

Critical Pedagogy and Ignatian Pedagogy:

Piecing Together the Why, the What, and the How of Teaching for Social Justice

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*[Teaching for] social justice is a compilation of verbs: asking, using, believing, giving, receiving, engaging, sharing, and respecting all rolled up into one. [Teaching for] social justice is the act of doing all of these verbs; it is providing quality education to all children, despite any differences or barriers that stand in the way; it is inspiring children to become active, engaging, socially aware individuals that can enter the real world with not only an academic education, but a moral one as well.*

--Allison, pre-service teacher.

*As the year continues, I'm really beginning to realize that a social justice classroom is one of those things in life that's a hell of a lot easier said than done.*

--Jennifer, pre-service teacher.

In our school of education, housed in a Jesuit university in the heart of a large Midwestern city, we educate future teachers to be teachers for social justice. The above quotes capture the flavor of both our empowering and our frustrating days. Our goal is to prepare future teachers to be knowledgeable experts in their content area, practically informed regarding the myriad ways cultural differences powerfully affect teaching and learning, and pedagogically and technologically skilled. We ask them to look at schooling—curriculum, pedagogy, and policy—through lenses of race, class, gender, and language. We ask them to try to think about as well as

outside of their own middle-class, white worldview, since, as with most all teacher education programs in America, the overwhelming majority of our pre-service teachers fit into that category. We ask them to reflect on their own experiences, the experiences of their urban students who typically are quite different from themselves, and the enormous gap in educational biographies that frequently exists between the two. Underlying and permeating all we do is our commitment to social justice, and so we regularly ask them to reflect on the phrase that must seem to them like a cross between a mantra and a meaningless cliché: “Teaching for social justice.” We ask them formulate an understanding of teaching for social justice and determine their response to that goal. Our task is formidable, but it is comfortably aligned with the mission of Jesuit higher education; yet, even in the context of that alignment we encounter numerous questions from our students and from ourselves.

In 2000, educators from several Jesuit colleges and universities convened to explore the nature of the Jesuit call to justice as applied to their post-secondary contexts. At that gathering, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach., Jesuit Superior General, issued a call for the “service of faith and the promotion of justice in American Jesuit higher education.” Implicit in that call is a need for clearer explication of its content, its implementation, and perhaps, for some, its rationale. In our own school of education, foregrounding social justice in the context of faith at our Jesuit university, we faculty members frequently engage in reflection and dialogue in search of that clearer explication. Our intent is that our students will become teachers who embody social justice in their varied teaching contexts.

In that endeavor, we realize that we, the faculty, must also embody social justice as we guide their development. What we expect of our students, we must do ourselves. Our efforts to be those socially just teachers have led us to explore and incorporate aspect of critical pedagogy and Ignatian pedagogy in our teaching practice. In this multilayered experience of teaching for

social justice, we find ourselves wrestling to clarify for ourselves and for our students why this social justice focus warrants our efforts, what comprises a social justice curriculum, and just what sort of pedagogy can be used to effectively teach that curriculum, by us to them and by them to their future students. We find our students engage in similar struggles to understand the why, the what, and the how of the call for justice in education.

In struggling to answer these questions, we engaged in an action research project, utilizing data from our personal reflections on our classroom practice as teachers for social justice and the written reflections of our students struggling to understand the idea and practice of being a teacher for social justice. This paper reports on the initial analysis of that data and provides an explication, with examples from student reflections, of the following consideration: While both critical pedagogy and Ignatian pedagogy offer essential ingredients to inform the goal of teaching that promotes justice, neither offers a sufficiently complex, critical, or practical perspective. Each theory benefits from critique by the other.

We begin with a brief overview of Ignatian pedagogy and critical pedagogy, followed by a description of our specific context and methodology. We then describe the weaknesses and complementary strengths of each of the theories in relation to a rationale, a curriculum, and a pedagogy for teaching for social justice, followed by implications for the field of teacher education.

### Theoretical Overview

Ignatian Pedagogy. Ignatian pedagogy is rooted in a commitment to education prompted by Ignatius of Loyola in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Over the years, Ignatian pedagogy has evolved and been refined through an on-going integration of best methods based on improved understanding of pedagogical and learning theory. Over time, however, the goal has remained constant: to

support teachers and students in “a manner that is academically sound and at the same time, formative of persons for others” (Section 14, Foundations, 1994, p. 239).

The emphasis would at first glance, appear to be more on the “manner” than the specific content. Yet, the commitment to a supportive and effective pedagogy, then and now, is not separated from content. That content, however, is less related to any specific academic discipline and more of a moral quality that can be applied to any course. Ignatian pedagogy is aligned with the characteristics of Jesuit education, including among others, attention to the formation of the whole person; a reverent posture towards the God-given inherent holiness of all life; a ready application of the lens of faith as integral to understanding the world, social systems, cultures, and individuals; an openness to growth and reflectivity; a willingness to structure an education that is value-oriented; and action-oriented solidarity with the poor.

