U FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: A SELF-STUDY EXAMINING TEACHER TRANSFORMATION

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this self-study research was to create new knowledge about teacher transformation and social justice education. The research was guided by the overarching question: What is the relationship between self-knowledge and social justice education? Over the course of the two-year study, using teaching journals to develop a disciplined practice of self- reflection on social justice practices in teaching, the researcher found that the practice of teaching for social justice is enhanced through an awareness of self. The researcher described transformation with language from Theory U (Scharmer, 2009). Theory U is a learning organization model for transformational leadership. The study is framed within the research literature on critical pedagogy and transformative leadership. The primary data for this self-study research were journal entries, which were coded and analyzed using a grounded theory method to allow for patterns and themes to emerge. This research establishes a new theoretical framework for social justice teaching that weaves self-study, critical pedagogy, transformative leadership theory (U for Social Justice). One of the significant findings of this research is that cultivating a sustained attention to self-awareness through intentional reflective and contemplative practices is a key aspect of developing authentic social justice pedagogy and publicly claiming a role as a transformative leader for social justice.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, K. Hanson. This research was approved by School District 23.

The participation of critical friends was approved by UBC BREB. #H13-03382. Expiry date: February 13th 2015.

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To my family, your cheers ring loudly no matter where I am.

To Andrew, you are with me every step of the way, your support makes anything possible.

And to Finn and Echo, the two golden retrievers who sat in my office as I wrote this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

My research began with a goal to improve my social justice pedagogy in my middle school classroom. I wanted to align my teaching with my belief that the greatest aim of education is social justice. I wondered what I would learn about myself from my endeavor and this inward gaze proved interesting. The improvement I experienced in my teaching, through my research, led me to question the relationship between self-knowledge and social justice education.

Self-examination is often recommended for social justice research (Delpit, 2006; Gibson, 1998; Griffiths, et.al. 2006; Hamilton, 2002; Price, 2006) and through gaining self-knowledge I noticed professional growth in the area of transformative leadership. This was significant as "few studies have operationalized transformative leadership and examined its effect in real-life settings” (Shields, 2010, p. 572) and educational researchers have rendered few accounts of transformative leadership substantiated through data. I developed my account of transformative leadership over two years through self-study methodology. During my reflective writing I noticed how I acted as a barrier to my social justice goals. I wanted to better understand these self-derived barriers and express how I overcame them in a way that would provide a narrative to support other educators. This required an analysis that highlighted what conditions and frameworks supported and guided my transformation. Through self-study methodology coupled with my theoretical framework I developed a comprehensive analysis of my experiences.

Over time I built my theoretical framework by weaving together research from critical pedagogy, transformative leadership theory and Theory U (Schamer, 2009). Each piece of my theoretical framework was a catalyst in my ongoing personal and professional development. Through critical pedagogy I defined social justice education and teaching practices (Apple, 1993;

Giroux, 2007; Kanpol, 1999; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). Transformative leadership theory helped me understand the transformative learning processes that guide leadership for social justice (Brookfield, 2012; Brown, 2004; Hoban, 2002; Shields, 2010) and Theory U (Scharmer, 2009) was a contemplative framework which helped me express my self-transformation.

I developed my account through the language of Theory U (Scharmer, 2009) to make my approach to transformative leadership pragmatic and to describe the relationship I experienced between transforming social justice education and contemplative practices. I described the relationship between social justice education and self-transformation as an interrelationship. It seemed that as my self-awareness improved so too did my social justice teaching and leadership. As I developed contemplative practices such as self-awareness, suspending judgment and deep listening I acted in greater alignment with my social justice values. *U for social justice* was a phrase from my research that described the relationship between self-knowledge and social justice I experienced in relationship to my theoretical framework.

U for Social Justice

U for social justice describes improvements in critical pedagogy and transformative leadership that emerged through my research. The U in *U for social justice* has two meanings. Firstly, it represents the idea that self-knowledge or 'You' is an integral part of working for social justice. In creating self-knowledge teachers become more aware of the needs and perspectives of others and are more likely to construct culturally relevant pedagogy (Gibson, 1998). Also, self-aware teachers are more likely to tap into the "spiritual work that every person is born with that enables him or her to know that he or she can create a positive change" (Price, 2006, p.124).

Price suggests there is a rich connection between self-knowledge and self-actualization which can lead to individuals developing their potential to create positive change.

The U in *U for social justice* also represents the language and shape of transformation in Theory U (Scharmar, 2009). I also used a U shaped pathway and Thoery U language to describe my transformation. An example of how I used the language and shape of the U in my research is the concept presence (the bottom of the U). In my research I made discoveries about myself as a collaborator, working with others towards social justice. Midway through my journaling I gained a heightened awareness of a generative, collaborative state that existed beyond the reality that I typically had experienced. This generative state of awareness is called presence in Theory U (Scharmer, 2009; Senge et al., 2004). Presencing is a word used to describe interactions which stem from self-awareness, "presencing blends the words "presence" and "sensing" and works though seeing from our deepest source" (Scharmer, 2009, p. 468). In other words, presence means being present to both people and the context and sensing the world through self-knowledge. Presencing led me to increased innovation and leadership in my social justice work. From this new form of collaboration I felt empowered as a transformative leader. Senge (2004) writes, "first you slow down and look deeply into yourself and the world until you start to be present to what is trying to emerge. Then you move back into the world with a unique capacity to act and create"(p.185). Self-knowledge led to working with others in new ways and creating new approaches to social justice education and transformative leadership.

Methodology

The methodology used for this research was self-study. I chose this methodology because self-study methodology: 1) positions the self as problematic, 2) emphasizes self-improvement, 3) captures the complexity of situations, relationships, context and 4) it supports long term professional learning. Hoban (2002) suggests that teacher change only emerges from a process that supports long term teacher learning. In my research self-study methodology supported my learning.

The main method I used to gather my self-study data were personal teaching journals. My journal entries reflected my sense making in interaction with colleagues, theory and students. Teaching journals supported my learning by enabling me to track my transformative process. Through analyzing the journals I could problematize and discover self in my work and to relate my experiences to my theoretical framework. In the tradition of self-study research I shared my data with a group of critical friends who provided multiple perspectives on my interpretations (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Ham & Kane, 2006; Samaras & Freese, 2009; Whitehead, 2000).

My personal background was the starting point for my data. It explained why I began my research and how I have struggled to identify myself as a proficient social justice teacher. The following personal biography is included to provide insight into my identity and prior experiences that relate to social justice.

Personal Biography

I grew up in a loving family where I experienced support, encouragement and good health. In my family change was always imminent. We moved cities and countries for my Dad's job, and when we were not on the move it was a possibility. This troubled me. While I made friends quickly, I carried with me a feeling of not belonging.

Growing up I was a good student. I enjoyed school though I battled my insecurities of not knowing where I belonged. Perhaps as a result of this, throughout my teenage years I was histrionic and dramatic. I attribute my emotional experiences during this time as one reason for my investment in healthy teenage development.

As I transitioned from girl to teen, I lived in an increasingly multicultural city and I remember being aware of cliques and groups. I also remember hearing the racist dialogue of fear and resistance to multiculturalism from white people around me.

Within the cliques and groups I noticed unity of race. These groups (sometimes) assumed gang like qualities of loyalty, aggression and bullying. From experience I believed that if you were alone in the bathroom when clique walked in you were likely to be accosted in some way; taunted, or intimidated. The tension between white and black girls was often palpable. Walking past a "black" table at lunch was something I began to avoid. I had seen a wrath, experienced it on brief occasions and watched as it resulted in someone's head getting pushed through the cafeteria window. This was girl against girl aggression that I perceived to be channeled at white girls by black girls. I was a high school student in survival mode through my chosen strategy of avoidance.

Avoidance and desire for acceptance would be reoccurring themes in my struggle to act in socially just ways later in life. Growing up in an atmosphere of racial tension is one of two experiences that come to mind when I think how social justice became important to me. The second was living in Australia.

At age 15, we moved from our suburban Canadian city in the greater Toronto area, to a small rural Australian town. Here my acceptance was minimal. The students would crowd around me to hear my accent and ask me questions about movie stars and snow. My teachers perpetuated the stigma. They would call me out to answer questions surrounding America; ‘I am not from America’, I would mumble. I later wrote a letter to the town newspaper pointing my finger at the adults in that school that hurt me. Though I never sent the letter it stands as a testimonial to my memory of that time.

When I returned to Canada from Australia to attend university I studied sociology. I became dedicated to becoming a critical citizen, eager to fix many of the injustices and inequalities in this world. Inspired and ready for change, teaching seemed a natural path to channel my passion for a more just and equitable world.

Yet as soon as I began my teacher education studies I started to disconnect the practice of teaching from my greater life's mission. I began to align teaching with the conception I had of what it means to have a career. I remember in one of my first classes in teacher education the lecturer described how he could not turn off his teacher switch. He expressed that whether he is on a train or in the mall, he would always redirect misbehaving students. I was aghast by this. It had never occurred to me that I would continue to be a teacher beyond the walls of the school. What I wanted was a divide between those selves; this was also the very opposite of connecting my work and life's passion.

Once I became a teacher I worked in the same urban Canadian city I grew up in. In contrast to my own education it seemed the dynamics had changed. I felt I heard about racism from every corner: disgruntled parents, worried parents and principals concerned about gaps in achievement. During this time I harbored a fear of not being able to 'get it right', of not being inclusive, understanding, or relevant enough. Every class novel selection, every lesson, I would be conscious of how race and culture impacted the dynamic of the lesson. I wanted to work effectively towards change, but deep down, as a White woman I could not fully understand my role. I was respected by the students, wasn't I? I was their White teacher and they trusted my teaching but I perceived a border between us.

As the minority in the class, I sometimes felt like an outsider. I knew all too well how people group themselves to exclude others. In my youth I had experienced some of the complexities of power, of difference and of being marginalized and I did not recall learning about social justice during those years; the divides were a hidden curriculum. As a teacher I wanted to address those divides but I felt meek and unsure. hooks (1994) writes "The unwillingness to approach teaching from a standpoint that includes awareness of race, sex, and class is often rooted in the fear that classrooms will be uncontrollable, that emotions and passions will not be contained"(p.43). hook's quote conjured many feelings for me, as despite my awareness of injustice, feelings of fear kept me from adequately addressing what I held most valuable. I was never sure where I belonged in the conversation of social justice, except to say that I believed it whole heartedly. From early on my experiences with social justice issues have been a source of inspiration, determination, contradiction, confusion, shame and fear.

There was so much I wanted and needed to address to believe I was living my goal of being a social justice teacher. It was in British Columbia where I enrolled in a Master's of Arts program through the Faculty of Education that I began to ask these questions in light of current research.

Research Questions

The framing of my research questions was influenced by social justice and self-study scholarship. Self-focused research is designed to "ask taken for granted questions about one's practice and the impact of their work" (Samaras and Freese, 2009, p.13). In my research, I investigated what impact developing self-knowledge would have on my ways of knowing and teaching. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What self-knowledge can be gained through my journey toward being a socially just educator?
2. What is the relationship between self-knowledge and social justice education?

Through these questions I examined the multiplicity of my identity and subjectivity and found unexpected blind spots that were barriers to effective practice. My stories, tones, reactions, emotions and emphasis had an amazing way of repeating themselves. Seeing this for the first time through analyzing my journals and talking with my critical friends and colleagues was unexpected and created a sense that I was changing in ways that would better serve my goal of teaching for social justice.

Investigating my research questions with others and sharing personal transformation was both exciting and daunting. Expressing my process in a way others might understand was unwieldy. It was tempting to begin to tell my story where I ended it, since in the end I was much clearer about my methodology and social justice. Articulating change stories are difficult since they do not always emerge in a linear, logical way. Senge et al. (2004) write, "midway through our work together we began to understand the theory more clearly, when this happens authors usually choose to spare the readers the messiness and uncertainty of their journey" (p.17). Rarely do research accounts start at the beginning. However, Senge et al. did not spare their readership and neither have I. Communicating my non-linear, organic change process was a continuous struggle however, I believe that authentic accounts of transformation must reveal and include uncertainty because uncertainty is integral to the change process.

There were limitations to this study. For example I have mentioned the personal nature of my study. Personal accounts are a benefit in self-study methodology because they illustrate real life classroom practices from the perspective of teacher is unique within educational research

(Austin & Senese, 2014; Ham & Kane, 2014). However, those who reject the validity of personal research might have difficulty seeing the value in my singular, personal account, since the perspective of my research is narrow and contextualized. Similarly, as with all qualitative research, I acknowledge that my interpretations reflected my personal history, biases, experiences and the histories and biases of those with whom I collaborated. I also acknowledge that my exploration of social justice from the position of self is one particular approach to social justice pedagogy. Self-knowledge is a part of social justice teaching but does not reveal all aspects of teaching towards social justice.

Self-study is context and content specific. It focuses on self and produces knowledge about the self. This focus created periods of self-doubt and concern for me as I collected my data. Loughran (2004) confirms that many beginning researchers react to self-study with uncertainty and fear. I doubted accessing my own stories and memories as the main data for my research. However with this practice I was also developing the observation habits of a teacher researcher which was rewarding and, overtime, rather than continuing to feel doubtful, I worked hard to create a high standard of trustworthiness. I wanted to make my account transparent in hopes that other teachers could learn from the presentation of my experiences. I hoped they could use my research to make sense of their own work toward change to become social justice oriented teachers.

In the following chapter I share the theoretical framework underpinning this research in detail. Both the theoretical framework and my journaling were an organic process, each influencing and resonating with the other. The literature is presented in the order that I encountered and embedded these theories as important layers of my theoretical framework. Moreover, by presenting the theories in the order in which I was influenced by them, I hope to provide some sense of the learning process that occurred as I worked to theorize my teaching practices and experiences through the self-study process. Therefore I begin the description of my theoretical framework with an overview of the first theoretical discipline that shaped my research, critical pedagogy. The second half of the chapter describes transformative learning theory, transformative leadership and Theory U.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework

The first aspect of my theoretical framework is an exploration of critical pedagogy. Social justice education is rooted in the practices of critical pedagogy, and is steeped in an understanding that social justice education includes an awareness of teachers' roles and an examination of key barriers. Critical pedagogy was a natural starting point for me to inquire into my teaching and to learn about how to become more socially just. My literature review begins with an overview of critical pedagogy and then a description of transformative learning and leadership theory, followed by an overview of Theory U.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy has a strong voice in the current literature on social justice education. Based on the work of Freire (1970), critical pedagogy is a way of teaching and learning with the goal of social change. Critical pedagogy is a constantly evolving practice that is mindful of the human power to both oppress and transform. It is critical and also hopeful. Critical pedagogy asks:

> What is the relation between classroom practice and issues of justice? How do schools reflect or subvert democratic practices and the larger culture of democracy? How do schools operate to validate or challenge the power dynamics of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, indigenous/aboriginal issues, physical ability-related concerns, etc? (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007, p.13)

Critical pedagogues see public education as a system which supports capitalist values and reproduces our currently inequitable society. They argue ideals such as competition, individualism and consumerism drive pedagogy, often under the guise of inclusive education (Giroux, 2007). Critical pedagogy uses an analogy of a banking model of education (Freire, 1970) to critique a system wherein students are viewed as empty vessels into which knowledge is poured. Critical pedagogy resists a deposit-based system by emphasizing dialogic education based in praxis (a combined approach of theory and action). In critical pedagogy debate and conversation involves multiple perspectives attempting to solve problems and guide learning. Student voice and indigenous ways of knowing are a valued and central part of teaching and learning.

