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"Calling Out" in Class: Degrees of Candidness in Addressing Social Injustices in Racially Homogenous and Heterogeneous U.S. History Classrooms

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"Calling Out" in Class: Degrees of Candidness in Addressing Social Injustices in Racially Homogenous and Heterogeneous U.S. History Classrooms

Abstract

Teaching for social justice requires an ability to address sensitive issues such as racism and sexism so that students can gain critical consciousness of these pervasive social realities. However, the empirical literature thus far provides minimal exploration of the factors teachers consider in deciding how to address these issues. This study explores this question through ethnographic case studies of two urban, 11th grade U.S. History classrooms. Differing classroom racial demographics and teacher instructional goals resulted in two distinct pedagogical approaches to social justice teaching. Despite differences in class makeup and teaching approach, students in both classrooms developed intellectual confidence and critical citizenship skills related to their growing sociopolitical awareness.

> "I would rather they hear it from me, that things are bad in a lot of ways. I would rather they hear that from me than learn it through lived experience and be surprised, coming out of high school." –Ms. Ray, White teacher in a predominantly Black 11th grade U.S. History classroom

"Something that I really rely on in my classroom is the dialogue piece. And them talking to each other." –Ms. Bowling, White teacher in a racially heterogeneous 11th grade U.S. History classroom

Curricular inclusion of contemporary social inequities is a powerful civic education tool for several reasons. One is that many students are already aware of injustices and thus view curriculum that neglects these issues as partial and disconnected from their lives (Epstein, 2000; Rubin, 2007). A second is that students' political knowledge and engagement have been shown to increase when teachers acknowledge injustices and help students identify ways to address them (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Moya, 2012; Rubin, 2007). This is particularly important given the civic empowerment gap that exists between low-income, racial minority students and their more affluent, White peers (Levinson, 2012). Having historically had political power withheld from them, many from marginalized groups feel lower political efficacy and therefore participate less in activities such as campaigning and protesting (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). This gap is then exacerbated by the disparate civic learning opportunities offered to students from higher versus lower socioeconomic backgrounds, also referred to as the civic *opportunity* gap (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). With fewer opportunities to learn about and engage in political activity, this already marginalized portion of the population becomes even more disempowered. As a result, the interests of citizens from varying socioeconomic strata are not equally represented in decisions of governance, a problem that undermines democracy and threatens its future (Levine, 2007; Levinson, 2012).

However, in analyzing the formation of civic identities among secondary students from racially and socioeconomically marginalized groups, Rubin (2007) found that, in classrooms

with "frank discussions of power and privilege" (p. 474), students formed empowered, rather than defeatist identities. Unfortunately, discussions of power and privilege are *less* likely to occur in schools serving low-income and racial minority students because the accountability and standardization movements have narrowed their curriculum to teach only the basics, with little space reserved for inquiry, critical thinking, or independent exploration (Au, 2007; Ryan, 2010). As a result, many students are left with an awareness of injustices but no opportunities to uncover their roots (Levinson, 2012). Without an understanding of causes, the perception may be that the injustice has always existed and therefore will always exist, which contributes to lower political efficacy and thus the civic empowerment gap (Levinson, 2012). However, there are teachers working to counteract this pattern through honestly acknowledging the inequities students face and teaching about historical and contemporary social movements so that students see that these injustices are not inevitable or insurmountable (Martell, 2013; Moya, 2012; Tyson, 2002).

For students with less personal experience with inequity, frankly addressing injustice is equally important. For more privileged students, such conversations allow them to recognize their own power to make political systems more just, and encourage them to do so (Swalwell, 2013). For all students, these discussions can provide a model of enlightened political engagement, particularly if they also include humility, reciprocity, and self-reflection to more productively and respectfully engage in difficult conversations (Parker, 2006). Such citizenship skills are the bedrock of democratic societies and yet at the present moment are too rarely found in political discourse (Sobieraj & Berry, 2011) or the classroom (Hess, 2009). The need for curriculum and school experiences dedicated to developing these skills is thus more urgent than ever. To craft informed positions on how best to address current social injustices, students must

be able not only to recognize their instantiations but also to understand their root causes, along with the unexamined assumptions that often surround them. These skills comprise the sociopolitical awareness Ladson-Billings (2006) identified as integral to culturally relevant pedagogy, as well as the critical consciousness that Freire (1970/2008) and other critical pedagogy scholars argued is necessary for emancipatory pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009).