Also pervasive in Jesuit education since the early 1970s is the commitment to a “faith that does justice” (International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education , 1993, p. 134), a commitment articulated by Fr. Pedro Arrupe in 1973 as education to prepare “men [and women] for others” who are “completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for [humanity] is a farce” (Arrupe, 1973, p. 32) (We take the liberty of editing older document for more gender inclusive language. Our changes are in brackets.) These men and women for others, products of Ignatian pedagogy, will understand Fr. Arrupe’s counsel, “Take justice away from love and you destroy love” (p. 35). The goal of Jesuit education, utilizing Ignatian pedagogy, is the transformation of the students’ view of themselves and others, of social systems and societal structures, and of the entire human community and natural creation (Section 10, Foundations, 1994). Yet even with a clearly stated commitment to this curricular backdrop of value-driven content, the primary focus of Ignatian pedagogy remains just that: pedagogical practice in classrooms. Indeed, Ignatian pedagogy can be applied to any content area since the

goal is a “particular style and process of teaching” that is effective in helping students embrace and enact Ignatian values (Section 14, Foundations, p. 239).

The practical expression of Ignatian pedagogy (Section 14, Foundations, 1994) describes the continual interplay of five tenets that comprise the approach—context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation—with various teaching strategies and activities well suited to enact each of these. Context encompasses the students themselves with their familial, community, and cultural identities; the socio-cultural, political, and cultural context in which the education occurs; the institutional setting itself; and the experiences and prior knowledge students bring to their learning task. Experience, whether direct or vicarious, aims to engage students as whole persons –affectively as well as cognitively—in heart, mind, and will. In the reflective aspect of Ignatian pedagogy, the teacher invites and supports students in the use of memory, imagination, feelings, and understanding in order to grasp the meaning and value of the content learned, the relationship of the new knowledge to other aspects of life, and any implications for future study and response. Action, based on the Ignatian wisdom that “love is shown in deeds, not words” (Section 14, Foundations, p. 251), can be an interior reordering of priorities and values, but frequently is extended to be an external action consistent with those new values and priorities. Finally, the process of Ignatian pedagogy includes regular evaluation of student growth, including academic mastery, but more importantly, a determination of the students’ growth in attitudes, priorities and actions aligned with the goals of Jesuit education.

Critical Pedagogy. Critical Pedagogy emerged from a variety of sources in the 1970s (Luke, 1997). One significant influence was the philosophy of critical theory, developed by the pre-World War II Frankfurt School, which advocated a Marxist analytical model using injustice and class subjugation as the primary lens for understanding human experience (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). As critical theory evolved into a multi-faceted perspective influencing a variety

of disciplines including literary criticism, anthropology, sociology, and educational theory (McLaren, 2003), so critical pedagogy has expanded, but educational theorists and advocates of critical pedagogy such as Apple, Aronowitz, Ayon, McLaren, and Molnar urge that the lens of asymmetrical power relations based on class remain a key means of analyzing and critiquing social institutions and structures (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003).

According to McLaren (1998), critical pedagogy “examines schools both in their historical context and as part of the existing social and political fabric that characterizes the dominant society” (p. 163), centering politics and power in its analysis. Every aspect of schooling and educational practice are seen as “politically contested spaces” significantly influenced by race, class, and gender forces (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 2). Teachers who embrace critical pedagogy understand and attempt to address the effects of those forces in their own activist stance as well as in their classroom content and method.

This inclusion of a political lens developed in reaction to the traditional depoliticized view of schools as sites where passive students are socially indoctrinated by pedagogical technicians transmitting a static body of knowledge in order to maintain existing hierarchies of dominance (Giroux, 1988). Instead of operating as technicians, teachers were challenged by critical pedagogy to become transformative intellectuals, engaged in restructuring the entire schooling system in order to empower children to read the world critically and act as agents of change (Giroux, 1988). As part of this transformative agenda, critical pedagogy also draws from a postmodern perspective that refutes the hegemonic meta-narratives of those who hold cultural, economic, and political power, particularly as this relates to the production of knowledge (Darder et al., 2003; Giroux, 1988; Kincheloe, 2005).

Though called a “pedagogy”, the primary emphasis of much writing about critical pedagogy remains more on content than methods. Yet, though derived from myriad sources and

philosophies more curricular in focus than pedagogical, critical pedagogy was most clearly defined in the theoretical and practical work of Brazilian literacy educator Paulo Freire, who worked to develop literacy among the oppressed adult peasant population of Brazil in the 1970s. Freire was influenced by Catholic liberation theology which produced a faith grounded in teachings that made it impossible to reconcile Christian love with exploitation of human beings (Giroux, 1998). As described in his classic work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) held that all education is political and the pedagogical means used to educate students renders them as either objects under the rule of oppressors or subjects with the power to transform their own experience. He rejected the traditional ‘banking’ method of instruction, where students remain as passive vessels waiting to receive the approved knowledge of the ruling class ideology and educators maintain control over the educational act, despite the cruel side effect of stripping the student of any opportunity for self-worth or creativity and replicating existing means of social control.

Instead, Freire developed a reciprocal pedagogy designed to create a “critical capacity to use language as a means for articulation of a transformative political analysis and agenda” (Luke, 1997). Working with themes derived generatively from students’ own experiences, literacy educators under Freire’s guidance engaged their students in a dialogic process of using language to name their experience and then “problem-pose” that experience by challenging its “common sense” taken-for-granted nature, critiquing the experience in light of their socio-political context, and eventually creating and acting on alternative means to transform their lived experience (Freire, 1970). This method encouraged acts of cognition, did not dichotomize students and teachers, celebrated the duality of consciousness and the world, saw reality as a process that could be changed through praxis, and celebrated the value of the here and now of each person.