Critical pedagogy is based on social justice values of democracy, respect, care and equality. Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002) define social justice pedagogy as “the exercise of altering arrangements by actively engaging in reclaiming, appropriating, sustaining, and advancing inherent human rights of equity, equality, and fairness in economic, educational, and personal dimensions (p. 162). Young (1990) cites five faces of oppression that are the primary concern of social justice educators: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. I found Goldfarb and Grinberg's vision of active engagement and Young’s five faces helpful because they reflected the wide scope of concerns of social justice education and the need for teachers to understand the culture they are working in to identify these dimensions.

The wide scope of social justice research can be perceived as ambiguous. Ambiguity stems from social justice's connection to the social context in which justice is being sought. Within a western context there is a troubling history of colonization and understanding this history is essential to promoting and defining social justice with Canada. Western history of colonization continues to contribute to and “infect social discourse, institutions, and individual consciousness with racism, ethnocentrism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, and a variety of other hostile and exclusionary thoughts and practices” (Solomon et al. 2011, p.3).

Colonization created a social system built upon inequity which is so prevalent it is difficult to identify. A system wherein some people benefit and some are disadvantaged. Smith et al. (2009) explain, “critical pedagogy demands that people repeatedly question their roles in society as either agents of social and economic transformation, or as those who participate in the asymmetrical relations of power and privilege”(p.332). From this perspective people are either upholding societal injustices or actively fighting to irradiate them. This is the Canadian context of my research and I engaged in repeated questioning of self to make sure I was working as an agent for change.

Through my experiences and learning about critical pedagogy I realized sometimes we might think we are working towards change but our perspective might be limited: “students, researchers, educators, sociologists, all of us are hegemonized as our field of knowledge and understanding is structured by a limited exposure to competing definitions of the sociopolitical world” (Kincheloe & McLaren 2011, p.290). Self-study methodology became a tool to investigate and make visible my field of knowledge. Advised by the research and writing on critical pedagogy, I created my self-study to evaluate knowledge that I had come to take for granted such as self as a teacher and leader. I engaged in self-analysis because I believed I ran the danger of reproducing the model of education I critiqued, a banking model of learning. In many classrooms “the teacher presumes to know what the students need without ever having asked or consulted them about their experiences, lives, situations, etc.” (Smith et al, p.333)

Critical pedagogy and self-study methodology values the integrity of the teacher and the constantly changing dynamics of the classroom. That critical pedagogues are more inclined towards emergent learning, critically reflective practices and descriptive accounts of teacher practice was complimentary to my teacher research. Critical pedagogue, Lee (2000) writes, “I do not aim to present the new and improved vision of critical pedagogy so much as I aim to provide a reflective, critical portfolio of one teacher’s (ongoing) process of coming to a specific version of critical pedagogy” (p.5). This is a typical account of critical pedagogy. It is not prescriptive but rather a conversational account of how critical pedagogy serves to create justice in a specific context. Critical pedagogy lends itself to multiple contexts because it is an inquisitive approach to teaching and learning, with a focus on interrogating ways of knowing.

Practitioners of critical pedagogy encourage dialogue to question our social contexts. This is a relational approach to learning, which allows individuals the opportunity to examine their assumptions about current culture and their status within it. The power of dialogical learning gained credibility and momentum through Paulo Freire. Freire (1970) was concerned that teachers teach their students without knowing them and make assumptions about what is best for that student. This practice denies student agency and engagement. “The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world” (Freire, 1970, p. 60).Critical pedagogy prioritizes voice and indigenous ways of knowing:

> No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption (Freire, 1970, p. 45).

Through my research I developed an increased sensitivity to the language I used. I noticed how language is a tool that not only describes and explains the world but also influences and constructs it. Critical pedagogy highlights how language and discursive practices can reveal the powerful and the powerless:

> Discursive practices are defined as a set of tacit rules that regulate what can and cannot be said, who can speak with the blessings of authority and who must listen, whose social constructions are valid and whose are erroneous and unimportant. (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, p.291)

Language and discursive practices reveal power. Kincheloe & McLaren (2011) describe critical pedagogy as a way of teaching and learning about power as it impacts society and the self. Understanding power means acknowledging who has power and who does not. Power can be examined through an exploration of hegemony. Hegemony is a concept critical pedagogues use to explain that power is not always imposed by force. Hegemony is the reproduction of unquestioned values and actions, for example, stereotypes. Kanpol (1999) writes, “Hegemony acts to exert control over groups of people and their accepted, common sense interpretations” (p.34). This arrangement privileges some and disadvantages others. In offering my experiences to the interpretation of others, I relinquished myself as the all-knowing teacher. I sacrificed this status to build equitable relationships.

Through my research, I shared myself and the mistakes I made with my community. An emphasis on community shifted the teacher-student dynamic from one of control to one of open dialogue. Civic learning requires cooperative learning and collaboration which is often undermined by completion and individualism in classrooms. hooks (1994) writes, “we must build community in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor” (p.40). Through self-study I learned about myself through community and contributed to creating fresh approaches to learning. Through my research I started a conversation about the relationship between self and democracy in a creative and liberating way. In problematizing the self for the good of the community I presented myself as community member first and individual second, "At the basis of our multilevel evolving critical pedagogy rests the ability to imagine new forms of self-realization and social collaboration that lead to emancipatory results" (Kincheloe, 2007, p. 36). I believed that when we are connected to our communities we are more empowered and the possibility for new solutions increase, particularly if we are self-aware and open to self-examination.

Critics of critical pedagogy express a concern that critical pedagogy is merely a critique that does not offer solutions or directions. Knight and Pearl (2000) write, "critical pedagogy "deconstructs" educational practice; deconstruction is necessary but only if followed by "reconstruction" (p.197). They argue that the destruction of critical pedagogy causes a vacuum which is filled by undemocratic practices when critical pedagogy tries to take over schools while remaining "remote from classroom reality" (Knight and Pearl, 2000 p.198).

Ellsworth (1989) examines the critical pedagogy concepts of voice and dialogue when she tries to better understand the relationships between herself and her students. She questions the assumption that all voices will be equal and all members of the group will be safe, tolerated and contributing to the dialogue. Ellsworth finds that assumption frustrating because it does not provide a "systematic examination of the barriers" (1989, p.309) which keep students from the kind of self-expression and dialogue that they prescribe. In referring to her own White, middle class identity she writes, "although the literature recognizes that teachers have much to learn from their students' experiences, it does not address the ways in which there are things that I as a professor could *never know* about the experiences, oppressions, and understandings of other participants in the class" (1989, p.310). I too had difficulty applying the abstract language of critical pedagogy to classroom practices. Ellsworth writes that "key assumptions, goals, and pedagogical practices fundamental to the literature on critical pedagogy- namely- "empowerment," "student voice," "dialogue," and even the term critical- are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of dominance" (1989, p. 299). She claims that the term critical is ambiguous and lacks political action.

Proponents of critical pedagogy refute the claim that their language is too abstract, stating that critical pedagogy can never be divorced from classroom reality or student action. Critical pedagogy is a practice of illustrating how knowledge, values and social relations are "always implicated in relations of power, and how such an understanding can be used pedagogically and politically by students" (Giroux, 2004, p.34). Critical pedagogy builds awareness in students so they can create action and so critical pedagogy is critical but also action oriented (Giroux, 2007; hooks, 1994; Kanpol, 1990).

As critical pedagogy evolves, "an understanding of the power of dominant cultural pedagogies, and the importance of identity" in diverse landscapes is essential (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007, p.36). Kanpol (1990) articulates the belief that more "legwork in schools will begin to define, validate, and generalize a picture that resonates a vision of justice, democratic life, dignity, and individual freedom" (p.280). Teacher research is an example of this legwork which can define processes of justice that resonate in schools. Through my self-study I started to reconcile the tension between my beliefs and practices by examining my teaching self and looking for possible sources of bias. Solomon et al. (2011) writes, "We found that many teachers' classroom practices contradicted their claims of commitment to engage with the practices of progressive education" (p.35). Self-study helped me prepare for the challenging work of social justice education.

Despite the challenges of aligning beliefs and action as a socially just teacher, there are many successful examples of socially just teachers, often referred to as culturally responsive teachers (Gay, 2002; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995). These teachers describe pedagogy which is attuned with the cultural capital (history, traditions, learning styles and identities) with which the students enter the classroom. Culturally responsive teachers create environments that welcome critical thought, dialogue and question the validity of sources of knowledge. Gay (2002) writes, "Culturally responsive teachers help students to understand that knowledge has moral and political elements and consequences" (p.10). Such teachers become agents of change engaged in the political act of teaching through illuminating concepts of power and privilege.

Culturally responsive teachers develop their teaching practices based in context and justice and do not necessarily rely on a standardized process of teaching. This is a grassroots approach since, for the most part, the standardized government curriculum is not created with the goals of social justice education in mind. Social justice educators find creative ways to work with a standardized curriculum to meet their vision of social justice. In their research on teachers' perceptions of social justice teaching, Solomon et al. (2011) found that teachers believe the Canadian curriculum to have a Eurocentric cultural bias and a lack of focus on social justice issues. They find the curriculum to be content driven and a content approach to learning is unjust:

> The very notion of putting tremendous amount of knowledge based education into a young child and expecting everyone to do it relatively the same regardless of their background, their language, who they are, and where they are from and then purposefully

> underfunding any possibility for real remediation and help is totally anti-humane and anti –child. (Solomon et al., 2011, p.89)

To create a socially just curriculum and offer better life chances for students, teachers must move away from a content delivery model to an organic learning environment where knowledge is generated within the classroom. This is difficult work and critical pedagogy is concerned with the working conditions of teachers and how working conditions limit teachers' ability to create social justice education. Many well-intendioned teachers often settle for ill-suited curriculum because their working conditions are so rushed and hasty they do not perceive other options. Solomon et al. (2011) suggests that teaching to the curriculum "compensates teachers for their lack of time by providing them with prepackaged curriculum rather than changing the basic conditions under which inadequate preparation time exists" (p.140).

Intensification describes teachers' working conditions becoming so eroded that they become increasingly dependent on the expertise of others as they try to manage through an overwhelming day. Intensification has a broad range of symptoms, including, "having no time at all to go to the bathroom, have a cup of coffee… the total absence of time to keep up with one's field… the chronic sense of work over load that has escalated over time" (Apple, 1993, p.124). Intensification creates deskilling and is often evident within school settings where teachers' work has been reduced to technical skills. Deskilled teachers are not involved with the planning and creation of curriculum; rather than creators of curriculum, teachers become managers of assessment, behaviour and materials. These teachers have little to no control over decisions that impact them and their students.

Some teachers do not feel worried about the constraint for the curriculum. While others experience the bureaucratization of teaching and learning intensely, making it difficult for them to manage or desire to adapt the curriculum. Some teachers “view equity work with skepticism because it is not explicitly addressed in the curriculum documents” (Solomon et al., 2011, p. 93).Solomon et al. (2011) explain that social justice teachers “feel they are being driven either to approach equity work as an epiphenomenon to the content specified by the curriculum or conversely to find ways to re-conceptualise the curriculum in order to integrate issues” (p.83).

My self-study helped me explore my fears and worries about curriculum constraints and through gaining self-knowledge I was able to reposition my experiences with equity work and feel more free to adopt the curriculum in ways that was meaningful to me and my students. I found myself empowered by my work. I became freed of the deskilling that leads teachers to feel disempowered and overwhelmed. Reskilling can occur when teachers become aware of the hegemonic forces of deskilling and counter these oppressive forces through the various processes in their work and in their work environment. Finding ways to take more control of their work environment is a critical step in the reskilling process. For example, Kanpol (1999) writes:

> To reskill oneself is not only an issue of control of curriculum content or working for the betterment of the community, but also an act of reflection on the subject matter in the curriculum and its relationship to dominate values, with short and long range goals of transforming those values that oppress, alienate and subordinate others. (p. 40)

Teachers who do participate in reskilling processes often report burn out as a barrier to reskilling (Solomon, et. al., 2011). Burn out occurs from trying to manage the specificity of the curriculum and infuse it with resources and lessons that support social justice. This is often lonely work as few teachers take this focus. Being a teacher for social justice means continually promoting social justice in the school and an ongoing personal practice of professional development. Given these demands there is often insufficient time to fully engage in all of the work that is needed for fostering and sustaining social justice teaching. Solomon, et al., (2011) caution, “without major interventions to support these teaches the future of equity based education is in jeopardy” (p. 125).

In summary, critical pedagogues describe the work of social justice educators in Canada as a practice of questioning social practices and institutions which were established through unjust practices starting with colonization and that maintain inequity. Questioning social practices can start with an examination of self as either supporting or working to challenge the status quo. Questioning is a dynamic process that involves discursive practices within communities. Through self-study I grappled with questioning self-knowledge. I wanted to let go of any institutionalized collective behaviors in order to meet and connect with my highest future possibilities (Scharmer, 2009, p.5). This process cannot be explained by critical pedagogy alone. The reflective practices I developed created another significant level of self-knowledge and led me to experiences in transformative leadership.

After a year of journaling I found that critical pedagogy alone was not enough to explain or understand my experiences. As I went deeper into the self-study process I needed to understand how reflection was an integral part of my transformation and I began to learn more about transformative learning. The second part of the theoretical framework supported my meta-cognitive development and helped me express how my thoughts led to transformative leadership. Transformative leadership resonates with ongoing research on the importance of teacher professional learning as an essential element for school improvement through heightening teachers' capacity and commitment to professional learning in their work (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Fullan &Hargreaves, 2012) and to the growing interest in educational research for understanding the role of mindfulness and contemplative practices in classrooms (Begley, 2007;

Meiklejohn et al, 2012; Siegel, 2010). After reading Theory U (Scharmer, 2009) I related the U shaped transformation process to the data in my journals. From there, Theory U vocabulary was used to consciously process and express change toward transformative leadership. Theory U is rooted in a history of studying transformation in organizations and provided a language that was useful for understanding the power of self-awareness to impact the collective. Incorporating Theory U (Scharmer, 2009) enhanced my ability to render a personal, but critical, account of the change process.

Transformative Learning, Leadership, and Theory U

Awareness of reflective practices was a double loop of learning in my theoretical framework (Argyris & Schön, 1978). According to Argyris & Schön, the first loop of learning is the situation where we act in the world and the second loop is the reflection on the process which led to making change. I needed a theoretical concept to articulate the action of being a teacher for social justice, the reflective learning process which informed my action and how the two related to result in transformative leadership. In this section of the literature review, reflective thought and practice are described as necessary conditions for change.

Reflection is a cognitive perspective of learning, where "participants rethink their practice to learn from their experiences" (Hoban, 2002, p. 62), and through this process participants gain insight to bigger picture ideas and patterns. Dewey (1933) emphasized reflective learning as learning through experimenting with the world. He understood this to be a dynamic and interactive process. He wrote that reflective thought is an “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends (Dewey, 1933, p.9). He also believed reflection to be a problem solving activity: "the function of reflective thought is, therefore, to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbances of some sort into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled and harmonious" (Dewey 1933, p.100-101). Deweyian assumptions such as, “education is development from within” (Dewey, 1938, p. 17) and “experiences lead to growth” (Dewey, 1938, p. 40) continue to resonate in contemporary pursuits in educational research.