In the present study, we analyzed the teaching practices of two critically-oriented teachers who invite frank dialogue about social justice issues in their classrooms, with particular attention to how they approach these conversations and the decision-making behind their chosen methods. We also examined how each approach influenced students' abilities to talk about racism and other social inequities. The need for such research is twofold. Firstly, teachers are in need of models that demonstrate concrete ways they can incorporate these conversations in ways that promote citizenship skills, as well as help them consider whether including these issues is worth the risks (Journell, 2016). Secondly, given that any approach to critical citizenship education must be highly context-dependent (Author, 2016; Freire, 1970/2008; Johnson & Morris, 2010), educators need deeper understanding of the precise ways that classroom characteristics may influence approaches to social justice conversations.

Candid Conversations About Power: Benefits and Barriers

Although social justice education is a growing field in education scholarship (Author, 2017), few empirical studies examine how social justice-oriented teachers select and justify their particular approach to addressing power and privilege in their curriculum. Thus, for this literature review, we will draw largely from the empirical work on controversial public issue (CPI) discussions. The present study was broader in that it examined curricular approaches

including but not limited to classroom discussions. Nevertheless, the CPI literature provides a helpful glimpse of some of the benefits of addressing controversial social issues, as well as the concerns that prevent some teachers from doing so.

Citizenship education scholars recommend that educators frequently implement discussions of controversial public issues (CPIs) to enhance students' skills in deliberation, self-reflection, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Barton & McCully, 2007; Epstein & Lipschultz, 2012; Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 2000; Flynn, 2009; Oulton, Day, Dillon, & Grace, 2004; Washington & Humphries, 2011). The conceptual literature on CPIs offers numerous recommendations for discussing difficult social issues in class including: dealing with personal emotions, obtaining support from within the school and curriculum, using examples that do not hit too close to home for students, revising questions to respect students' personal experiences, having multiple entry points for discussion, welcoming all students into the conversation, providing a supportive classroom environment, and planning lessons in advance (Barton & McCully, 2007; Epstein & Lipschultz, 2012; Evans, et al., 2000; Oulton et al., 2004; Washington & Humphries, 2011).

Although teachers may recognize the value of addressing social issues, relatively few feel comfortable raising such controversial issues in their own classrooms (Byford, Lennon, & Russell, 2009; Hess, 2004; Hess, 2011; Tannebaum, 2013; Waterson, 2009). Of the ones that do, many feel they should hide their own viewpoints in order to convey a neutral position (Hess, 2005, Kelly & Brandes, 2001; Oulton et al., 2004). Staying neutral—to the extent this is even possible—impedes citizenship skill development in that students are denied opportunities to separate fact from opinion, understand how bias works, and observe teachers modeling tolerance for alternative perspectives (Journell, 2016; Kelly, 1986). Nevertheless, teachers are likely to

continue projecting a neutral stance as long as they fear accusations of indoctrination or other resistance from their administration, students, or other community members (Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013, 2013; Engebretson, 2017; Hess, 2011). Many other concerns also prevent teachers from taking up—or in many cases even bringing up—controversial positions. These include time restrictions, lack of training and preparation, school and district policies, curriculum constraints, and concerns about classroom control (Byford et al., 2009; Hess, 2002; Hess, 2011; Oulton et al., 2001; Tannebaum, 2013; Waterson, 2009).

The field would benefit from more studies examining how differing contexts might influence teachers' decisions and actions. A recent study by Engebretson (2017) addressed this need. Engebretson's (2017) case study of one social justice-minded teacher in two different contexts found that she was more comfortable addressing race and class when the students' demographics mirrored her own (i.e. White, middle-class). When the demographics differed (i.e., lower-income, African American students), the teacher had trouble addressing LGBTQ issues because she feared compromising her ability to forge strong relationships with her students. More studies of teachers' decision-making in varying contexts would be illuminating. This study offers one such study in its comparison of two social justice-oriented teachers in the varying contexts of racially homogenous and heterogeneous classrooms. Moreover, the research has yielded little information about how differing approaches to curricular inclusion of social justice issues may produce divergent results in terms of students' abilities to talk about racism and other power structures. This study begins to address this gap as well.