Dialogue based upon love, humility, faith, and hope in humanity and upon the power of reflection, action, and critical thinking would produce *conscientização*—a Portuguese word roughly translated as “consciousness-raising”—among the oppressed and, ultimately an enactment of agency that could transform their oppression. The goal of Freire’s (1970) pedagogy was the “humanizing” of those whose humanity had been diminished by oppression done to them, and then, through loving engagement with the formerly oppressed, the possibility of humanization for those whose humanity had been diminished by the oppression they perpetrated. Literacy became the tool by which transformation was possible, a tool to “read the word, read the world” and then “write the word, write the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987), creating a language of hope and possibility where there had previously been little of either. McLaren (2003) describes the embeddedness of Freire’s thinking in the critical pedagogy goal “to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices” (pp. 186) in schooling practices.

Though unified in its commonly embraced objective, critical pedagogy is not a homogenous set of ideas (McLaren, 2003). Several authors who willingly embrace the mindset of critical pedagogy define it by providing extensive lists of heterogeneous principles and concepts, accompanied by the theoreticians who helped infuse those terms with content, all of which form an aggregated understanding of critical pedagogy (Darder et al., 2003; Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren, 2003; Wink, 2000). The very heterogeneous nature of the set of ideas is frequently identified as inherent to the meaning of the term. “...it is important to emphasize that no formula or homogeneous representation exist for the universal implementation of any form of critical pedagogy. In fact, it is precisely this distinguishing factor that constitutes its critical nature, and therefore its most emancipatory and democratic function” (Darder et al., 2003, p. 10).

The postmodern rejection of any meta-narrative is invoked here to mean that no universal expression or practice will be an essentialist representation of critical pedagogy.

### Context and Methodology

Our search into the use of critical pedagogy and Ignatian pedagogy as means for educating our students began several years ago. Our teacher education program serves approximately 375 teacher candidates on an urban campus that is significantly shaped by its Jesuit mission and identity. We realize the importance of Fr. Kolvenbach's (2000) call to pursue "faith in the service of justice" and his question: "How can the Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States express faith-filled concern for justice in what they are as Christian academies of higher learning, in what their faculty do, and in what their students become?" Partially in response to this call and partially in response to our convictions, our teacher education program began a redesign process in 2000, specifically to foreground racial and social justice in the context of the Jesuit goal of *cura personalis*, that is, "care for the whole person," for our students and for the society in which those students will pursue their teaching careers. Our faculty is committed to training our pre-service teachers to be able to effectively serve the students of our city who are, on the whole, racially and economically different from them. The mission statement that emerged from that process captures our program's commitment to pursuing a just form of education for both our own students and the students they will serve:

A commitment to social justice demands that educators have a deep understanding of the disciplines they teach and use developmentally and culturally responsive pedagogies and appropriate technological tools to facilitate learning for all children. Essential throughout the program is the development in prospective teachers of strongly held ideals of care and respect for all students, racial justice, transformational leadership, and critical reflection.

--Excerpt from the School of Education Mission Statement.

Based on the ideals of Jesuit education, the teacher education program attempts to cultivate students who practice personal reflexivity, maintain cultural sensitivity, and embrace social activism. While all of the classes within our program foreground the multicultural nature of teaching for social justice, we offer two stand-alone introductory courses that focus heavily on multicultural issues couched in the call to teach for social justice. The first, *Education 008: Teaching in a Diverse Society*, focuses on the purpose of schooling and the vocation of teaching as they are experienced in the context of societal views of race, class, and gender. The second course, *Education 048: Critical Inquiry into Contemporary Issues in Education*, examines various school policies through a lens of race, class, and gender. Both courses challenge students to consider teaching for social justice, with some level of activism, as a vocational calling. In both courses students engage in a significant amount of critical written reflection on both the issues and their own responses to those issues.

The methodology out of which this paper evolved is practitioner research (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1997; Hubbard & Power, 2003). In this research paradigm, the practitioner, in this case the instructor of the course, selects specific aspects of his/her instruction for study, using their personal reflections and data gathered from the students themselves, to determine the effectiveness of the practice. As data emerges indicating areas where the practice could be modified for greater efficacy, the teacher adjusts the practice and continues the collection of personal reflections and student data, creating a recursive process of action, reflection, and evaluation, then revision of action, more reflection and evaluation, continued revision of action, and so on.