Schön (1987) also saw reflection as a way of thinking and as the hallmark of being a professional. He identified two types of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection -on-action. The first type of reflection refers to decisions based on previous experiences and the second refers to deliberate reflection after an action. This is an important conceptual difference for transformation. In the first instance action is based on past patterns and responses; in the second, learning is the result of thinking about actions.

Teachers who engage in reflective thought are often referred to as reflective practitioners. Reflective practitioners are aware of the interaction between thinking and action. In reflective practice teachers learn through problematizing knowledge, questioning and investigating situations through a variety of lenses. Through conversations with the self “teachers can interrogate what they do, question the educational values and goals which give them shape and purpose” (Ghaye & Ghayne, 1998, cited in Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012, p. 16).

While the idea of reflective practice continues to grow in popularity, it is a contested term with various definitions and terminology. Although traditions of reflective practice vary "they all express normative ideals for better, deeper, or more liberating ways of learning and can therefore be seen as emancipatory approaches to education (Renolds, 1998) or as pedagogies of hope (Freire, 1994)"(van Woerkom, 2010, p.340). Without emancipatory, hopeful, reflective practice in education we run the risk of continuing unintentional practices based in tradition.

Educational researchers provide illustration of the power of reflective practice. Kitchen (2005) uses personal knowledge to observe how he was impacted by his prior experiences. He explores how early on in his teaching he used his own experiences as a student to inform his teaching style, leading him towards an authoritative approach to teaching rather than the more student- centered approach he developed through rigorous self-reflection. His teaching journal documents these changes. Nuthall (2005) similarly provides evidence that “basic patterns of teaching may be carried out in much the same way, with much the same effects, by novice and experts like” (p. 898). He argues that teachers are essentially re-enacting the same ritualized routines and patterns of their own education regardless of training or what might be seen as the best practices of the time. Writing from her experience as a university teacher, hooks (1994) writes, “most of us were taught in classrooms where styles of teaching reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal” (p.35). She explains that teachers often emulate that same model in their own teaching. This tradition of thinking blindsides many teachers, masking the need to critique current educational systems. Shulte (2005) writes, “I was a successful student, so how bad could the current system be?”(p.31). She illustrates teachers' propensity to reproduce their teaching based on their experiences particularly when they themselves have been successful in school.

Without a reflective approach to understand my actions and beliefs, my teaching might have remained unchallenged and most likely unchanged. I had to investigate self in relationship to the culture around me. Nuthall (2005) claims one of the most significant things about culture is that it shapes our perceptions and organizes our lives. Without an awareness of culture and its influence on teaching pedagogy, “any attempts at reform are likely to be ineffective and we will remain locked in a system that inevitably produces failure and social inequality" (Cuban, 1998 cited in Nuthall, 2005 p. 896). Similarly, Barnes (1992) writes:

> To achieve change teachers need to discover that their existing frame for understanding what happens in their classes is only one of the several possible ones, and this, according to Schön, is likely to be achieved only when teachers themselves reflect critically upon what they do and its results (p.17).

In my research I wondered how I could create a new level of reflective practice and self-awareness and move toward a favorable future, and I wondered how I would know when I had reached a proficient level of self-knowledge. Transformative learning theory qualifies self-knowledge to be transformative when reflections and examinations of taken for granted assumptions result in new beliefs and knowledge frameworks that are emancipatory. The term, transformative, is used in educational research in many ways. It describes schools, teaching, curriculum and learning and leadership. My research developed an exploration of transformative learning and leadership.

Transformative Learning

Mezirow (1998) states that learning can occur in four ways: elaborating on existing frames of reference, learning new frames of reference, or through transformation, critical self-reflection of the assumptions that supported the meaning scheme or perspective in use through transforming points of view and transforming habits of mind. Transformative learning starts with the self. Before a teacher can help transform others they often must transform themselves. Taylor (2006) writes, "Without developing a deeper awareness of our own frames of reference and how they shape our practice, there is little likelihood that we can foster change in others" (p.92).

Mezirow (1996) explored transformative learning theory as an emancipatory model of adult learning which involves learning through self-reflection and social interaction. This type of learning results in reshaping knowledge for the purpose of social betterment. Taylor (2006) argued that we must learn to develop a better understanding of our own culture and the privilege and power that might go with it. Freire (1970) connected critical pedagogy and transformative learning theory with his term conscientization, which involves "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions—developing a critical awareness—so that individuals can take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 19). Transformative learning creates an awareness of injustice and creates action based on re-understanding one's own experiences. My research was transformative as it changed the way I saw myself in the world and the world around me, resulting in a shift in self at the level of thought, feelings and actions.

Learning is both past and future oriented, a "process of using prior interpretations to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of ones experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). Transformative learning impacts our frame of reference that Mezirow states is composed of two dimensions. The first dimension is meaning perspective. A meaning perspective refers "to the structure of cultural and psychological assumptions within which our past experience assimilates and transforms new experience" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 21). The second part of a frame of reference is meaning scheme, which he writes is, "constituted by the cluster of specific beliefs and feelings and value judgements that accompany and shape interpretation (p. 163). Through transformative learning we develop a frame of mind which is "a) inclusive b) differentiating c) permeable d) critically reflective and integrative of experience (Mezirow, 1992).

For me, self-awareness also brought a crystallization of vision and confidence which increased my potential to impact others. My experiences which resulted in transformative learning also helped me develop leadership skills based on a growing awareness of others and sensitivity to others.

Transformative Leadership

Transformative leadership theory examines the impact of individuals on the school environment when they challenge the status quo and work towards more just schooling practices. In educational research the focus on effective change in leadership theory is shifting from beyond top-down leadership towards including an examination of change as it emerges from the individual (Brookfield, 2012; Brown, 2004; Hoban, 2002; Shields, 2010).

Transformative leadership starts with the assumption that every individual has the right to fair and equal treatment and “recognizes the need to begin with critical reflection and analysis and to move through enlightened understanding to action” (Shields, 2010, p. 572). Transformative leaders challenge the status quo of education, with an activist’s agenda, in order to help change society to fairer and more just ends. They work collaboratively in pursuit of social change and educate others on the impact of power and privilege in society from both a historical and current perspective, they “link education and educational leadership with the wider social context within which it is embedded” (Shields, 2010, p 559). Transformative leaders are in a position to both offer critique and possibility. Quantz et al. (1991) posited that a “transformative leader must introduce the mechanism necessary for various groups to begin conversations around issues of emancipation and domination” (p.112). In other words, transformative leaders do not just make sure that all students are successful in the current system of education but they shed light on the current problems with that system and suggest a way forward.

Weiner (2003) outlines some of the responsibilities of transformative leaders. Responsibilities such as: instigate structural changes, reorganize political space, understand relationships and lead dialogically. He asserts that such leaders need to ask questions about curriculum and student success. Shields (2010) summarizes the work of transformative leaders as creating “learning contexts or communities in which social, political, and cultural capital is enhanced in such a way as to provide equity of opportunity for students as they take their place as contributing members of society” (p.572). Other transformative practices noted in her research are: balancing critique and promise, effecting deep and equitable change, creating new knowledge frameworks, acknowledging power and privilege, emphasizing public and private good, focusing on liberation, democracy, equity and justice and demonstrating moral courage and activism (Shields, 2010, p. 573). I used these definitions to judge my own success and experiences as a transformative leader.

Transformative leadership is challenging work. Transformative leaders often have “one foot in the dominant structures of power and authority” (Weiner, 2003, p.100) and as such need to proceed with deep critical reflection and self-awareness. Through this deep awareness of social justice educators must become aware of attitudes within themselves and others that impede social justice work. Some educators are skeptical of social justice stating its goals are too idealistic, and not possible (Solomon et al. 2011). Others argue that social justice education should come from outside the realm of a school since the curriculum is so full that social justice efforts could lead to a lost focus on academic excellence (Solomon et al. 2011). Solomon et al. (2011) write that equity and excellence go together: “if a category of the population is marginalized simply by definition as the result of standardization, then the excellence that emerges is a limited one”(vIII). Transformative leaders must provide opportunities for those in their schools to make social justice work possible.

Beatty (2000) advocates that teachers should explore their own potential for transformative leadership, citing that very few examples of professional development directed at teachers actually result in sustained, meaningful change (Fullan, 2001). She suggests using principles of transformative learning (although she uses the term adult, self-directed learning), wherein people experience an increased sense of agency and personal growth. In Beatty’s research organizational change resulted through “reflection and collaboration, self-direction and shared leadership opportunities for personal and professional nourishment of teachers which were created from the grass roots level” (2000, p.78). What she finds lacking in the research is “the particular changes in perception of self and work that may, in part, account for some of the effects these collaborative experiences can have on teachers and their professional growth” (p. 78). My research accounts for the particular changes I experienced and how they impacted my ability to create self-directed change, to collaborate and to grow.

Hoban (2002) also advocates for teachers to develop a deep understanding of the self, specifically to learn how they learn but he then he recommends they create a framework to support the long term process of this learning. This is not a linear process. Hoban uses a systems approach to change that is also present in Scharmer's (2009) research on organizational change. Such an approach notices the wholeness of a system and avoids reducing it to distinct, separated parts. This worldview rejects the analogies that try to equate organizations with machines. As one part of a system changes so too do the other parts, thus systems theories are theories of interconnectedness.

Learning to moving toward enlightened understanding and to action was not part of my teacher training programs or educational leadership programs. These gaps left me without guidance, strategies or awareness of how to enact my values. Through my research I began to gain an understanding of what action was required to start my journey to become a transformative leader within my school. I developed a long-term plan for teacher learning through self-study methodology. Theory U (Scharmar, 2009) was systems approach which supported my learning plan.

Theory U

Theory U (Scharmar, 2009) is a framework for transformative leadership that emerged from the business world that presents many types of institutional life (such as our current educational model) as unsustainable. Scharmar (2009) argues that systemic breakdowns offer opportunities for emergence. When something is at its end, something new can emerge. In such a unique time Scharmer describes the need for awareness of changes, and states that a deeper level of consciousness can create awareness and act as a source for creative processes leading to effective change. Scharmer's Theory U is a description of how successful organizations have changed and moved into their desired future. He argues that organizations need a new leadership technology for change, a new social technology that will emerge from the activation of heart, mind and will. Theory U demonstrates how change happens when "people start to connect deeply with who they really are and their part in both creating what is and realizing a future that embodies what they care most deeply about" (Scharmer, 2009, xvii).

I related to this model because it included levels of consciousness as part of change theory, similar to what I was experiencing through self-awareness. The theory provided a language for describing and communicating the self-knowledge towards transformative leadership:

> We are trying to develop a language that can help people think and talk together about how the whole can shift….What we need is a language of hope and possibility that’s ground in ideas and experiences. (Senge, et al. p. 218)

The vocabulary I used from Theory U (Scharmar, 2009) was from the seven cognitive spaces and five key insights (seeing, letting go, shift, let come and acting). The seven cognitive spaces are described as: suspending, observing, sensing, presencing, crystallizing, prototyping and performing. These seven domains can be summarized into three processes as sensing, presencing and realizing. Sensing involves listening, and suspending judgment. Sensing creates a pathway to presencing (the bottom of this framework). Presence is a new social field people experience when there is an awareness of the connection between how we "relate, converse, think and act together" (Scharmer, 2009, p. 469). The last process of the U, directed up the right side of the U, is realizing, which means to create action while keeping all the stages in mind.

Presencing is described as a profound opening of the heart (p. 234), a collective awaking, “waking up to who we really are by linking with and acting from our highest future self and by using the self as a vehicle for bringing forth new worlds” (p. 234). Presencing is an individual's capacity to create things anew as they gain deeper awareness of who they have been and who they can become when they see themselves as interconnected to others. Presencing is the bridge between the past (left side of the U) and future (the right side), “We chose the term “presencing” to describe this state because it is about being totally present- to the larger space or field around us, to an expanded sense of self, and, ultimately, to what is emerging through us” (Senge et al.2004, p. 91).

Moving up the U involves the co-creation of bringing something new into being. This process is described in the U as crystallizing. Crystallizing is manifested through deep awareness of the self and creates an ability to act instantaneously from this knowledge. Creating action rooted in awareness was one of the goals of my self-study. All thinking and action in the U involves an open mind, an open will and an open heart, “just as moving down the U requires refraining from imposing pre-established frameworks, moving up from the bottom of the U involves not imposing our will” (Senge et al. 2004, p. 91). Scharmer’s (2009) work suggests the evolution of human systems is possible through the transformative power of thought and reflection evolved into action. Learning to understand a leader’s journey and noticing the subtleties of individual or collective acts can create a powerful shift in how we understand and enact change in our learning. My written account of my research is my leadership journey written in a way that aligns with self-knowledge and Theory U in hopes of creating conversations about new ways to create transformative leaderships in schools.

The multiple dimensions of critical pedagogy combined with transformative leadership theory created a theoretical framework that shaped my research process and created new knowledge which unfolded through my self-study. In the next chapter I provide an overview of the methodology of self-study, a description of how I was inspired and supported to go deeper into my own inquiry into social justice through self-study methodology and an explanation of the processes of my methods for my self-study research.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Self-study is a methodology (Feldman, 2006; Feldman, Paugh, & Mills, 2004; LaBoskey, 2004) that supported the introspective focus of my research. I wanted to examine myself carefully, conscious of how even small acts can impact students in deep ways. I wanted to be aware of my habits and ensure they were aligned with my beliefs, believing that my responses could be moments for social justice teaching. In a moment I could value, empower, honour and respect my student or I could dismiss, marginalize, and silence them. I wanted to be able to share my learning with other educators, since part of social justice teaching is making personal practice public. Self-study comes under the conceptual umbrella of practitioner-based research, which has taken many forms (e.g., the teacher-as-researcher movement, reflective practitioner research, action research, narrative inquiry, and praxis inquiry) (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004). Self-study is relational, where “the individual ‘I’ is always seen to exist in company with other individual ‘I’s,’ and each asks, ‘How do I hold myself accountable to myself and to you?’” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 11).

I was interested in developing the self-study methods of reframing, narrative writing and critical friends. Through reframing I learned to see myself through a variety of perspectives. Reframing in my study took place through interaction with colleagues, students, university faculty members and the theory I was reading. I reflected on myself in relationship to my interactions in my narrative journal writing. I then had critical friends reflect on my interpretations of self. Creating self-knowledge through self-study methods helped me understand that "self-knowledge is not immediately given and therefore valid…people can deceive themselves about their intentions, motives, etc.” (Hemmersly, 1993, p. 218 as cited in

Ham and Kane, 2007, p. 123). Self-study methods, reframing, narrative writing and critical friends provided depth and trustworthiness to my interpretations. These methods were to be disruptive. I felt vulnerable and humbled as I questioned myself and included others in my personal endeavor. However, I was encouraged by self-study research literature that supported exploring social justice education through self-study.

Self-Study Methodology

The process of self-study research is a critical inquiry into one's own actions, in order to achieve a consciousness of self that is not based only on habits and traditions (Samaras & Freese, 2009). This involves examining teaching and learning about the self in relationship to others (Lighthall, 2006). In self-study, learning and teaching are identified as a social phenomenon resulting from multi-faceted interactions between an individual and a complex set of social and cultural forces (Loughran, 2006). Through self-study I became aware of how I was interconnected in my past, my culture, and others. The respect for humanity cultivated through developing self-knowledge is in accordance with social justice practices (Griffiths, et al., 2006).