Critical Citizenship Education

Citizenship education – one of the primary purposes of public schooling– involves developing students' abilities to engage in public discourse and deliberate with others to identify

areas of society in need of improvement (Barton & Levstik, 2008; den Heyer, 2003; Kelly, 1986; Parker, 1996; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Yet in most cases, citizenship education consists of sanitized facts about American government rather than student inquiry into the extent to which American ideals of equality are reflected in reality (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Thus the citizenship discourses in schools are idealized, silent on persistent social inequities, and detached from the realities of our students (Abu El-Haj, 2009; Journell, 2011; Urrieta, 2004). Such discourses are appropriate only if the goal is to produce a passive citizenry that accepts the status quo and its unequal distribution of power along lines of class, race, gender, ability, sexuality, and other dimensions.

Many students recognize the disjuncture between the democratic ideals presented in the curriculum and their own lived experience (Rubin, 2007). Epstein (2000) found that African American students differed from their White peers in the same 11th grade U.S. History class in their perception that democratic principles and practices "applied to European Americans only and racial oppression marked the experiences of African Americans, Native Americans, and Japanese Americans" (p. 203). Similarly, Urrieta's (2004) study of Chicana/o educators' reflections on their social studies education revealed that Black and Mexican identities were essentialized, marginalized, or excluded in what he termed "whitestream pedagogy and curriculum" (p. 433).

Critical citizenship education, with its origins in participatory democracy and critical theory, counters such whitestream conceptualizations with more inclusive, pluralistic, and emancipatory understandings of citizenship (Andreotti, 2006; Johnson & Morris, 2010). It involves specific identification of the shortcomings of American democracy, such as persistent unequal access to power and a decent quality of life. In other words, it requires students to be

able to critique their own society, a skill which some view as unpatriotic or divisive (Hackman, 2005; Parker, 2011). Research suggests, however, that candid discussion of injustice is actually likelier to increase positive civic engagement among youth than to produce resentment, apathy, or division (Moya, 2012; Rubin, 2007; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Therefore, a new form of citizenship education that prioritizes such discussions is needed to address the civic empowerment gap that currently exists between low-income students of color and their more affluent peers (Levinson, 2012). Critical citizenship education, taking cues from critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009; Freire, 1970/2008), incorporates examinations of root causes of social injustices to help students see that injustices are not inevitable (Johnson & Morris, 2010). This study applies a critical citizenship lens to pedagogical uses of class discussions to examine how these contribute to all students' abilities to critique elements of their society and cultivate efficacy to address these.

Research Design

Context and Participants

This qualitative case study is part of a larger ethnographic study in two high school classrooms in a mid-sized city in the Southeast. These were 11th grade U.S. History classrooms, chosen because the first author had a long professional relationship with both teachers and knew them to be working towards raising students' sociopolitical consciousness. Both teachers were young, White women with two or three years of experience teaching. (The first author) knew Ms. Bowling from supervising her student teaching internship and observing her for another qualitative research project. (The first author) knew Ms. Ray from working with her at a free college-access program for low-income youth, in which Ms. Ray taught classes on social movements, structural sexism, and critical media literacy. The two schools were five miles apart

from one another and around half of each student population was eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch. Table 1 provides further details about the two teachers, classrooms, and schools.

Table 1

Teacher Participants and Schools

Teacher	Race	Years teach-ing	School	Racial Demographics of School	F/R Lunch	Racial Demographics of Class	Gender Demog-raphics of Class
Ms. Bowling	White	3	Creekside *(comprehen-sive public)*	55% Black 23% White 18% Latinx 5% Other	59%	9 Black 8 White 7 Latinx	13 F 12 M
Ms. Ray	White	2	Health Academy *(small public magnet)*	61% Black 20% Latinx 9% White 6% Asian 3% Other	55%	21 Black 3 Latina 3 White 1 Jamaican/ Egyptian	22 F 6 M

Researcher positionalities. Both authors are White, female, former public school teachers with an interest in equity and justice in education and a critical orientation toward social reality. The first author taught high school social studies and English as a Second Language in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, and the second author taught kindergarten and first grade in a rural school outside of Charlottesville, VA. We now dedicate our research to supporting anti-racism, anti-sexism, and the freedom and humanity of all people, beginning within the American school system. The first author conducted all data collection and co-analyzed data with the two teacher participants. The second author wrote much of the literature review and collaborated on structuring and writing the full paper.