This particular project focused on the efficacy of instructional practices used in *Education 048: Critical Inquiry into Contemporary Issues in Education* to help students develop

their understanding of the concept of “Teaching for social justice” and consider their willingness to embrace this goal in their own future teaching practice. In nine classes taught over the course of six semesters, we applied the recursive methods of practitioner research. Instructional practices and content were designed, drawing on theories of critical pedagogy and Ignatian pedagogy, to guide students in their learning. Data were collected in the form of personal instructor reflections and five reflective journals written by each student during the course of each semester. Each journal was assigned a specific topic, including “What is your definition of ‘teaching for social justice?’” “Can you see yourself being a teacher for social justice?” “How has this course affected you intellectually, affectively, behaviorally, and ethically/spiritually?” “Where do you see yourself in a continuum of individual acts of mercy on one end and collective political acts of justice on the other?” and “How has your definition of ‘teaching for social justice’ changed over the course of this semester?” As they were turned in to the teacher, these data sources were subject to on-going analysis which provided the bases for evaluating and modifying instructional practices each semester. The process was continuously repeated over the course of the six semesters. Approximately 1300 journal entries were produced over the entire research project. With this significant mass of journals from all six semesters now available, the compilation of data is being analyzed through a process of close reading and coding of themes for more comprehensive insights into the efficacy of instructional theories and practices. In the first level of that more comprehensive analysis, the following findings emerged regarding the specific efficacy of critical pedagogy and Ignatian pedagogy.

#### Findings.

Our pre-service teachers struggle with their own assumptions about school and society as they wrestle to understand social justice goals in teaching by familiarizing themselves with theories related to and then their actual experiences with the racially, economically, and

culturally diverse urban schools served by our school of education. Three topics typically emerge in students' reflections: Why or why not to pursue being a teacher for social justice, what content that term denotes, and how the goal of being a teacher for social justice can be accomplished.

Each of the three topics aligns with aspects of Ignatian pedagogy or critical pedagogy.

The "WHY": A Rationale for "Teaching for Social Justice".

*Either way you look at it, pushing social justice issues coincides with pushing political issues....I want my students to know about the topics, and act on them if they feel like they should, but I certainly do not want myself being the one pushing one way or the other. I think that if you bring social justice arguments into the classroom, whether you are trying to or not, you will be in some way affecting how a child thinks politically.... Even though you may be righteous in your efforts, I believe that it is wrong to push any political philosophy by using the power of your title as teacher. --Gus, pre-service teacher.*

*As a parent, the ideology of a teacher scares me. Students can be so impressionable that one bias from the right teacher may take years for a child to let go of.... Also, as a parent, I would like to shelter my kids from all the negativity in this world. They'll be running up against it much sooner than I would like as it is. A teacher who talks about homelessness and discrimination might bring a depressing end to what started out as a good day. --Molly, pre-service teacher.*

Given the blinders of their common white, middle- to upper-middle class experiences, a small group of our students, when challenged to consider teaching for social justice, becomes recalcitrant, burrowing deeper into their mono-cultural understanding of life. Though few place these thoughts in writing, some may adopt explanatory models that either place blame on struggling students whose educational experiences are as much a product of the vicious cycle of

urban poverty and racism as individual choice or on those students' families who are equally trapped in systemic webs that sustain poverty and discrimination. As seen in the student journals quoted above, some resist what seems like an imposition of political views, failing to realize that not raising issues of injustice can also be considered an imposition of political views by virtue of what is left unsaid. Others assume they will be teaching students whose lives do not include images, much less experiences of homelessness and discrimination, so protecting the privilege of the group takes priority. For these students, there is no sufficient rationale for being a teacher who teaches in ways that challenge the status quo.

A few students are willing and even eager to conduct social justice classrooms, because they already agree with the positions being required. They justify their choice on the basis of their already held belief that the very social issues themselves and the political views represented in naming and challenging unjust social issues are necessary both to motivate learning and to create a more just world.

*Presenting the students with situations where the information in class applies to real life would help the kids learn and also help them actually apply what was learned to their lives on a day to day basis. Also, from a social and activist perspective, this can do nothing but help make the world more livable.*

--Joe, pre-service teacher.

Of particular interest is the group of students who may begin as somewhat less eager but demonstrate growth towards a willingness to embrace social justice in their practice, not based on an easy acceptance of the task, but on the moral foundation of their ethics. In more than one case, students identified their faith as the rationale for taking a socially just stand in life as well as their classrooms, even when the temptation was to avoid it.

*There have been many times when I have felt like I should speak out against an injustice, but I, like so many others, "chicken out", and choose to ignore it..... I heard this Jiminy*

*Cricket-esque voice telling me that I missed a golden opportunity to improve my character. Not only would I have to live with the guilt of knowing I didn't do anything, but I still had to eventually face the issue at hand.... How can we call ourselves "human" if we are not willing to work to better humankind?... I've always known that social justice is a huge part of my faith. [Now] seeing how certain issues directly affect education makes me want to respond more to these issues in my everyday life. Overall, this class has made me more willing to live my life courageously. It has shown me the importance of not only having a voice, but of using it every day to help those who can't speak for themselves. --Anna, pre-service teacher.*

*What I learned about cultural diversity and social justice has corresponded with my religious beliefs. My religion was definitely a huge part for me growing up and it still is. But at the same time, I would say it's both religious faith and ethics, because though I am a religious person according to the standards, I like to try and communicate with people on a completely nonreligious level when it comes to things like social justice, because... I do believe that it's not just the beliefs of one religion that rule the world. It's people being moral and ethical and human. --Catherine, pre-service teacher*

Establishing a clear "why" in taking a stand for justice in the classroom and in the teaching profession is crucial since pre-service teachers from the mainstream, dominant culture may readily see so many reasons against it. The task required of them is a confrontation of their own ideology in order to counter-hegemonic stances (Bartolome, 2004). For this formidable task, being instructed in the ideology that will produce those new stances and being exposed to the counter-hegemonic work of others may be helpful but not sufficient without a compelling reason for students to be willing and able to change so radically.