As I constructed my story to myself through self-study methods I recognized how my story was impacted by others and that my story was one of many stories. Part of my journey was recognizing when the stories I told were contradictory or inadequate as vehicles towards social justice. Through these self-discoveries I was encouraged to take on the perspective of other as a way to reframe and deepen my own ways of knowing. Taking on the perspective of other is a social justice practice as it creates openness to difference, to the idea that there is more than one way of knowing and to perhaps uncover personal bias. A deep level of respect for others can be achieved when we eliminate unconscious bias and prejudices and "isn't the issue of diversity related closely to identifying and overcoming one's unconsciously learned reflex responses to moments of difference?" (Russell, 2002 as cited in Griffiths, et al., 2006, p. 657).

Through self-study I hoped to illuminate and examine my own beliefs and involvement in perpetuating the status quo. In problematizing the self "white scholars must ask questions and confront issues that are too easily overlooked in a privileged environment’’ (Hamilton, 2002 p.187). I had to understand the connection between my actions and larger stories. Through self-study methodology I examined the individual pieces of my story, often in comparison to larger, grand narratives. Grand narrative refers to professional knowledge that is abstract and distant from the everyday experiences of the classroom (Griffiths et al., 2006). For example I compared how my teaching practices were different from, or similar to, the grand narratives in my current school environment or of critical pedagogy, a grand narrative that promotes the goal of equity for all. Awareness of grand narratives in comparison to my small stories helped me to disrupt, contradict and deepen self-knowledge by paying attention to differences in perspective.

Expressing personal experiences through small stories was transformative and liberating from oppressive or restrictive grand narratives regarding the nature of self. Senge et al. (2004) write, "I think our culture's dominant story is a kind of prison"(p. 215). Senge et al. are concerned that in western cultures people perceive themselves as separate from one another and from nature. Like Plato's allegory of the cave, if the story of segregation is all you know it is very difficult to break free. Self-study creates a shift to see the self as connected to social and natural worlds. The self is not one of isolation, but rather the concept of self refers to the self as it is connected to others and to time and space.

Through self-study I learned to know myself through interconnections and multiple perspectives. I learned to share myself with my colleagues, my critical friends and my students in order to learn and grow. I shared my experiences with critical friends allowing myself to be exposed. I relinquished control of my interpretations of myself to become open to co-created knowledge. I was shedding my defenses and was not protecting my identity through the privilege and authority of being a teacher. This is social justice teaching (Griffths, et al., 2006):

> Do teachers of teachers have the courage to think aloud as they themselves wrestle with troubling dilemmas such as striking a balance between depth and breadth of content studied, distribution of time and attention among individual students ... teaching disasters, and the human mistakes that even experienced teacher educators make (Clark, 1988, p. 10)

Through my self-study I learned to wrestle with myself. I became willing to take responsibility of my actions, to change, learn and grow. The implication of personal responsibility might make many reluctant to participate in a social justice self-study, but acknowledging personal responsibility was one of my motivations for this research.

Self-Study as Teacher Research

Over time there has been a shift in the politics of knowledge in educational research (Clarke & Erickson, 2004). This shift moved the focus of educational research from a focus on pupil's and teachers' actions to research *with* teachers, and then to a current focus on research *by* teachers (Clarke & Erickson, 2004, p.59). Self-study challenges the traditional assumptions about research grounded in empirical data because it is very different from a positivist or mechanical approach that privileges knowledge that is predictable and detached from human interference and the impersonal (Whitehead, 2006). A positivist approach to educational research is commonplace in academia in North America (Cole & Knowles, 2007). While this approach may not be the best fit for complex educational contexts, researchers may take this approach to align with university research standards. Educational research has tried to conform to the standard set in the sciences, despite evidence that such research may have little or no impact on educational policy or the classroom setting. Thus, for decades, much educational research has been a round peg trying to fit into a square hole.

From this history, self-study is research reform, started by teacher educators and now practiced in the K-12 setting. Self-study urges teachers to find their own voice, connect with community and discover and document their potential as leaders. Through self-study teachers can strengthen their practices and actualize their values and beliefs. Self-study opens the doors of teachers' classrooms and invites others in. Working with others, teachers can start to reimage their profession. Caine and Caine (1997) suggest, "to really restructure anything means to restructure our thinking" (p.vi). The ability to restructure our thinking is transformative learning and good teaching.

Lighthall (2006) uses two metaphors to contrast self-study and traditional models of quantitative education research. The first metaphor of educational research is looking for a penny in the sand. This imagery emphasizes the fine-grained character of working within diverse contexts in classrooms. Traditionally this work has been done with bulldozers, but these are ill-suited for the task. The types of tools needed for such delicate work are tools that help us get close, help us to trowel, sift and closely examine the sand. The second metaphor for self-study research he offers is Jack and the candlestick, the researcher/dancer. Teacher researchers need tools to respond quickly and effectively, and self-study can help identify and develop these reflexive tools:

> We are engaged in an constantly moving, often shifting, dance, a dance in which are partner is often not one student, but a dynamic relation among 12-30 students interacting

> … In this dance we need to interpret and respond to events moving much faster than traditional research methods can capture (Lighthall, 2006, p. 224).

My teaching has benefited from my use of the research methods of self-study. Engaging in self-study helped me to recognize the interconnected, complex and nonlinear realm of teaching and learning.

Data Collection

I designed my data collection based on recommendations from the research and writing of the Self-Study of Teacher Education (S-STEP), a group of educators who work in different practice settings and seek to make substantial contributions related to the theory and practice of self-study research, design, practice, and the professional development of educators through self-study of professional practice. The writing from the S-STEP research community guided my data collection. Lyons and LaBoskey(2002) argue that "validity in the [self-study] approach… depends on concrete examples of actual practices, fully elaborated so that members of a relevant research community can judge themselves their 'trustworthiness' and the validity of observations and interpretations" (p.20). The validation of self-study research emerges from the action of the researcher and the reflections of the reader. Bullough and Pinnear (2001) summarize a trustworthy account from the readers' perspective:

> Articles need to be readable and engaging, themes should be evident and identifiable across the conversation or the narrative presented, the connection between autobiography and history must be apparent, the issues attended to need to be central to teaching and teacher education, and sufficient evidence must be garnered that readers will have no difficulty recognizing the authority of scholarly voice, not just its authenticity. (p.20)

I developed my study to foster a relationship between my research and potential readers. Characteristics that I included to improve the trustworthiness of research were: 1) trying to capture my intentional actions, including social, cultural, historical context through a regular practice of journal writing; 2) including other people in the unpacking of my narrative through the use of a critical friends' group; and 3) trying to render my public account of how I changed and worked towards constructing new meaning in transparent ways (Craig, 2009, LaBoskey, 2004). I also included timelines and diagrams to help guide the reader through the sequences and thought processes of my account.

I maintained a teaching journal from September 2012 to April 2014. My teaching journal recorded my emerging, collaborative, sense making as a middle school teacher in Kelowna, British Columbia. I collaborated with theory, my colleagues, and my students. My self-knowledge grew through a relational process recorded in my journals.

During my research I worked at a school with approximately 650 students, located in a moderate to low socio- economic area. 15% of the student population is Aboriginal, 13% have designated special needs, and 42% of the students do not currently live with their mother and father. The first year of my study was my 8th year of teaching and the second year that I had been teaching at my school and living in British Columbia. During the first year of the study I taught: social studies 9, English 9, media arts, and a class in yearbook design. In the second year, my social studies 9 course was replaced with a leadership class and the rest of my courses stayed the same.

In my writing I focused on social justice teaching experiences in my classroom context and working with an all-girls club that I developed called Amicia. My data also included a two-hour audio recording from an open discussion with critical friends. The data from critical friends offered new perspectives.

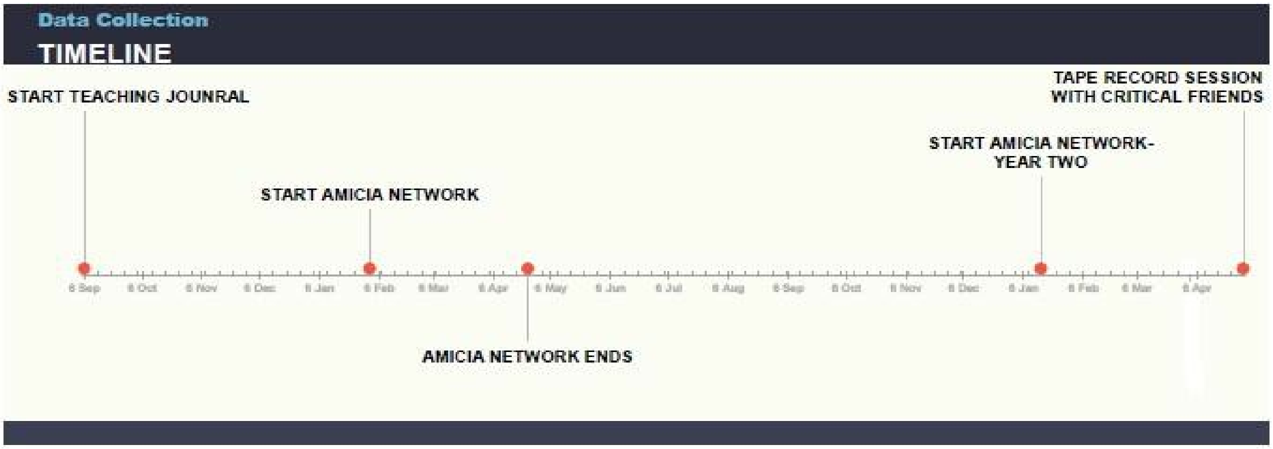
Data Collection
TIMELINE
START TEACHING JOUNRAL
START AMICIA NETWORK
AMICIA NETWORK ENDS
START AMICIA NETWORK-
YEAR TWO
TAPE RECORD SESSION
WITH CRITICAL FRIENDS
6 Sep
6 Oct
6 Nov
6 Dec
6 Jan
6 Feb
6 Mar
6 Apr
6 May
6 Jun
6 Jul
6 Aug
6 Sep
6 Oct
6 Nov
6 Dec
6 Jan
6 Feb
6 Mar
6 Apr

Figure 3:1. Data Collection Timeline.

To begin the journaling process, in September 2012, I wrote a biography (included in chapter one). I also wrote a statement of my teaching philosophy. These narratives were a baseline to note possible influences from my history and to note any philosophical changes that emerged from the study.

Throughout the months of September, 2012 to February, 2013 I wrote in my reflective journal one to three times a week either directly before or after school. I started each entry with the date and the time. My early journal entries explored all aspects of my teaching practice: planning, behavior management, critical issues that arose in the classroom. Through the journals I expressed my emotions, my actions, and my thoughts. The length of my journal entries usually ranged from one to two pages typed.

In the first months I would typically include details about a lesson I created around social justice or emergent social justice learning. I would write what happened, what I thought and felt about the experience and what interactions I had with others. In between journal entries I would reread my journal and I would sometimes record additional notes in the margin.

After February, 2013 I decided to focus my writing on one particular social justice initiative called Amicia. Amicia is a leadership and mentorship group for adolescent girls. The name Amicia is derived from the Latin word amiticia, which means political friendship. Amicia grew out of concerns about girl wellness at my school. Initially, I was approached by a grade nine student who was passionate about the struggles young girls face. She had experienced and observed girls battling insecurities and demonstrating relational aggression. Her experiences made her anxious about transitioning to high school. On her recommendation, Amicia became a mentorship program between middle school girls and girls from our neighborhood high school. Creating Amicia represented my social justice sense-making in my new school. I wanted to learn more about myself in this context as Amicia was an opportunity for culturally relevant teaching.

I worked work with Amicia during two different time periods in my study. The first time was February to April, 2013 and the second time started in January 2014. During the first year of my research Amicia was supported by two outside community members. Two university students in their final year of nursing school who needed to work in a community program for their practicum were assigned to work with Amicia. These nursing students became important partners for collaborative conversations about our work and provided another perspective through which to view my self. In the second year Amicia was organized and facilitated by a group of seven girls in grades ten, eleven and twelve from our neighborhood high school. In the second year the group was also supported by me and two high school teachers.

Throughout both years I wrote journal entries about my work with Amicia. I wrote about myself as a collaborator, a leader and a facilitator. During Amicia meetings I would write observations on sticky notes and then write detailed journal entries once a week using these notes and observations from my recollections. Again, these entries were approximately one to two typed pages. During the second year of my study I also wrote about the personal transformation I was noticing in comparison to the first year.

The final stage of my data collection was a two-hour conversation with three critical friends. The recorded conversation was held in April, 2014 after ethics permission was granted. The friends were invited to the conversation based on pre-existing relationships of mutual respect and for the different perspectives they could offer. While I had shared and reflected on interactions with a variety of colleagues, students, administrators and the university nursing students as ways to understand myself throughout my study, my critical friends were selected because they had been the strongest collaborative influences throughout the study. My critical friends were the teachers with whom I worked most closely. I presented data from my research to these friends. I shared examples from journals and how I interpreted them. Their perspectives influenced the crystallization of the meaning I derived from my data. The following section is a description of my data analysis process.

Data Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data needs to start from the beginning of the research (Glense, 1999, Gubrium and Holstein 2002). As I started my teaching journal, I attempted to make sense of the data. My data did not test a theory, but rather served as observations from which new theory could emerge. I did not know where my journals would lead me, only that I was looking to create self-knowledge about myself as a social justice teacher. Glaser and Strauss (1967), explain how theory emerges from data as symbolic interactionism where the researcher explores “basic social processes to understand the multiplicity of interactions that produces variation in that process" (Heath & Crowley, 2003 p. 142). In my research, meaning emerged from self-study methods of reframing, sharing and examining events. New knowledge was generated by creating new theories for understanding as opposed to making experiences fit pre-existing theories.

In my data analysis awareness of the self and its relationship to data was essential. In self-study and other qualitative methodologies researchers are often seen as “social beings whose experiences, ideas and assumptions can contribute to their understanding of social processes observed" (Heath & Crowley, 2003, p.143). Part of my analysis was to include descriptions of how my own background, context and research interests were impacting my data.

After a year and a half of journaling, I went back and marked my journals with a series of colours, breaking down the data into discrete incidents. The colours became codes for similar ideas I noticed had emerged from the journal entries. I grouped the colour-coded texts into similar concepts in order to make the data more workable. From these concepts, themes started to emerge that seemed significant to social justice education. I compared and contrasted all of the themes with the findings from my ongoing literature review. The themes that emerged were informed by critical pedagogy, transformative leadership and Theory U. My final themes were presented to my critical friends to broaden, challenge and provide further insight into how I organized my experiences into themes.

Three main themes emerged from this ongoing analytical process: *self in contradiction, self as leader* and *presencing*. Within these main themes, I identified several categories, or subthemes. The first theme was *self in contradiction,* developed through the subthemes: a) struggling to find the space for social justice, b) using jargon and c) excuses why not to change. The second theme is *self as leader*, developed through the subthemes: a) collaboration and b) border crossing. The third theme is *presencing*, developed through the subthemes: a) collaboration, b) letting come. These themes identified significant self-knowledge that impacted my social justice teaching. Figure 2 illustrates the major themes that emerged from this study and how they are located in relation to the timeline of my study.