Data Sources

I (the first author) spent ten weeks (4 to 5 days per week) observing one 90-minute class period of each teacher, from February through the end of April 2015. I selected Ms. Bowling's 3rd period class and Ms. Ray's 4th period class because these were the sections that the teachers said were the most outspoken and, as Ms. Ray lovingly described them, "opinionated." During the months observed, Ms. Bowling's class covered World War I through the 1960s and Ms. Ray's class, which was on a different annual calendar, covered the Great Depression through the administration of George W. Bush. All class discussions were audio-recorded, and portions relevant to the research questions were transcribed. This resulted in over 500 pages of transcripts.

I also conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with seven students from each class, during which I asked questions about their opinions about the United States and how these have been influenced by their history class, if at all. I attempted to achieve a roughly representative sample of the class along the lines of race and gender (e.g., I only interviewed one young man from Ms. Ray's class as her class was only about one-fifth male). I also invited students who, during class discussions, expressed varying degrees of critical consciousness. All students who I invited to be interviewed assented. The interviews lasted about 30-45 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed. See Table 2 for the characteristics of the 14 students interviewed.

Table 2

Student Participants Interviewed

Student	Gender	Religion	Race/Ethnicity/ Nationality[a]	Duration of Interview
Ms. Ray's Class, Health Academy High School (Public Magnet, grades 9-12)				
1. Amina	F	Muslim	Black American	50 min
2. Melony	F	Christian	African American	43 min
3. Ida	F	Christian	African American	31 min
4. Josephine	F	Christian	Black/Afr. Amer.	33 min

5. Diane	F	Christian	Black/Afr. Amer.	40 min
6. Dolores	F	None	Hispanic	28 min
7. William	M	Jehovah's Witness	White/U.S. citizen	38 min

Ms. Bowling's Class, Creekside High School (Public Comprehensive, grades 9-12)				
1. Kiya	F	Christian	Afr. Amer./Black	30 min
2. Angela Davis	F	Theist	African American	45 min
3. Isabel	F	*blank*	Amer./Dominican	40 min
4. Alex	M	*blank*	Mexican	26 min
5. Feisty Rebel	F	None	White/American	31 min
6. Roman	M	Christian	Black/Native American	35 min
7. Matt	M	Christian	White, American	33 min

[a] Students who were interviewed filled out a demographic sheet in which they self-identified their religion and race/ethnicity/nationality.

Following each class observation, I had short (10-15 minutes), unstructured interviews with each teacher in which they shared their reflections on the lesson, student comments, and classwork. I took detailed field notes of both the class observations and these daily conversations. In addition, I conducted two in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each teacher—one halfway through the 10-week observation period, and the other in September of 2015. These lasted between one and three hours and focused on questions related to their goals in teaching and the methods they used to achieve these goals, particularly as they related to developing students' abilities to critique social inequities. In the second interview, teachers read anonymized transcripts from interviews with their students and provided their interpretations of the degree to which students demonstrated critical consciousness development.

Data Analysis

The teachers acted as co-investigators as they analyzed these data with me in three ways. First, our daily conversations about the class discussions from the period I had just observed provided me with their interpretations of students' responses to the lessons. Second, the teachers co-analyzed their students' interview transcripts with me by thinking aloud as they read these

and answering semi-structured interview questions I then asked regarding their reactions to students' statements. A final way in which teachers acted as co-investigators was by reading an early draft of the entire study and providing written and verbal feedback which I then incorporated into the final write-up.