The work of confronting and replacing ideology requires a strong rationale, even for those who are already “on the fence,” a rationale that critical pedagogy may not be able to provide because of its staunch postmodernist rejection of any meta-narrative. The equal valuing of multiple perspectives is integrally linked to the theory of critical pedagogy, yet the very rejection of an absolute referent upon which to base convictions has left theorists of critical pedagogy struggling to warrant the firmness of their call to disrupt inequity for a more democratic, just society. Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) see critical theory as an answer to the postmodern dilemma of absent norms, claiming that critical theory addresses the danger of postmodern relativism by providing a necessary “normative foundation (i.e. A basis for distinguishing between oppressive and liberatory social relations” that is missing from postmodernism...) without which the postmodern critique is left “ever vulnerable to nihilism and inaction. Indeed, the normatively ungrounded postmodern critique is incapable of providing an ethically challenging and politically transformative program of action” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 144). While critical theory may claim to provide such a normative foundation, the postmodern tenets usually included as primary in critical pedagogy maintain a strikingly similar rejection of “meta-narratives.” Giroux (2004) tries to circumvent this dilemma by reaffirming the values of modernist democracy, while still maintaining that there are no definitive stances available to the critical pedagogue, but the semantic gymnastics that such a position requires fall short of providing a solidly grounded rationale. The postmodern perspective does little to support their efforts of college students being asked to confront the ideological dimensions that have been developed their families and cultures since their birth.

Ignatian pedagogy offers a solution to this shortcoming by providing a solid “why” to warrant the promotion of justice grounded in the Jesuit tradition of faith that embraces the social teachings of the Catholic Church, the transcendence of God in human experience, and the ethics of the Gospel of

Jesus (Arrupe, 1974). Fr. Kovenbach (2000) suggests that “Jesuit institutions have stronger and different reasons, than many other academic and research institutions, for addressing the actual world as it unjustly exists and for healing to reshape it in the light of the Gospel.” The problem, of course, is that foregrounding the metanarrative of Christian faith as the rationale for embracing social justice would seem to deny a major tenet of critical pedagogy and even offer privilege to an already dominant position. However, the fact that students harken to their faith as a foundation to warrant their choice of social justice, sometimes in spite of how uncomfortable such choices might feel or their realization that their religious belief system is only one of many, indicates that they may be searching for a normative foundation from which to discern their positions and with which to back their accompanying actions.

Other scholars approach the issue from a similar normative stance, though they widen the choice of foundations beyond the Christian Gospel. Fr. Fred Kammer, SJ, (2003) agrees that the Gospel calls for a denunciation of unjust structures, and from that foundation claims the need for a dialogue with the various religions that shape cultures and provide sustenance for societal structures. Oldenski & Carlson (2002) describe a similar foundation as a “spiritual yearning” for meaning, purpose, and connectedness, all of which are necessary to sustain democratic public life and work for a more equitable, just, caring world. They claim that students who lack such a transcendent spiritual foundation are left with a void of motivation and meaning, quite similar to Kincheloe and McLaren’s (1994) warning against nihilism and inaction.

The value that Ignatian pedagogy offers at this point is based in its Jesuit roots, particularly Fr. Arrupe’s (1973) well-articulated connection of the call for justice to the claims of the Gospel. The Christian meta-narrative or a different, though perhaps equally normative transcendent spiritual perspective, offers students a foundation upon which to make the hard choices to engage social issues in their teaching. The postmodern leaning of critical pedagogy mitigates against that foundation.

Ignatian pedagogy with its historical connection to Jesuit values may provide what is needed to establish a solid rationale for being a teacher for social justice.

The “WHAT”: A Curriculum of “Teaching for Social Justice”

*Don't get me wrong, I want to give my children an equal education that they can relate to, but I feel that it is more important to teach them the skills that they are going to need later on in their education and to ensure that they understand everything that they come in contact with. So do I think that I'm going to have a social justice classroom? No, I probably won't, but I wasn't taught in a social justice classroom and I turned out fine.*

--Sally, pre-service teacher

A slightly larger group of our students, when called to consider a socially just teaching practice, congruent with the empowering, reformation goals of critical pedagogy and Ignatian pedagogy, grapple with the content of such a practice. Some in this group typically favor an individualistic analysis of the inequitable educational experience of many children where the solution rests solely in the power of each teacher to meet the students' needs by loving them, treating them equally, and teaching them well the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in school and society. These students reject outright any focus on justice issues and typically maintain a relatively unquestioning trust that the existing systems, in schools and in society at large, are relatively just and sound, and a conviction that discussions of justice related to societal structures only falsely criticize what they perceives as a well-designed, satisfactorily functioning American society. Ironically, many of these students represent the second and third generation of Jesuit-educated families, the children and grandchildren of impoverished immigrants who were able to rise to middle and upper middle class prosperity because of the support and access to learning provided by a Jesuit system committed to educating the poor (Stephen Rountree, SJ, personal communication).