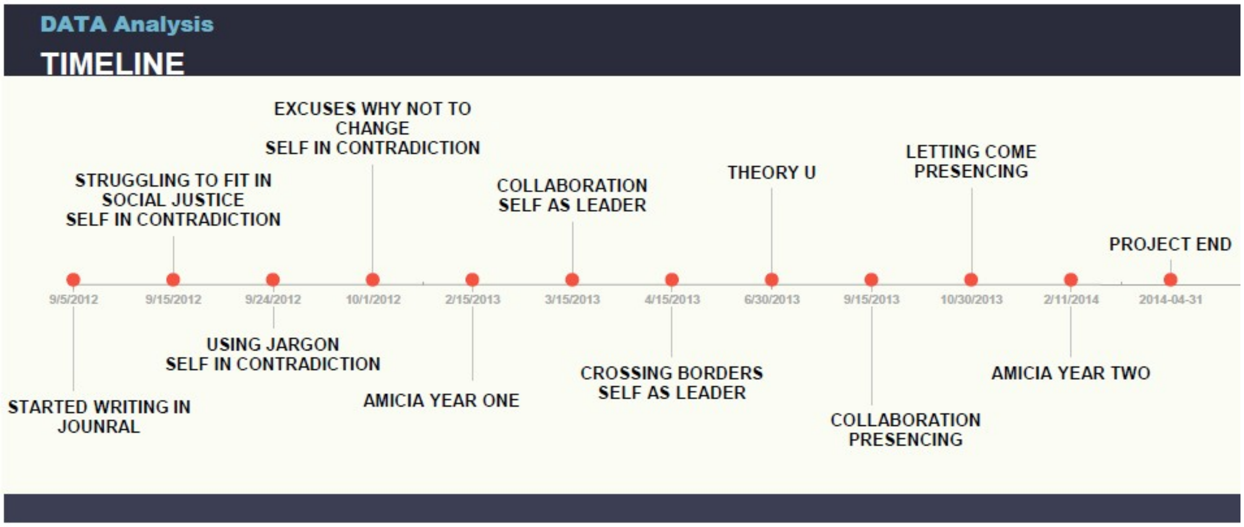
DATA Analysis
TIMELINE
EXCUSES WHY NOT TO CHANGE
SELF IN CONTRADICTION
STRUGGLING TO FIT IN SOCIAL JUSTICE
SELF IN CONTRADICTION
COLLABORATION
SELF AS LEADER
THEORY U
LETTING COME
PRESENCING
PROJECT END
9/5/2012
9/15/2012
9/24/2012
10/1/2012
2/15/2013
3/15/2013
4/15/2013
6/30/2013
9/15/2013
10/30/2013
2/11/2014
2014-04-31
USING JARGON
SELF IN CONTRADICTION
STARTED WRITING IN JOUNRAL
AMICIA YEAR ONE
CROSSING BORDERS
SELF AS LEADER
COLLABORATION
PRESENCING
AMICIA YEAR TWO

Figure 3:2. Data Analysis Timeline.

Theory U is indicated on my data analysis timeline because it was the start of a thematic shift in the data, a shift toward transformative leadership. By reflecting on the patterns emerging from my data I experienced personal growth. The process of reflection also created new habits of mind to continue to notice the self in my work.

Through observing the self over time I began to develop self-study intuition. This is a strength of the self-study methodology; you get better at self-study the more you do it. Tigwell and Fitzgeral (2006) write about the "synergistic relationship between self-study and change"(p. 78) and the "intuitive nature of experience" (p. 85). They argue that intuition becomes sharpened the more informed and practiced one is in self-study.

My intention was not to settle and confirm the issues that emerged from my data but rather to provoke and illuminate, to offer a personal trustworthy example in which I linked my intentional growth to growth of self-knowledge. As my ability to observe myself was strengthening, so too was the trustworthiness of my research. I was gaining an authority of experience (Russel, 2004; Northfield & Loughran, 1998) through “repeated self-critical analysis of experiences in a conscious attempt to know or understand them” (Ham & Kane, 2007, p. 126). As my self-study progressed, I felt a growing sense of confidence in my narrative. However there were still difficulties.

Creating a linear account to report and describe my research was challenging. Self-study is improvement oriented and requires evidence of reframed thinking and transformed practice (LaBoskey, 2004). My research process was multilayered and I struggled to articulate my learning. My experiences were interconnected but not linear, "neither life nor thought are as tidy or linear as they are when they are presented in this form [self-study report]" (Griffths, 2002, p. 162, sited in LaBoskey, 2004). The need for linear reporting of experiences is a limitation for self-study research. Tracking my change, making sense of change experiences in relationship to what I was learning in the literature review in a linear fashion was challenging but I tried to report in a linear manner to provide evidence of change in a way my readership could make sense of. While self-study methodology demands we formalize our work it is also open to integrating innovative ways of describing learning (Galman, 2009). Theory U was a helpful storytelling method as the path of transformation is U shaped and examines cognitive stages. I used this U shape to create depth and dimension in my account.

In the following chapter I present the findings from my analysis in the order depicted in my data analysis timeline. I develop my 'scholarly voice' (Bullough & Pinnear, 2001) by weaving my understanding of my journals through insight from literature. To increase my transparency I provide summaries of my teaching journal entries as well as direct quotes from my journal. Throughout the remainder of my thesis direct quotes from my journal and those from the critical friend conversations are indicated with italics.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

The themes that emerged from the data analysis were guided by my overarching research question of what self-knowledge can be gained through my journey to become a more socially just educator. The central narratives that emerged from my journals were: *self in contradiction, self as a leader* and *presence*. The theme *self in contradiction* summarized contradictions between my thoughts and actions. For example, although I believed in the importance of teaching for social justice, I struggled to find ways to integrate social justice in my classroom due to a habit of approaching social justice teaching as an additional responsibility. Other examples of contradiction involved using jargon (empty and over-specialized words) and making excuses for why not to change. The second major theme I reflected on was *self as a leader*. Through this theme I examined my struggle to create culturally responsive education through the girls group Amicia. In *self as a leader* I explore my frustration with collaboration and my fear of crossing borders. The third theme was *presencing* (Scharmer, 2009). In the theme *presencing* I describe how I began to see myself as a more effective collaborator and how this collaboration led to transformative leadership and into new practices of inquiry and mindfulness.

Theme One: Self in Contradiction

I began my teaching journal reflecting on my teaching beliefs:

> *I believe that learning is a result of the interaction of teaching and learning and it is through this process the teacher and student grow through a reciprocal relationship; both continually learn through a process of reflection and experience. In my experience learning occurs as a result of "creative acts within complex environments" (Bennett & Rolheiser 2001, p.15).* (Teaching Journal, Sept 2012)

Later in the same journal entry I described my ideal of the teaching and learning process:

> *At its potential this process* [teaching and learning] *is one of continual engagement with the world around us, living consciously and joyfully so we can sustain, grow and evolve.* (Teaching Journal, Sept 2012)

When I compared these statements to my first few months of journal writing I noticed gaps between my stated ideals and my day-to-day thoughts and reflections. I noticed three sources of contradiction. First, I struggled to include social justice in my teaching. Second, I noticed I was using jargon in my descriptions of my teaching, and finally, I made excuses for why I did not change.

Struggling to find the space for social justice

> *32 students in my class! Half grade 8s and half grade 9s. I expected 18. This course will run for the whole year. Course description - none! My experience in teaching the course…none! I had to advocate for the class to be capped at 30.* (Teaching Journal, Sept 2012)

Later in this same entry, after expressing discomfort in my new teaching assignment, I questioned how I might include social justice lessons in making the school yearbook. The question of social justice appeared after fretting and planning other lessons. The order of my writing suggested social justice was an afterthought on a long list of worries and things to do.

I had a full schedule at my middle school, which included teaching students how to make a yearbook. However, planning where to fit social justice into my program was counter to my belief that social justice should be an integral educational approach. The journal entry showed how, as I wondered where in my schedule I would find opportunities for social justice, I was disconnected from my philosophy.

I did not make this observation at the time of writing and when I re-visited my early journal entries months later in the self-study process I was surprised. It surprised me that I wrote more about getting through the school day than social justice and that I was treating the two as different things. The commonality I noticed in all my writing about my teaching was that my focus was teacher directed. Teaching was something I planned out and executed. Realizing this was troublesome because critical pedagogy emphasizes democracy in the classroom and I shared that value.

At the start of the school year I wrote about being eager to create a democratic community. In my journal I described speaking to the students about creating a classroom democracy, but I did not have a strategy for integrating student voice back into the classroom. For example, I had students share what was important to them in terms of classroom routines but I had preplanned our classroom values and routines, so I did not use their perspectives in our classroom expectations. My practice was not reciprocal or transformative, but teacher-directed:

> *I felt particular panic... sense of dread, before this class. Today we must finish a PowerPoint for the spirit assembly. I have committed our class to so many deadlines and community projects. We are making monthly PowerPoint presentations for our school assemblies, posting school wide blogs, committed to writing reports for our local newspaper and of course the yearbook itself. I am fearful. What if I am the only one that does the work… someone has to do it… what if the kids don't finish! Then it will be left on me. I have started to use a job analogy with the students. What kind of workers are they, would be hired and fired, I ask them. Even though I define my role as paraphraser, summarizer and time keeper, I feel myself slipping into the role of boss.* (Teacher Journal, September, 2012)

Fueled by stress, I encouraged a commodity-based work place consistent with neo-liberal values rather than democratic. My lesson plans were a 'things to do list' and I had difficulty coping with the number of tasks I was required to complete. Social justice was not integrated into the foundation of my practice and "creative acts within complex environments" (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001, p.15) were not evident as the emergent needs of starting a new school year took precedence. Lockers, course syllabuses, class size and composition, resources, students being switched in and out of classes, held my attention and energy.

Again and again through the early months, my journals focused on the trivial and mundane, and I rarely focused on social justice. My descriptions of my emotions reflected my general feeling of being upset and worried about routine tasks. I wrote about students leaving garbage in and around desks, about being frustrated when students save seats for each other. I wrote that writing in my journal was making me tired. Perhaps the students sensed this.

My students may have followed my direction and perceived social justice education as a separate thing to do and in response provided feedback that they were not interested. One month into my journaling (October, 2012), I started to create lesson plans to scaffold the students to think critically and honestly about the media. These lessons were in addition to other classroom activities I had established and the students were reluctant to engage:

> *Already the media program has shifted from the critical thinking lessons I had planned. The students show so much interest in design. I had planned on alternating between design projects and digital citizenship lessons but the students are getting immersed in design.* (Teaching Journal, October 2012)

In separating social justice activities students were not able to see the value in them. The students enjoyed the exploration of new computer programs but resisted social justice analysis. This is not English class (or social studies), the students would groan:

> *Media studies: we did a lesson from media awareness website on stereotypes. The lesson came with a photocopy that probed thought… not much thinking occurred. I try to get discussions going whenever I see an opportunity.* (Teaching Journal, October, 2012)

My journal suggested my pedagogy of photocopied lesson plans interspersed into a unit did not engage or transform student learning. I was so bogged down in the details of running a classroom that when I did plan something I allowed it to be negotiable or it was hastily planned.

During the months of September and October, 2012, my social justice teaching was weak and sparse. However, embedded into the journals was the language of social justice practice such as transformative schooling (Solomon, et al., 2011). While writing about creating a classroom democracy I noted the term transformative schooling in my journal. Transformative schooling is a "democratic project that informs educational practices for fostering open-mindedness, social responsibility, and academic success, as well as confidence in oneself and security in ones' identity (Solomon, et al., 2011, p.187). I had highlighted and asterisked that term. In a transformative model of schooling students are given the opportunity to transform their views about themselves and the world around them. However, as noted, my classroom democracy was based on my rules and belief systems. There was a lack of consistency in my journals between my stated philosophy and my teaching action.

Sometimes I used social justice language like 'transformative schooling' to describe my practice but without exemplifying the concept in my practices. I was using social justice language as jargon, language which is characterized by uncommon or pretentious vocabulary. The language I was using was creating another element of contradiction in my writing.

Using jargon: how language contributed to self-contradiction

> *…these* [media arts and yearbook class] *will be good places to focus on social justice issues by critically examining images, by challenging the status quo and providing an opportunity for us to deconstruction what ideas we are reproducing through images.* (Teaching Journal, October, 2012)

The language of critical pedagogy (transformative schooling, critically examine, challenge status quo, deconstruction, reproduction) was present in my writing, but missing in my teaching practice. That I used the language was not surprising as during that time I was reading a lot of social justice literature. What was problematic was that I did not act out this language. The language I used was not qualified through examples in my teaching.

Discrepancies of language also appeared when describing myself. I sometimes used jargon to describe myself as a teacher, *I feel totally empowered and completely emerged in a deeply academic process in media arts* (Teaching Journal, October, 2012). I wrote this without acknowledging my earlier complaints that students were resisting critical thinking in favor of learning technical skills needed for design. With contradiction between the experiences I wrote about and my descriptions of self, my perspective seemed flippant and emotional. In later reflection I relate discrepancies of language to a lack of understanding of social justice education.

Problems with language are common for social justice educators. For example, Durst (2006) is questioning of critical pedagogy, explaining that often the language used by critical pedagogues is too broad and unclear. As a result of uncertainty practitioners can become confused as they work through a poorly defined process. Others, such as Ellsworth (1989), wonder if the jargon of critical pedagogy masks empty assumptions and creates confusion. Based on my journal data it seemed I was not able to translate language from my readings into changed classroom practice. I was constrained by my lack of personal resources to effectively embed change into my practice.

As I reread my journal entries I started to ask, what do I really mean by this? When did I do this? Where does this language come from? In the first few months of journaling there were times when I wrote about not reaching my social justice goals but in those entries there were also excuses for why I did not change.

Excuses for why I do not change

By November 2012, my research was causing me some frustration and fatigue. Rather than examine the self, I saw my difficulties as a product of the system I worked in. I blamed my struggles on intensification. I had read about intensification while reviewing critical pedagogy literature (Apple, 1993; Kanpol, 1999; Solomon, et al., 2011).

Through my reading I connected to the theory of intensification. I felt like I was burning-out and it became a crutch for me. I often wrote about how over-worked and busy I was. I perceived this busyness as something the education system does to teachers that teachers have no control over. When I became frustrated and confused I was quick to blame my profession. Excuses about why not to change created a contradiction: how can you change when you believe you cannot change? I believed I was too busy and that there was nothing I could do to change this busyness except take on less. If I perceived social justice as an additional thing to do in my teaching, then it seemed legitimate to wonder if there was enough time to pursue social justice:

> *Maintaining professional satisfaction, autonomy and artistic expression in the teaching profession has been difficult as I battle with workload, lack of adequate support and conflicting demands, all of which lead to a sense of burn out and fatigue.* (Teaching Journal, October, 2012)

Through an intensification narrative I was describing an inability to reach my goals. I made it easy for myself to throw up my hands and say, “I can't do it.” I am not suggesting that teacher burn out was not a real factor in my life and the lives of other teachers. However, moving forward based on reflection, I realized I that I can recognize when I feel overwhelmed and address those feelings instead of allowing them to provide an excuse that led me further away from my social justice teaching objectives. Part of addressing my feelings required a shift in how I was approaching social justice, putting social justice at the center of my teaching. However, I needed a model for this.

