to recognize ourselves as responsible in different ways. We no longer talk about responsibility as a response (I have no choice, therefore I am not responsible) and instead recognize responsibility as unique to how we are in relation to oppression. We imagine our responsibility as a matter of complicity, therefore we think in terms of having a responsibility to think about what we choose instead of choosing how we are responsible.

Imagining the Impossible

Imagination plays a very important role in navigating complicity pedagogically. Recently I attended the open house of my daughter's first grade class. The principle described their learning initiatives and spoke of how they draw upon the children's imagination as a means to connect their vision with their agency in the world. I was struck by how often imagination comes up in early childhood education and I wondered when this utilization of imagination ends. When are our children not asked to imagine anymore? In the higher education classroom, imagination is all but a fantasy that is relegated to kindergarten or perhaps a role-playing fantasy or video game. Why do we not evoke imagination as a great source of critical thinking, specifically as it connects to social justice? Time and time again, my participants brought up imagination as an important component of thinking about complicity.

We so often ask our students to write about their understanding of the world and reflect on other people's understandings and perspective of the world, but rarely do we ask them to engage in imagination or what Fels called enlarging the space of the possible. By asking our students to engage in imaging what world they would like to live in and why, they may see possibility where previously they had not seen it. Imagining the impossible requires that we

question what it is we think is possible in the first place and then interrogate what we deem as impossible. Notice this falls into the binary framework but it is important to have them think in a way they are taught in order to have them recognize how such thinking is limiting. William Ayers said that it is crucial to bring imagination into our pedagogies.

Because it goes directly to the question of how we conduct the struggle today. We conduct along certain moral lines because of the world we want to live. Not because we are living in that world, but because the world we want to live in has to take root in our minds and in our behaviors even now.

Centering complicity in our pedagogies allows for us to recognize the spaces in-between as enlarged spaces of the possible in so many areas of our lives. As teachers we can ask “what types of relationships are possible?” “What relationships do you imagine [context matters]?” “How can you imagine our relations differently?” “Imagine what choices you can create in your relationships.” “What ways can you can act towards creating a relationship that works towards anti-oppression?” These are just examples of questions that contemplate how our imaginations act as movements towards thinking about complicity as possibility. I believe imagination creates what is most profound about this study, the ability to imagine oneself as complicit in creating change, as an accomplice to humanization.

Pedagogy of Accomplice

Once you recognize complicity in oppression as inevitable, you work towards recognizing that even though there are oppressive relations we participate in, we can simultaneously resist in them and act as accomplices. To be an accomplice is to mark yourself as complicit in humanizing relations. By recognizing and marking complicity as significant in anti-oppressive pedagogies, it immediately ought to call attention to relation. It is up to the teacher

and students to take this relation and distill from it all the many connections, contradictions, and complex realities that this complicit relation contains and then attempt to become accomplice to humanization, knowing full well that this relation may be both/and oppressive and resistant to oppression, but moving none the less with the hope that understanding this relation will lead towards transformation. I want to conclude this dissertation with a quote from Warren and Fassett (2002).

To change the ways in which we conceptualize the problem opens it up to possibility. It is a changed world we desire: an educational system in which we hurt students less, a social world where we inflict less racial violence on one another. We desire that end. And it is to that end that we look at how our research works to remake and rebuild the very oppressive structures we seek to undermine. We ask these questions because to realize our own participation in these systems of power only leaves us as researchers accountable for fostering a new language that serves possibility. (p. 588)

I started this study from a very personal place. I wanted to find ways to navigate complicity in my pedagogy that moved me from the stuck places of contradiction to unstuck places of action. What I have learned from the discourses of complicity has changed my initial understanding of complicity. I have learned that navigating complicity in our pedagogies is not about moving from stuck to unstuck places. Instead, navigating complicity, as a marker and calling attention to relationality, moves me in-between the stuck and unstuck and opens up spaces that I never imagined were possible, particularly the spaces of accomplice.

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