Other students search for a just curriculum and embrace the value of weaving knowledge and skills instruction into a “real-life” curriculum linked to the students’ experiences.

*The famous question that my high school math class loved to ask was “Where are we actually going to use this in our real lives?” We made it sound as if we had two separate lives in two different worlds; school, and everything not school. I don’t want my students to feel so alienated from what they know as “real-life” when they go to school each day. They need a curriculum that speaks to their own experiences. This is where the classroom can become a safe place to ask, discuss, and learn together about complicated social issues. Of course, there is a competitive, academic world that students need to be prepared for. They need to know reading, writing, and math, as it is the power and foundation behind making change in society. Without adequate education, social activists will not get very far.*

--Margaret, pre-service teacher.

While this moves in a direction aligned to both critical pedagogy and Ignatian pedagogy, the emphasis frequently remains on the individual student and her/his access to personal economic or even political power that a sound education in reading, writing, and math will provide.

Though the link to a more critical analysis of the structural inequities of society may accompany this position, the focus remains primarily on providing students access to requisite knowledge and skills. The position these students embrace is simply stated, “If a child leaves my room and doesn’t know how to read, that isn’t just.” It is a position that is entirely valid and important, but students who hold this position run the risk of omitting larger critical analysis of society or call to activism.

Other students who struggle to define the content of a socially just curriculum recognize that the individualistic approach of good, fair teaching, even when couched in terms of content and activities relevant to students’ experience, only partially achieves the goal of teaching for

social justice. They grasp the importance of a critical examination of systemic issues of inequity, and of equipping students with knowledge and skills to become activists who can effect change in their own lives and in the lives of others.

*There are over five billion people living in the world, five billion talented people. Despite all this talent, we continue to suffer from disease, poverty, violence, discrimination, and pollution. The only conclusion I draw from all of this is that we are wasting much of our talent. Yes, without a doubt, it is important to know history dates and math formulas. However, this knowledge alone has proven to be less than adequate in improving our world.*

--Mary, pre-service teacher

*The definition I first gave [at the beginning of the semester] was very individualistic, that kids need to overcome their own obstacles and that teachers are there to help them do this and provide kids with the opportunities to do so. I realize now [at the end of the semester] that teaching for social justice is not just teaching kids to overcome their own obstacles, but to teach kids how to destroy those obstacles for others when they are in the same position. Teaching kids a sense of activism and giving them the tools to make changes around them (and not just for themselves) is such a key part of this concept that I had not even realized at the beginning of the semester. Teaching for social justice is not just being a fair teacher who will help everyone no matter who they are or what they look like or whatever their own "handicap" is, but teaching for social justice is developing students into people who will make change in the world for both themselves and those around them.*

--Tom, pre-service teacher

Establishing a well-theorized and solidly fleshed-out “what” is as crucial as formulating a solid rationale in the promotion of justice. Though intimately connected to the Jesuit call for

“service of faith and the promotion of justice,” much of the practical implementation of Ignatian pedagogy in higher education has focused on method, with the content often missing a sufficient inclusion of the more controversial critical focus. Students frequently engage in valuable, even life-transforming acts of mercy as part of the Ignatian pedagogy experience, but without accompanying analysis of the societal ills that continue to produce populations of people in dire need of mercy, the goal of justice will not be served. Members of the community of Jesuit higher education see this lack. “It seems the work of education for justice has just begun” (Spohn, cited in Hug, 2000, p. 18). According to Catholic historian David O’Brien, Jesuit universities, while excelling at volunteerism and service learning, have “only scratched the surface on actual education for justice” (cited in Hug, 2000, p. 18).

The strength critical pedagogy offers to this dilemma is its focus on teachers and students gaining a critical understanding of how power, ideology, and culture are intimately interconnected (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1995) This critical analysis of societal inequities and both the complicity of schools in those inequities and the hopeful possibility of schools as sites of a more democratic enactment of justice (Giroux, 1988) produce a deeper, more potentially transformative “what” for the promotion of justice. Proponents and practitioners of Ignatian pedagogy would do well to spend time immersed in the more radical, critical perspectives of their counterparts in critical pedagogy.

Yet, a balance is needed. In education, teachers intellectually and emotionally respond to the specific learning needs of the children they see each day in class. Even for those teachers who are most committed to embracing a social justice vision, the inclusion of reading, writing, and math skills clearly falls under the rubric of “socially just teaching,” and given the current challenges and constraints of time and resources teachers face, particularly in urban classrooms, those more basic needs may take priority. McLaren. (2003) seems to be offering a criticism of

how critical pedagogy has been ill-served by practicing teachers when he states that “critical pedagogy has frequently been domesticated in practice and reduced to student-directed learning approaches devoid of social critique and a revolutionary agenda” (p. 161), when, in reality, he may simply be observing the strong emotional and intellectual pull teachers experience when they see the immediate, often desperate need for knowledge and skills in their students.