By the end of November 2012, I started to be confronted with the idea that I was using the same teacher-directed model of information dissemination that I grew up with, one that ignored the tough questions rather than engaged with them. I started to revisit some of journal entries, writing notes in the margins:

> *I am starting to really question my teaching…my classes are very skill based… when I look at transformative pedagogy and what my goals are for the year I am not sure that I am getting things right.* (Teaching Journal, November, 2012)

I began to refocus on my goal of teaching for social justice. I knew I was not approaching social justice in an effective way. Through self- examination I was learning to be more critical of my teaching. I started to try to use language that was more accurate, focusing on what I was doing rather than just dropping terms that seemed to speak of social justice.

I felt I needed to design more specific lessons and units with a social justice focus. I started to let go of the more trivial matters that were filling my days. I re-wrote my goals to make them more specific. November 2012, I wrote, *I need to spend more time developing critical thinking skills; specifically I want to improve my questioning skills* (Teaching Journal). The need to develop critical thinking skills in my students would have been an insight which would have created stronger social justice teaching. However, it took time before I closely followed that observation.

During these first few months of journaling I also made observations about the culture of my school and issues I perceived students to face. One of the things I noticed was the depiction of females in the media programs. I wrote about over-sexualized female characters in animation programs for kids and negative attitudes towards female students by male students and the depiction and treatment of girls through various forms of media. Amicia girls' club was an example of culturally responsive education that came from my reflections. I wanted to create opportunities for girls, supported by girls, to problem solve difficulties girls were facing in school. With my own background experiences of aggression between adolescent girls in mind, I wanted to create positive relationships between diverse groups of girls. This was a leadership initiative. The second theme in my analysis is *self as leader*. This section describes the self-knowledge I gained through facilitating an all-girls network that I called Amicia.

Theme Two: Self as a Leader

> *I thought I wanted to collaborate but then I felt frustrated when the group went in directions that I did not expect. I thought I wanted the leadership responsibility but got scared when I was unclear about certain boundaries.* (Teaching Journal, March 2013)

I wanted to involve myself as a leader in the school and to work towards social justice, but glimpses into my shortcomings had brought on new feelings of frustration and a deepening sense of being unsure. To hide my insecurities and protect myself from stress I also just wanted to retreat and leave what I did not know uncovered. Learning about *self as a leader* was another fruitful part of this journey.

As I reflected on examples of gender inequality in my school and community, I was reminded that the purpose of my self-study was not to evoke a paralyzing voice of judgment, cynicism or fear but to create self-awareness for action. For example, I wrote about Amanda Todd, a young teen in the province who committed suicide due to cyber-bullying. The life and death of Amanda Todd impacted me deeply. I remember crying while watching her video posted on U Tube. Amanda had experienced online sexual exploitation and cyber-bullying for years before she decided to take her own life and the video was her suicide note.. I wrote:

> *The suicide of Amanda Todd is heartbreaking. She found her voice through the very thing that destroyed her but only her death made people listen. How was she disempowered by existing social and institutional practices? Her life now serves to provide powerful dialogue for change.* (Teaching Journal, October, 2012)

Amanda's death and observations from my teaching journals on student use of social media motivated me to examine what my role could be in educating girls on: the media, bullying, mental health, self-exploitation and harm. I felt Amanda's story had the potential to create disruption in how we think about social media through creating discussions in the classroom:

> Children provide a powerful referent for pedagogy of disruption, social criticism, and collective change because their suffering and hardships offer the pedagogical promise of a public hearing. (Giroux, 1993, p. 183)

My need to have meaningful conversations with my students around Amanda's experiences was compounded by surprising lack of sympathy demonstrated by many students. When asked about their irreverence they explained that when people make bad choices, bad things happen. A range of issues and problems were emerging through the pedagogy of disruption created by Amanda. I was eager to examine this culture of blame. Did I influence students to have such a rationale? In my journal I examined our school culture as one that blames victim. I called it “the stolen IPod mentality; *if you don’t want your IPOD stolen, don’t bring it to school*” (Teaching Journal, October, 2012). I felt I had taught kids that if they made a mistake there would be a consequence, but did I spend enough time teaching them empathy, fair mindedness and critical thinking? I wanted my students to be able to make evaluations that included the complexity of the human experience and that, above all, valued human life.

When I shared these observations with my critical friends they confirmed my experience with Amanda's death. They remembered their own surprise at the lack of compassion from their students. Amanda's painful example encouraged me to imagine values and practices that might have supported Amanda Todd. This experience was part of my call to action.

In my journal I also reflected on a female student who challenged the others, *Amanda was bullied; she was bullied so badly that she took her own life*, she had said. Rather than blame Amanda she was blaming the bully. While her perspective was not the dominant voice, I wanted to create a dialogue between these perspectives. I wanted to provide girls a space where female students could hash out things that happen in society, a space for Amanda's example to be untangled by girls and for girls, a space where girls could teach each other.

The administration at my school was in full support and in February, 2013 I was offered the chance to collaborate with two nursing students from the local university who would work with the group as part of their practicum. Together, with students who had expressed similar concerns, we decided to start the program Amicia.

I organized my experience with Amicia into two subthemes that summarize self-knowledge gained about *self as a leader*. In the first section I describe my experiences with *collaboration*. In the second section I describe my experience with *crossing borders*, exploring how I might pioneer new teaching sites such Facebook and how I was crossing borders between formal and informal learning.

Collaboration

In January 2013, the nurses and I met to discuss how we would support the group. During this planning two different visions emerged. The nurses wanted to create a workshop program for the girls that could be used in the future. Based on successful examples of culturally relevant teachers (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995) I wanted to create a student-initiated, open-ended learning environment. I thought this would help me resolved and my self-critique that I often treat social justice as an *add on*. The nurses challenged me on this; they wanted me to know what content we would cover, but I did not know. I knew that I did not want to facilitate a worksheet-driven workshop. I wanted the direction of the learning to come from the students:

> *The nurses are under pressure to complete their 40 hours community service, they are task oriented and want to create plans for beyond their time with the students. They are a fantastic resource but I am worried that we will lose the voice of the students due to adult drive and interest in the group.* (Teaching Journal, March, 2013)

I wanted the high school girls to take the lead, allowing them to solve the problems together. I was unsure of how to create a learning environment that encouraged students to become leaders. The students also had their own perspective on leadership:

> ***Me****: I am trying to figure out how to best support you girls so that you can support yourselves.*
> ***Student****: it's hard because you can't get too involved but you can't be too uninvolved, for example a teacher needs to monitor the Facebook site and a teacher needs to keep the students on track and focused.*
> ***Me****: I just don't want to take over and tell the girls what I think they should do. How can we help girls become leaders?*
> ***Student****: you won't need to take over if we have the right students in the leadership positions. The selection of the girl leaders will be important; we need to have some kind of application process.* (Teaching Journal, March, 2013)

She did not answer my question of how can we help girls become leaders, not just empower those who are already successful in leadership roles. Through this process I questioned the assumptions of the nurses, the students' and my own notions of leadership. The assumption that students need to be monitored and controlled and that we needed to carefully select the leadership for this group made me uncomfortable. I wanted to engage in deeper conversations about what it means to be a leader, and how it is decided who becomes a leader, but I did not have the tools to do this. It would be later, in recognizing my own shift to working as a transformative leader that I would gain insight into leadership development that I could share with my students.

At that time I was confused and I left my questions on leadership development aside and focused on the differences of opinion between me and the nurses. I wanted assistance in facilitating student-led pedagogy but because the nurses did not offer this I began to struggle with seeing the value of our collaboration. Adding to my difficulties was the need to collaborate with the high school to make time for the students to meet:

> *The girls club is frustrating me; there are so many different stakeholders involved with this club but the club is nothing without the full participation of the high school and I am having difficulties connecting with the high school. I am wondering what the difference is between being given an opportunity and having something dumped in your lap.* (Teaching Journal, April, 2013)

I wrote that the girls club was being dumped in my lap, because I was frustrated with coordinating with so many different people. I felt like I was the one responsible for Amicia and that it might be easier to just run the network by myself. As I reflected on my difficulties I rationalized them:

> *The girls club is a complex task and that complex tasks can be difficult for educators to manage when they work under "stressful, disempowering, and challenging conditions, and must navigate complex webs of internal and external demands, including the hierarchical culture of school, policies that foster social inequalities, orthodox professional training, etc.*" (Nieto and Bode, 2008). (Teacher Journal, March, 2013).

This was the same intensification argument I used in the first months of school. Habitual ways of making sense of my teaching seemed to be lingering; feeling overburdened was, once again, a reason not to change. Ineffective collaboration skills created a ripple effect of difficulty. Without the support of a truly collaborative network, I could not share the load of Amicia or my uncertainties. I created borders to maintain my comfort zone, making change difficult. Border crossing (Giroux, 1993) is a metaphor to describe breaking down barriers. Crossing imaginary boundaries put in place by tradition was daunting. In the following section I detail self-borders I needed to cross.

Border Crossing

Crossing borders was a stressful part of my work with Amicia. One border was using the social media site, Facebook, in school. Facebook played a role in friendships and the cultivation of identity for some girls at my school. It was also the social media site Amanda Todd was bullied on and thus I believed it was relevant to our group. Facebook is an example of a larger barrier: I had defined a border between students' private lives and school life. Facebook was of their private world. The nursing students and girls network students were adamant that we use Facebook as a way for the girls to communicate. However, I was not comfortable with this:

> *I am concerned that it is going to create problems that I am not prepared to cope with; what if someone posts something inappropriate? As a teacher I don't want to have access to viewing the students Facebook pages! What will my responsibility be if I viewed something that concerns me? Despite these concerns I am compelled to use Facebook because it represents a form of communication that has been ignored by the schools and possibly misused by some students as a consequence.* (Teaching Journal, March, 2013)

Crossing between private life and school life is often implicit in social justice work. To work with the girls effectively required insight into their lives outside of school. I was avoiding blurring the lines between public and private because I did not want to feel responsible for that part of students' lives. I thought it would create more work that I did not have time for. At the time I had sought advice from the administration:

> *I look to my vice principal for direction the use of Facebook but he only listens. I think he wants to give me the confidence to do what I think is right but I am concerned that the misappropriation of Facebook could lead to serious problems for me and the students involved.* (Teaching Journal, March, 2013)

My principal was supporting me but I remember wanting to be told what to do. I was not feeling confident about my decision-making.

The final insight I gleaned from the Facebook example was a border I was maintaining between informal and formal learning—what we learn in the classroom and what we learn outside of the classroom. My journals revealed an unconscious belief that the most important learning happens in the classroom:

> *The lunchtime meetings find me rushed and tired, the nurses have done an amazing job facilitating our meetings. It allows me to sit back and observe and also catch my breath. I know I would struggle to continually motivate myself to hold the lunch time meetings without them. These feelings leave me wondering if I am investing my energy in ways that will best benefit my students. Why is this work not being done in the classroom?*
> *In addressing social justice issues outside of the classroom am I participating in the creation of a school culture that views social justice as add on to learning rather than an integral part?* (Teaching Journal, March, 2013)

On the one hand, I wanted to give students control of their learning and I wanted to cross borders to access new learning but on the other hand I wanted keep learning in the traditional classroom.

Through focusing on the self, I was able to examine how barriers can be self-imposed. Social justice teaching requires an evaluation of our assumptions and when I started to see the borders around me as self-imposed I could see how my own thoughts were holding me back. This motivated me to be more open to new things. Senge (as cited in Scharmer, 2009) notes that, “people begin to consciously discover and account for how their own patterns of thought and interactions manifest on a large scale and create the very forces by which the organization then 'is doing it to me'” (p.54). By the end of April, 2013, Amicia had ended for the year and I had identified and crossed some barriers. In the end we had used Facebook to create the online support network. Through self-study I was learning about my own potential from inventing and re-inventing my own story through the lens of self-awareness.

Through my experience with Amicia in year one, I knew I needed to shift how I collaborated. This awareness led to presencing and an access to a field where deeper levels of interaction happen, where increased self- awareness led to improved action. Presencing is at the bottom of the U, where Scharmer (2009 suggests that both the past and the present intersect. The final theme from my data highlights how self-knowledge led to improved collaboration.

Theme Three: Presencing

During the second year of my study I started to pause and reflect on my emotions in the moment, not just when I was journaling. This became a new habit in my work. This was a shift. I noticed how the feeling of intensification (feeling over worked, under supported, and pulled in too many directions) would cause me to be defensive and self-righteous. Noticing those feelings gave me the opportunity to suspend them. I could suspend them because I knew that if I did not the outcome would be a breakdown in communication, which I did not want. Changing my way of thinking changed what I did and my understanding of why I was doing it. My journals were providing lampposts of my shift to transformative leadership through innovative leadership methods, otherwise, “attempts at restructuring, redesigning… more often than not serve to only deepen our frustration and cynicism" (Scharmer, 2009, p. 40) as they continue to reveal more of the same kinds of solutions as tried in the past. All transformation requires "not only change in what we know or are able to do but also a dramatic shift in how we come to know and how we understand ourselves" (Dirkx, 2012, p. 116). The U helped me to describe the changes and shifts I experienced as I went from downloading information to acting from a place of presence.

Collaboration

Late in October 2013, I wrote about a conversation with a frustrated coworker who was concerned about students using headphones and music devices in her classes. Even though I agreed with this teacher's frustration, I was not confronting my students about their use of headphones. As she spoke I felt a defensiveness creep up in me. I started to feel annoyed with myself for not taking a stand with my students and I could feel myself starting to internally rationalize and defend my behavior. In the past I would have gotten hung up at this point, feeling like my behavior management is too lax. I might have even wondered if my coworker was judging me on this point:

> *I suspended my feelings and listened to what she was saying… thinking about where she was coming from and validating that she had a point. We started exploring the topic further. As my colleague spoke I found myself connecting her thoughts to an inquiry grant I was applying for. Once all of these ideas got on the table (my mindfulness strategies and her frustration with students listening to music to avoid learning) the feel of the discussion between us was energetic. We were both excited about how we could use this language of being present and mindful with other teachers and community members to start working on some of the struggles we were having with our students, specifically, their use of technology and their perception of appropriateness. She was really supportive of the inquiry concept and had helped me understand the inquiry better by deeply considering her perspective and experiences. We both agreed that using this new lens might help us avoid useless power struggles with our students in the future.* (Journal Entry October, 2013)

This was an example of presence and how I was starting to use the processes of Theory U (Scharmer, 2009). Scharmer (2009) describes the listening in my example as fourth level listening, "you know that you have been operating on the fourth level when at the end of the conversation, you realize that you are no longer the same person you were when you started the conversation"(p.13). Through deep listening, I started to connect with others in a transformative way. In the next section I describe the progress I made by working from a place of presence and explain how I used my self-knowledge to work with others to create social justice pedagogy.

Letting Come

In the second year of my study I started sharing my experiences with self-study more openly. This included discussing the work I had done with Amicia and my struggles with empowering students to be self-directed in their learning. A colleague recognized my desired approach as student-led inquiry and she connected me to the Healthy Schools Network (HSN), an organization in British Columbia that develops teachers' proficiency with an inquiry approach to teaching and learning.

I immediately connected with the inquiry approach, which, like critical pedagogy, facilitated a view of knowledge wherein knowledge is constructed, problematic, questionable and moldable. An inquiry approach prioritizes student voice since students pose and investigate their own questions, rather than regurgitating facts and content. An inquiry approach allows students to focus on issues that are important to them.

With this approach in mind, my colleague and I created a leadership program at our school. Throughout the first phase, September 2013- January, 2014, our students cycled through a range of social justice inquiry questions: How can we use technology positively? How can we raise awareness of internet bullying and safety? How can create a school wide understanding of essential human rights? Through these inquiries students attempted to follow a cycle of asking questions, scanning available knowledge on the topic, developing a hunch, refining their questions, pursuing knowledge, and recording how what they learned impacted their answers.

Our vision was to give students control of their own learning. However throughout this process my colleague and I became frustrated. Many of our students were getting lost in the inquiry process. They were off task and not getting work completed. As a group we experienced further conflict as each month we were expected to showcase our school by hosting a student pride assembly. These assemblies created lengthy '*to do lists'* and as a class we reverted to a teacher directed management style. This was much like what I experienced in my first year of journaling.

Having become more habituated to focusing on the self, I noticed the symptoms of being disconnected from social justice teaching right away. Why was this happening again? It seemed we were too busy to change. That was when I realized that perhaps mindful, reflective practices were missing from the inquiry model we were using with the students. The self-study methods had trained me to cultivate attention to self and others and focused listening. I realized these mindfulness strategies had supported my self-inquiry. From this experience I decided to develop mindfulness with my students and my colleagues to support inquiry.

Mindfulness is a method of developing the mind's capabilities through awareness of the mind, a way to live in harmony with oneself and in touch with others (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). I developed my first habits of mindfulness through journaling. When I would journal I would find quiet time to write about my thoughts and activities throughout the day. As I engaged in this writing practice, I became more aware of my thoughts and feelings. The mindfulness I gained through this practice transferred into the next day through little notes and reminders I made of things to which I wanted to give more attention. Writing, reflecting and setting intentions for future actions and thoughts in my work became an important skill set for mindfulness in my work. I have since extended that practice to include a variety of meditations and exercises to improve my focus (Scharmer, 2009; Marturano; 2014; Siegel, 2011) and deepen my practice.

Through self-study and experiencing presencing, I had realized the value of learning and working collaboratively. Creating the inquiry community in my school with my teaching partner and students had helped me to develop proficiency to facilitate mindfulness in my classroom. In this community I learned to develop an integrated approach to teaching mindfulness though role modeling and through explicitly teaching mindfulness skills of breathing mindfully, listening deeply, cultivating insight and limiting reactivity. For me these skills created positive change through improved self-awareness and collaboration (presence).

> *For so long I was paralyzed wondering what the secret was to making things happen, was there a book, a manual? I was frustrated with myself- why didn't I know this stuff? I remember asking a speaker once how she became such an effective facilitator. She said that people have to know you and trust you. I was not happy with that response, it was not enough direction. Now I get it!! I get the relationship she was referring to the connections needed to facilitate action. (Teaching Journal, November, 2013)*

From this new place of presence, crystallizing and clarification of vision became possible. In the final chapter I describe how theory U and the self-study process changed the way I think about teaching for social justice that reflects Brown’s (2004) assertion that "if educational leaders have engaged in self-directed learning, critical reflection, and rational discourse concerning their underlying assumptions about practice, the next logical step is to integrate these assumptions into an informed theory of practice i.e., social action"(p. 97). I have called the knowledge that emerged from this self-study, *U for social justice.* This theory is explained further in chapter five, along with how this theory of change impacted my work with the girls club, Amicia.

CHAPTER FIVE

Crystallizing and Clarification of Vision: U for Social Justice

Through my journals I documented personal transformation that resulted in transformative leadership. I organized my transformational developments into three themes. In the first two themes, *self in contradiction* and *self as leader*, the self was problematized and found to be floundering. The third theme *presence*, highlighted changes stemming from the accumulative learning from the first themes. This chapter is about crystallizing my findings. Crystallizing is a term from Theory U (Scharmer, 2009) and means "clarifying vision and intention from our highest future possibility… crystallizing happens from the deeper place of knowing the self" (Scharmer, 2009, p. 192). The crystallization of my learning was informed by critical pedagogy and transformative leadership theory and is detailed in the section: *U for social justice*. *U for social justice* explored the relationship between self-knowledge and social justice. How my research impacted my leadership practices is examined in the section: *Enacting Social Justice: Transformative Leadership.* Part of crystallizing my experiences was presenting my data to a group of critical friends, and so their feedback is also featured in this chapter.

Bridging the theory/practice divide with personal knowledge to create new theoretical knowledge is integral to critical pedagogy and self-study. Lived theory is praxis and represents the combined efforts of critical reflection and action. Self-studies create lived theories (Whitehead, 2000) based on researchers' experiences in learning and teaching (Chapman & Heater 2010; Darling- Hammond; 2006; Hamilton, 2002; Kitchen, 2005; Northfield & Loughran, 1996; Lock & Munby, 2000; Nuthall 2005; Schulte 2005; Senese, 2002).

Based on the short timeframe of my two-year study, *U for social justice* is a lived theory in its infancy. It represents personal insights into social justice teaching gained from self-knowledge. In *U for social justice* I have reflected on a particular approach to social justice: examining self. Looking at self-knowledge is one part of what it means to be a social justice teacher. Fenstermacher (1994) argues, there is a "quite tight connection between the form of inquiry one uses and the type of knowledge one produces"(p.20). There are many other aspects and perspectives of social justice that I did not gain insight into through my lens, aspects such as cultural production and reproduction, multiculturalism, and critical literacy. These are just a few examples of important and necessary aspects of social justice teaching that did not fall within the scope of this study that was guided by my research questions that focused on self. *U for social justice* is my particular social justice story which led to my shift toward transformative leadership that continues to develop and grow over time.

U for Social Justice

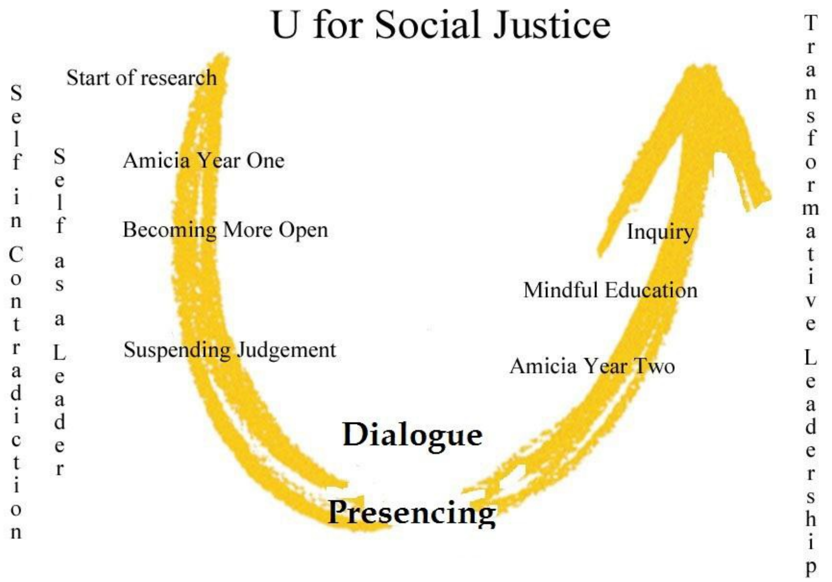
U for Social Justice
Self in Contradiction
Self as a Leader
Start of research
Amicia Year One
Becoming More Open
Suspending Judgement
Dialogue
Presencing
Amicia Year Two
Mindful Education
Inquiry
Transformative Leadership

Figure 5:1 **Self-study experiences organized into a U shape**

U for social justice explains how I related my self-knowledge to the U shape of transformation (Figure 3). I use this model to also describe the relationship I experienced between self-knowledge and critical pedagogy.

The start of my transformation was learning about *self in contradiction*. This is a critical pedagogy practice called conscientization (Freire, 1970), learning from perceiving and revealing contradictions. I learned that I was in contradiction when social justice was not at the center of my teaching practice, when the language I used could not be qualified through experience and when the running narrative in my head justified my inability to reach my goals of social justice. Conscientization is a problem-posing approach to self-knowledge which helped me critically perceive the way I exist in the world (Freire, 1970, p.83).

In becoming aware of self-contradictions, I became more open and flexible with my perspective. Openness to learning was the first step down the U to social justice teaching. All genuine learning requires an open approach, a willingness to engage invention and reinvention, so that we might discover those places of radical transparency where knowledge can empower us and others (hooks, 2010, p 187). Through conscientization I came to believe that a constantly open approach to new knowledge is the root of empowered learning. Since I was more aware of the possibility for self-contradiction I held my opinions and practices more lightly, continually reevaluating and reinventing them. An open approach created distance from self and possible personal bias.

Suspending judgment was another step working down the U process that developed critical pedagogy. Through my growing openness I became less critical of myself and others. I felt connected to my compassion. I identified my struggle as part of the human condition and understood that others experience struggle as well. Seeing my own complexities and shortcomings gave me insight to the complexities of others. Critical pedagogy requires people from a variety of perspectives to work together in an exchange, rather than a depositing system of information. During the first year of working with the nurses and the Amicia network I was not able to suspend judgment. When the nurses' ideas were different from mine I distanced myself from them and the potential for deep collaboration. Suspending judgment allowed me to create more respect and cohesion in the groups I work in. Suspending judgment can create an open and comfortable space. Realizing that, now when I collaborate, I begin by stating, *please know is this is a safe space with no judgment*. Problematizing the self and suspending judgment led me to the bottom of the U, to a state of presence and to creating a dialogical approach to teaching.

Dialogue is important to critical pedagogy. It involves teachers and students learning through a relationship together. The reciprocal nature of learning was something I discussed in my earliest writing but did not exemplify in my practices. Dialogue is a cornerstone for critical pedagogy and when I started become aware of the social field of presence (Scharmar, 2009) I experienced a shift in my pedagogy to dialogue-based inquiry teaching:

> For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention, re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (Freire, 1970, p. 72)

I found when I communicated with people without being reactive or without judgment I could cultivate the social field of presence and create dialogical learning. To promote dialogical learning I became more aware of my values but I also realized that I did not need to be in control and that ideas need to be explored and questioned. I learned I could embrace new ideas rather than trying to force my ideas from the past. This gentle positioning of values did not mean that I lost my conviction. Rather, I had found confidence that I would be fair and open in my teaching approach and this made me less likely to neglect topics of social justice in my classroom. I found when I developed deep listening, communication became stronger and bonds were created. When you are deeply listening to people they feel safe and valued. I found if I remained committed to not judging, conversations deepened. I felt more confident having conversations I need to have with students, engaging them kindly and directly when they expressed stereotypes, used derogatory language or needed personal guidance. I recently talked with a girl who had drawn deep cuts with marker across their wrists and up her arms. We talked about why she drew the cuts and that I felt sad and scared when I saw her drawings. I felt a synergy that continued to deepen between us as we interacted at school. In dialogue and in the social field of presence, challenging conversations are welcomed and necessary to propel transformative learning. When I shared examples of presencing with my critical friends they had their own examples as well.

For example, while having lunch with a Jewish colleague, my critical friend used the word church as a general term for a place of worship. Using the term church hijacked the emotions of her Jewish colleague; at that point in the conversation her colleague started to fold in and retreat from the conversation. However, rather than withdraw from the conversation, her friend shared that when church was used as a general term she felt abandoned by the conversation. She felt her life experiences could not be known through this generalization:

> *Part of being part of the dominant culture is that you just assume your culture is what everyone understands… It was such a productive conversation because she told me that.* (Critical Friend, April, 2014)

When my critical friend understood that her word choice created pain for her colleague, she had the opportunity to learn and grow. Her friend demonstrated great self-knowledge and insight by revealing her emotions so truthfully. Through their dialogue they experienced presence. Presencing can occur in situations where people interact from a place of self-clarity, which comes from being connected to your ideals and self. Through my research I realized that to connect my self and my values I had to build new understandings and tell new stories.

Building New Stories

Through self-knowledge my perception of social justice work changed. I had been looking for a space in the curriculum to do social justice work, yet my personal philosophy suggested I desired an integrated approach. Solomon (2010) explains this challenge, "Not all those who claim to do social justice work in fact fully understand what this works conceptually means and entails for their practice"(p. x). What I realized through self-study is that social justice education can be developed as a way of dealing with knowledge. Social justice education is more than the content I taught, it was a competency, a way of interacting that empowers all participants and could be applied to any context or content.

Through my research I realized that treating social justice as content was something I had always done in my teaching. Listening to the recording from my critical friends meeting I heard myself describe social justice teaching in my previous setting:

> *Me: [social justice] used to be the center focus of everything. I was making sure to be culturally relevant to my students because if it [content] was not culturally relevant they [students] were not going to be engaged and there would also be ramification from the families. I knew how to navigate in that world, but coming into here [Kelowna, BC], I lost that and I think that is where the fitting in [adding social justice content and practices when I can] stuff is coming from* (Critical Friends, April, 2014).

The assumption I made was that I experienced difficulty with social justice teaching in Kelowna because I did not understand the new culture. Culture had been the content I used to teach social justice. When I heard that discussion, I realized that through my research I have developed a more complex understanding of social justice teaching wherein cultural awareness emerges through a dialogical way of interacting with my students. I was learning that dialogue can be developed through problematizing the self, an open approach to learning and suspending judgment.

I also evaluated my ongoing stories about intensification. Though my research I interrogated the internal story of how I told myself I felt like I did not have time or energy for social justice. Those feelings had made me resistant to engaging in social justice work, even my own Amicia initiative. I perceived intensification as something I could not change. *U for social justice* changed my perspective. I can see how I contributed to creating the feelings of intensification. I reflected that if feelings of intensification were something I created then I could work to transform these feelings. I realized I could shift social justice competencies to be the primary focus of my teaching. I could be intentional about where I put my focus, giving less time to less important things. This way of attending to where and how I place my focus could also be called mindful leadership. Mindful leadership is a practice which cultivates inner practices. It does not lessen work load or change the pace of work, but rather helps leaders be more intentional about how they choose to spend their time and how they think about these choices (Marturano, 2014, p.63).

My critical friends reframed my rejection of my feelings of intensification. They wondered if I was denying institutional barriers and restrictions of time and resources that make teachers jobs challenging. They asked me, "*Isn't intensification more than an excuse not to change?*" One of my critical friends suggested that what I presented as contradictions of self would be better understood as contradictions created from trying to do social justice work within an unjust education system (system meaning the curriculum, the hierarchies, grading practices):

> *When we talk about a white privileged school system there are structures in place that don't allow a socially just system. You are working against the system. I see what you are saying that it's the self in contradiction but we are part of a system that is antithetical. It is the self but more than the self.* (Critical Friend, April, 2014)

I did not dismiss institutional barriers, but when I reflected on intensification from the perspective of my research questions, I learned that intensification was a narrative that I had reframed and re-imagined through my self-study:

> *It takes time to change the mental models of our minds, our habits and stories reappear again and again and again but as I attend to the stories I create such as intensification, I am beginning to write a new story. To do this I had to get lost for a while, challenging the mental system I lived in. Over time, I came to trust this process. I learned that while wondering around lost, you find things that make more sense. I trust I will know when I know.* (Teaching Journal, April, 2014)

Intensification narratives were prominent in the first year of my research. Since then I became aware of those thoughts and I experienced an improvement in my sense of wellbeing. I feel healthier and happier letting go of my intensification argument in favor of focusing on how I am contributing to situations. Originally when I had a difficulty coping with my teaching assignment I did blame the system. Previously, to create change I worked harder and if I felt I could not work harder then I felt I could not change. As I let go of the idea that change means doing more, I began to experience change as the process of gaining self-knowledge.