Critical pedagogy appears to clearly foreground empowerment and radical transformation, with teaching of skills important, but not centered. “Critical pedagogy is founded on the conviction that schooling for self and social empowerment is *ethically prior* [italics in original text] to a mastery of technical skills, which are primarily tied to the logic of the marketplace (although it should be stressed that skill development certainly plays an important role)” (McLaren, 2003 p. 188). This position seems dangerously close to pitting the curriculum of a critical perspective against the curriculum of knowledge and skill that teachers are morally obligated to provide for their students, knowledge and skills without which students will not be empowered to enact change in societal systems. Unfortunately, little discussion of teaching for social justice has resisted this dichotomy. The work of Cochran-Smith (1999) is one of the few examples of a social justice rubric that includes both, and, perhaps as a corrective, posits a rubric significantly heavier on teaching and content than critical lens and activism. This false dichotomy is inaccurate and possibly dangerous in its lack of balance and lack of wisdom that comes from praxis—theory and practice in a reciprocally informing relationship. The voice of teachers, who daily face classrooms of students struggling to gain the academic mastery needed to become agents of change, is needed to balance the dialogue to define the content of teaching for social justice.

The “HOW”: The Pedagogy for “Teaching for Social Justice”

*My only question about social activism and teaching for social justice is how to implement them. Both of these ideals are essential but I can see how including them in a class could be difficult.*

--Jane, pre-service teacher

Even excellent content based on a well-conceptualized rationale is of little value when not coupled with sound pedagogy—an equally well-theorized “how.” That need is seen in the last group of students we see. They are both committed to teaching the academic knowledge and skills students need and open to engaging those same students in the critical questions about society that are raised by a call for justice. They engage in dialogue and critical reflection about societal injustices maintained both by individual attitudes and by institutional structures. These students open up their hearts as well as their minds to the call for teaching for social justice. The frustration they experience has more to do with how to accomplish the goals they have embraced. Sometimes the frustration produces a panic that potentially defeats them, even though they may have felt a commitment to teaching for social justice.

*Teaching for social justice is what now again? I thought that I had a grasp on what it meant to me but now I really don't know what is going on with it. I mean I still have the base knowledge of it but there is so many questions in my mind of how I am going to achieve teaching for social justice in my mind that I just don't want to think about. ...I do want to have a social justice classroom....But if this style of teaching will impede on my students learning, it will not be used....*

--Michelle, pre-service teacher.

*YES, but HOW? As the classes go on, I sometimes leave thinking, ‘Oh my gosh, how am I going to be able to do that in my classes? How am I going to be up to the challenge?’ With these worries in the back of my mind, my biggest fear is that I might think that teaching without social justice is just easier.*

--Christina, pre-service teacher

Other students are able to go beyond feelings of panic and are able to articulate the nature of their fears which range from failing to teach required materials to lacking the creativity to combine both in ways that will please the state, the parents, the school, and the students.

*The idea of being a teacher for social justice is one that is wracking my brain right now. I really like the ideals that are in a social justice room because.... But as I feel the positive energy, wanting to do all these good things, I also feel a little fear. Like it was mentioned in class, there are serious repercussions to being “that kind” of teacher. One is that I lose sight of what I’m really there to do: teach. I hate the idea of teaching to pass a test but that is our reality unfortunately. And I know the majority of parents will identify stronger with the testing laws than social activism. Also, I am scared that I will not be able to pull off these great activities.*

--Sally, pre-service teacher

Once again, curricular demands, currently exacerbated by an externally imposed agenda of high-stakes testing and accountability, create a tension. While other pre-service students’ concerns may have been on including both the traditional curriculum and social justice content, now their concerns center on acquiring the pedagogical skill to “pull off” the creative activities that spark empowering dialogue around current issues, a task that is especially frightening for pre-service teachers who are scrambling to learn how to teach reading, writing, and math at even the most basic levels.

Students want to master sufficient pedagogical skill and strategy to be able to weave together the basic curriculum and the social justice content successfully. Some of the pre-service teachers understand the important difference between preaching to their classes and teaching their students in constructivist ways that will allow them to create their own understanding of justice issues. They know the task will require creativity and extensive pedagogical skill. The task, to master a pedagogy

that successfully weaves together both social justice and essential knowledge and skills, is a significant challenge to any teacher, an especially daunting challenge to the pre-service novice.

*When I teach, I want to teach with social justice, but I am scared to death. I do not know how I am going to be able to teach students about current issues..... I am also afraid that I am going to be just preaching what I believe and not giving the students an unbiased lesson. I have had teachers who are biased and it is not fun. The third thing that I am afraid of is my creativity. I am worried that I may not be able to design a program that will be creative enough for students to learn what [they actually need to] learn in a basic curriculum and to lace that with social justice.*

--Jennifer, pre-service teacher

This cry for support in developing pedagogical knowledge to become teachers for social justice is not well addressed in most current expressions of critical pedagogy. Freire (1970) delineated a fairly specific pedagogical pattern—problem-posing drawing on students’ experiences, inductive questioning to elicit dialogue and eventually understanding, critique, and action—and writing aimed at classroom teachers frequently describes this very process (Diaz-Rico, 2004). The vast majority of writing done by theoreticians of critical pedagogy, however, seldom gives adequate attention to describing or encouraging pedagogical models for teachers to emulate. In fact, the theoreticians have been accused of obscuring any practical application of their theories, in society, much less in the classroom, due to “opaque and inaccessible writing” that is more style than substance (Lowe & Kantor, 1991, p. 124). Ayers, Mitchie, & Rome (2004), themselves teacher educators and teachers, in effect distanced themselves from the arcane language of critical pedagogy when they commended successful, vibrant teachers who are doing the work of critical pedagogy while using none of the vocabulary because they know none of the words.

The problem extends beyond style to a flawed substance, however, at least in emphasis. In Lowe and Kantor's (1991) critique, they challenge the elaborate calls for transformations in education while providing scant description of how to achieve these goals of radical change (Lowe and Kantor, 1991). This lack of clarity regarding the "how" of doing critical pedagogy appears to be an integral part of the critical pedagogy vision. In regard to "concrete pedagogical practice," McLaren (2003) specifically states that he "will not provide a blueprint for doing critical pedagogy (which goes against the entire principle of critical pedagogy)" for fear that "reducing teaching to a tool box of prepackaged lessons does little to bring into dialectical relief the underlying logic of capitalistic social life..." (p. 26, 27). Freire's method of dialogue is almost always mentioned, but even this method is more focused on content, encouraging teachers to engage in a study of social and historical conditions of their content and less filled with clear, specific way in which to engage students and support their learning in similar exploration. The emphasis on examining personal ideology also takes precedence over mastery of strategies for teaching the content, according to Bartolome (2004) who claims that teachers need more instruction on ideologies, democratization, and empowerment, and less on strategies.

Macedo (1997) raised this very issue when posed to Freire a question about "...pseudocritical educators [who], in the name of liberation pedagogy, ...reduce Freire's leading ideas to a method. (p. 2)...[and] blindly advocate for the dialogical model, creating, in turn, a new form of methodological rigidity laced with benevolent oppression..." (p. 3). The solution to this issue, according to Macedo, is an "anti-method" pedagogy that refuses the rigidity of models and methodological paradigms" (p. 8). Freire's (1997) response to this question reveals a more balanced perspective that seems frequently lost in critical pedagogy rhetoric: "It is not possible...to think and act on the literacy problems of teaching without attending to the technical question for teaching literacy. They are essential, for without the techniques of teaching we do not achieve literacy" (p. 303). He goes on to

explain, however, that concern with the techniques for teaching literacy must always remain secondary to the larger purpose of education—the development of people’s human capacity to know and to act as agents in their own liberation.

While Ignatian pedagogy also makes little claim to a toolbox of pedagogical strategies, their more detailed methodology built on attention to context, experience, action, reflection, and evaluation (International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, 1993) offers a well-conceived framework that supports the development of numerous pedagogical strategies, making it possible for teacher educators to at least partially alleviate pre-service teachers’ panic for methods. Not surprisingly, our experience in working with pre-service teachers has shown that they are frequently more resistant to considering the critical analysis of society and schooling required in a social justice stance when they don’t sense equal attention to discussion of practical pedagogies to address their concerns. We have found, when we attempt to coax white students from middle class communities to embrace the perspective of social justice, that maintaining a strong dichotomy between theory and practice may make theory considerably less palatable to pre-service teachers.

### Implications

In studying our students’ responses to our incorporation of both critical pedagogy and Ignatian pedagogy in our social justice courses, we have learned about each theory. Both critical pedagogy and Ignatian pedagogy offer valuable contributions to the promotion of justice in the area of education, yet each needs a more discerning self-appraisal. Critical pedagogy, while offering a strong curriculum, stumbles over a firm warrant for such content, and often flounders in language and theories that are far removed from practical implementation. Ignatian pedagogy, while based on a conviction of a transcendent ethic and rich with methodological possibilities, lacks a sufficiently critical content, without which, the reason for promoting justice in education

and the quality of the methods utilized can be for naught. These lessons are helping us improve our teaching in our particular setting. At the same time, we realize that our Jesuit context provides a unique setting for the inclusion of a faith perspective that is not possible or even advisable in all settings and it is not our intention to encourage a similar stance. We believe, however, that the lessons we are learning and applying in our specific context raise issues that deserve attention from a wider audience, regardless of context.

If our goal, as teacher educators and educational researchers, is to produce a large population of teachers, most of whom are drawn from white, middle class communities, who are committed to pursuing social justice in their classrooms, in what they teach, in how they teach, and in how they inspire and motivate their students to pursue social justice in their own lives, we must attend to several issues that remain unresolved. We need to pay attention to our students' need to have a solid foundation upon which to base their convictions, even if that threatens the primacy of a postmodern interpretative model, since many of them will need to embrace a rationale that transcends the racial and cultural blinders they typically bring to the dialogue. We need to create a much more well-developed definition of the various elements of the classroom curriculum that fall under the rubric of the socially just teacher so that teachers are not placed in the untenable position of fearing they have to choose one over the other.

And finally, we need to be more proactive in the creation of sound pedagogical practices, fluid enough to resist a formulaic adoption but concrete enough and detailed enough to give pre-service teachers the ability to conceptualize, and see as possible in their own practice, the tapestry we envision, where a societal level social justice critique, the empowerment of students, and the possibility of transformation are woven artistically and successfully into the fabric of teaching the knowledge and skills necessary for students to achieve academic success. In order to achieve this, we must pursue a cross-pollination of ideas among the various theories, among



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