Until now I have described experiences going down the left side of the U to the bottom state of presence. The right hand side of the U is about creating action. In the next section I examine examples from my work with Amicia and how the group evolved in its second year. During my first year with Amicia I was not a transformative leader but with increased self-knowledge in the second year I started to cultivate communities of people who were willing to take learning journeys with me. In my new collaborative groups I experienced a flow of energy and creativity. My critical friends group became an example of this. I remember feeling worried about taking too much of my colleagues' time when asking them to act as my critical friends. While I was thanking them at the end of the session they shared with me how much they enjoyed the process and how it had helped them to understand not only my ideas but their own. I felt a powerful connection between us as they left the room. Gaining self-knowledge led to a new understanding of social justice and operating with this knowledge I experienced a shift to transformative leadership.

Enacting Social Justice: Transformative Leadership

U for Social Justice describes the relationship between self-knowledge and improved collaboration. Improved collaboration skills had a significant impact on Amicia within the second year of my study. Using the visual representation of the U process reflects how I came to think differently about creating action. For example, by February 2013, I had not addressed the contradictions noted in my journals, but I started Amicia anyway. In terms of Theory U, my action would be considered moving

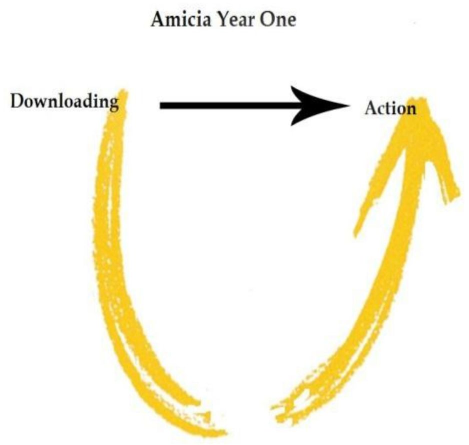

Figure 5:2.**Amicia Year One. (This figure illustrates the level of self-knowledge involved in action)**

across the top of the U, downloading to action rather than moving down the U and back up (Figure 4).

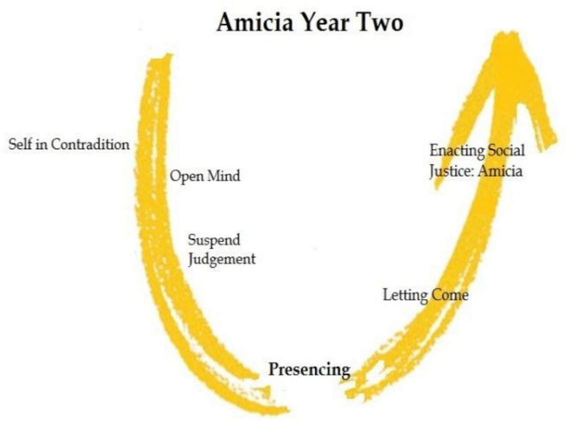

Figure 5:3.**Amicia Year Two. (This figure illustrates the level of self-knowledge involved in action)**

In year two of Amicia (Figure 5) I realized I needed to create action based on my developed self-knowledge, with change coming from going down the U instead of straight across. Creating action from that process seemed to create new solutions. These new solutions were evident in the second year of Amicia. Amicia started its second year in January, 2014. We were a group of: three teachers, seven high school students from grades 10-12 and 25 middles school girls who learned together about issues teenage girls face. The girls met face to face once every two weeks and kept in touch online through Facebook. The high school leaders were so effective at creating the Amicia community that they were invited to speak at the Canadian Student Leadership Conference 2014.

Amicia Year Two

Amicia is my story of my improvement as a social justice educator. I attribute my improvements to the professional development that occurred from my self-study. I was a different leader during the second year of Amicia. In my first experiences with Amicia my leadership story was lacking joy and inspiration. I was hanging onto the narrative of intensification and teacher burnout. In the first year I had struggled to collaborate due to differences of opinion. I had been reluctant to cross borders between what I perceived as the girls' home and school life or between formal and informal learning. In the following year I took a new approach to collaboration that emphasized self-awareness, openness and suspension of judgment. I worked from beyond my classroom and created a larger community of support for Amicia—by sharing my intentions with my administration, they provided financial support and I connected with the Healthy Schools Network (HNS) made up of other teachers engaged in inquiry. Through sharing and seeking community I created relationships with two teachers at the high school who are now an integral part of the Amicia program.

I also worked to build the leadership capacity of the Amicia high school students. Frequent brainstorming sessions with the high school leadership girls began on and off line in January 2014. To begin we discussed the purpose of the group and learned tools to facilitate transformational learning such as suspending judgment and open listening. I hoped these strategies would help build the social field of presence in our group. Together we decided the leadership girls would run a 'getting to know you' session where the high school girls would find out the needs of the younger girls and plan from there.

In the weeks and months that followed, the senior girls were self-directed as they planned the sessions and the adults coordinated time, place and materials and were available for consultation. Together everyone involved created and nurtured a space for critical reflection and dialogue to foster self-awareness and potentially ignite transformative change. Together the middle and high school girls discussed positive solutions to difficult problems involving friendship, dating, drugs and alcohol and food. Their discussions revealed dramatically different perspectives, but all focused on our common goal of creating positive peer support. Recently, the mentor girls decided to start a session by sharing what they never liked about themselves and how they came to accept themselves. The stories were powerful and there was a feeling of awe in the room. They were the stories that the girls chose to share. This was an emancipatory approach to learning aimed at raising the consciousness of students. Participants need to be knowing subjects, not just recipients of information, "the process through which men [sic] not as recipients but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of both the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform their lives" (Freire, 1970, p. 27). The Amicia group discussions became emancipatory experiences addressing what it means to be growing up as girls in the context of their lives.

Self-study has become my framework for learning. Since self- discovery had illuminated my blind spots while working with Amicia, self-discovery was something I wanted Amicia students to experience and I encouraged reflection as an integral part of Amicia. Through my self-study experience I was "able to articulate for my students my own teaching metaphors, as they arise from life-history" (Bullough, 1994, p.110). I was actively exploring myself as teacher, just as I required that they engage in such exploration. I wanted students to be aware of who they are, how they think and how that is impacting them. I also wanted them to know that their way was only one way, and to consider leaving ideas and thoughts behind that do not serve them or others well. Transformative leaders support students and teachers to be involved in active exploration together. In my first experience with Amicia it seemed we all had different agendas and I was not able to bring them all together:

> *There is a paradox in teaching. I plan the best lessons, I really do. They are awesome… but the reality of teaching them is not the same. I wonder if it ever, ever, is? Sometimes you think [students] are together and you feel it and they feel it. They are excited and you are excited and its flowing but I wonder how close we really are?* (Critical Friend, April, 2014)

Can students and teachers share the same reality and experiences? I think the role of transformative leaders is to create environments that foster connectedness. For me, an inquiry learning orientation connected me to the experiences of the girls in Amicia. In the second year we used inquiry to co-construct knowledge. Amicia's question was: How can creating a community of middle school and high school girls improve middle school girls' sense of wellbeing and belonging? Inquiry is not a process of teachers planning lessons and wondering how the girls perceived the lesson. Rather, through co-constructing our goals and reflecting together I saw evidence that we were creating shared understandings and examples of how transforming thoughts are emerging. For example, through this process we all (leaders and participants) experienced an improved sense of wellbeing. I noticed that Amicia had an empowering effect on all participants, which made us feel really good. The high school mentors took ownership of the group, which brought them a sense of pride. The relationships between the leadership girls themselves seem to have also grown. This is an example of the reciprocal nature of inquiry learning. When we construct our learning together leaders and participants can begin to experience new thoughts and perceptions.

My growing capabilities as a social justice leader in my school were confirmed to me during my critical friend session. One of my colleagues stopped me early on in our session and said she was surprised my journals focused so much on my shortcomings:

> *Have you reflected on everything else you do for the school as a whole because you do a lot outside the curriculum, like for Harmony Day and Anti-Bullying Day. You do a lot as a social justice teacher in our school.* (Critical Friend, April, 2014)

Throughout my teaching I have taken on many school events that share a message of peace and justice. With this research I wanted to investigate myself, who was the person organizing these assemblies, clubs and events, and is she effective? Tracing Amicia over two years provided me with evidence for how to continue to improve my effectiveness as a social justice leader.

Limitations, Significance and Next Steps

Through my self-study I developed an account which highlighted how sustained attention to self-awareness through contemplative practice was a key aspect of my transformation toward developing authentic social justice pedagogy and claiming a role as a transformative leader for social justice. This is a start to creating lived educational theory. There is still much work to be done to develop *U for Social Justice* as a contribution to educational theory. To pursue establishing this research further I would encourage the development of a self-study community to explore teachers' perspectives on the impact of self-awareness on their social justice teaching. Self-study is powerful when done in collaboration and is often done in groups of professional learners (Kitchen and Ciuffetelli Parker, 2009). Collaborative self-study can result in supporting participants in the process of self-study as well as co-creation of the knowledge being built. In retrospect my study would have benefited from being part of a community of educators who were also examining self-knowledge and social justice teaching.

Through my research, I demonstrated that teacher-researchers are capable of initiating change through theorizing about their practice through self-study methodology. Although this singular account of one teacher's change can be seen as a limitation, I offer it here as a significant aspect of the research. In providing this account I aim to establish my work as an example of self-study as a framework for teacher learning. Hoban (2002) explains that too often teacher learning is depicted as a one-size fits all task that can occur at a one-day workshop. He argues, "change needs to be supported with a long term framework for teacher learning… if teachers understand how they learn in the workplace, they may begin to manage their own change"(Hoban, 2002, pp.2-3). My research showed how I, as a self-study researcher, created a framework to sustain and manage personal change within the context of my teaching.

I continue to sustain and negotiate personal change by extending my self-study through an online professional blog. I continue to investigate how social justice inquiry might be enhanced through contemplative practices in education, such as mindfulness, though studying my own mindful practices. This new direction in my work has generated growing interest from my teaching community. My colleague and I were selected to present our work on linking mindfulness and inquiry at the Healthy Schools Network Symposium and then to our colleagues through our local teachers association. We were also asked to run a workshop for student leaders to develop mindfulness tools at the Canadian Student Leadership Conference 2014.

I aim to further explore Theory U as a tool for transformative leadership. I would like to examine how Theory U (Scharmar, 2009) could be used in schools as a model to enhance and support transformative learning. Again, I would like to include students' and teachers' perspectives in this exploration. The broadening of my perspective could increase my appreciation of how Theory U might impact learning and change in schools, with an informed guess suggesting that the relationship could be powerful.

After sharing my U transformation with my critical friends, they quickly connected the U as a model to understand and develop student learning:

> *Critical friend one: What have the students learned so far? Students have learned to jump across the top of the U. They have learned to do school across the shortest distance.*
> *Critical friend two: Everyone wants to go there (across) until you start to go there (pointing down).*
> *Critical friend one "The U is perfect because it shows that downhill part, so frustrating and then when you go up, it's like whoa!* (Critical Friends, April, 2014)

My critical friends could relate to the U shape of transformative learning. They spoke of their experiences with student resistance and avoidance of the uncomfortable emotions associated with transformative learning. Social justice learning requires students to get uncomfortable and be disrupted. Contemplative practices such as mindfulness techniques can reduce student stress and increase coping skills to provide a gateway to learning that might otherwise be disorienting. Theory U provides a rationale and a process for the further exploration of mindfulness in education: "education researchers can draw on the new literature on consciousness studies, spirituality and neuroscience to find new ways to facilitate transformative learning" (Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p. 33).

In their research on mindfulness in education, Meiklejohn et al. (2012) note that “one of the challenges facing research on K-12 mindfulness programs is the absence of an easily articulated theory of change model. Specific questions facing the field include: What is the most promising theoretical framework for conceptualizing the effects of mindfulness training? (p.34) Using mindfulness as stress reduction and using it to facilitate a social justice mindset are two different but complimentary theories of change: My research highlighted my development of social justice education through self-knowledge and contemplative practices. Further research is needed to investigate how mindfulness might develop students' self-knowledge and impact social justice perspectives and capabilities. Evaluating student transformation might be obtained through a combination of self-evaluation, interviews, observations, surveys, checklists, journals and art-based techniques (Cranton and Hoggan, 2012).

My initial assessment of our ability as teachers to bring this practice into the classroom is a hopeful one. Though my own struggles I have learned we cannot teach mindfulness if we do not practice it, we must start with ourselves first. Starting with the self draws teachers into a process of potential transformation. Mindfulness is simple but challenging and I think it will take deep investment to cultivate it in the classroom. Mindfulness-trained teachers learn to embody mindfulness through their own behaviours in and outside of school (Meiklejohn et.al. 2012). This is an exciting prospect. If mindfulness is used by teachers in their everyday life as well as in the classroom, then teachers may begin to experience an increased sense of well-being. If it is framed as a way to pursue social justice educations, they may begin to embody that way of being as a teacher. Through my research I experienced an increased sense of wellbeing linking self-awareness to social justice. Further research to inquire into how other teachers might experience enhanced wellbeing through using contemplative practices such as mindfulness could be an important area for future study.

Conclusion

By identifying my capacity to learn from my mistakes in my teaching I have become more playful, less afraid and more comfortable sharing where and when I go wrong in my teaching. Through this process I have changed many of my teaching and thinking practices. For me this new level of awareness created a new quality of collaboration, of focused intention and clarity that improved my actions. I use my self-knowledge to be more socially just.

Throughout my research I included concrete examples of my teaching experiences with the hope that the transparency of my story will help others to construct meaning in their work. Teacher researchers have unique voices since we speak from within our schools. Our stories are important and we add complexity and new dimensions to educational theory.

My story is a change narrative. It was an example of deconstruction and also of reconstruction, a reconstruction of self-knowledge. *U for social justice* summarized is the perspective I found while I was sifting through the sands of my educational practice, examining each piece slowly (Lighthall, 2006). This perspective will be helpful in the future as I continue to dance around the flickering flames of education. It will help me quicken my steps so as not to get burned and as I grow and change and learn, so too will my dance.

My story can encourage other teachers to address the self as a starting point for social justice, to examine one's own values and practices and learn to collaborate with an open heart, open mind and open will (Schamar, 2009). Through offering my story I invited others use my experiences and the framework of U transformation to create their own social justice self-inquiries.

I am still in the pursuit of social justice through self-study. Through my journaling I look for multiple perspectives, paying attention to what I am feeling and my interactions with other people. Through this my learning continues. Though my journals I wonder about the impact I have made in the lives of my students and colleagues and I try to take note of the influence they have had on me. As I journal I reflect on the values of democracy, respect, care and equality and I set my intentions for a new day.

I want to improve my teaching and I believe that the greatest aim of education is a dedication to social justice. Through inquiry I have furthered these practices and discovered the leadership capacity to do so.

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