I (first author) also independently analyzed all data using MAXQDA data analysis software. I drew upon both inductive and deductive coding methods. Examples of inductive codes include "cliffhangers" and "withholding judgment," while deductive codes—derived primarily from critical theory and citizenship education literature—included, "critiques of racism" and "understanding power." As I coded, I oscillated between each of the teachers' classrooms, as well as between transcripts and field notes, finding that these juxtapositions made elements of their discussion strategies stand out more in relief against the other. For instance, the code "teacher non-disclosure" was applied twice in data related to Ms. Bowling but never for Ms. Ray. "Encouraging dissent" was applied 12 times for class observations of Ms. Bowling, and only in one class observation of Ms. Ray. On the other hand, "complicating students' understanding" was applied 14 times to Ms. Ray's class transcripts and 7 times to Ms. Bowling's. From constantly comparing the two data sets (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), both during data collection and throughout later data analysis, the theme emerged that Ms. Ray used an explicit approach to discussing injustices, while Ms. Bowling used a facilitation approach. When coding student responses, two themes emerged that were similarly true for both groups: 1) students in both classes appeared willing and able to call out inequities, and 2) students expressed hope, as opposed to disillusionment, related to the intractability of these inequities and a belief in the power of individuals to improve them.

Two Approaches: Explicit and Facilitation

Ms. Ray and Ms. Bowling used two different pedagogical approaches to including social justice issues in their curriculum. Ms. Ray tended to "call out those things" (Interview, March 28) herself, as a way of modeling for her students, whereas Ms. Bowling tried to incite her students to call them out. The primary reasons for this were differences in the teachers' overall curricular goals and in the degree of heterogeneity of their classrooms. From our analysis of the data, one option did not stand out as superior to the other. Rather, each seemed to have its own merits depending on the contexts of the students, teacher, classroom, school, and community. Thus we hope that presenting in-depth portraits of these two approaches (among the many possible approaches to addressing social justice issues) will help readers make more informed decisions in their own contexts of how explicit to be in discussing issues of social inequity. Each subsection below provides a description of how the teacher chose the approach employed, illustrations of the approach in action, and finally the impacts of the approach on students (see Table 3 for overview). I then present common themes observed in students across both pedagogical approaches before discussing the findings.

Table 3
Overview of Two Approaches to Controversial Social Issue Discussions

	Factors Influencing each Pedagogical Approach		**Distinct Impacts on Students**	**Shared Impacts on Students**
	Teacher's Curricular Aims	School Demographics		
Ms. Ray's Explicit Approach	raise students' critical consciousness; empower students to recognize and call out injustices	Racially homogenous (mostly Black); small, public magnet school	Confidence in recognizing and calling out injustices	intellectual confidence and curiosity conception of citizenship that includes critique
Ms. Bowling's Facilitation Approach	promote questioning of common sense; get students to raise	Racially heterogeneous; large,	Questioning dominant narratives	

	each others' critical consciousness	comprehensive high school		belief in the power of ordinary people to effect change

Ms. Ray's Explicit Approach

Contextual considerations and curricular goals. Ms. Ray explained that, because her

school and classroom were predominantly African American and female, she felt impelled to

overtly confirm the existence of institutionalized racism and other injustices, in part because her

experience led her to believe that many of her students were already aware of such phenomenon

and she wanted them to feel comfortable discussing these in class. She explained:

> I think the demographics of who I'm teaching matter, right? . . . I'm teaching students of
> color. There's no doubt in their minds that everything's not bright and sunny. (interview,
> 9/19/2015)

Thus she did not feel class conversations needed to uncover injustices or that she needed to

anticipate student resistance to learning about these issues (Bolgatz, 2005; Tatum, 1992; Welton,

Harris, La Londe, & Moyer, 2015). Rather, her intent became to help her students develop

confidence in naming the injustices they were already aware of. She later elaborated:

> I want students to be able to say, "White people did this." A lot of people come in afraid
> to say the word "white." They're like, "Sometimes, not to generalize, *some* Caucasian
> people, *sometimes* have like, maybe some stereotypes..." I'm like, "Yes! Ok! You don't
> have to tiptoe around that. . . . I don't feel personally offended!" (interview, 9/19/2015)

Ms. Ray believed that if her students were ever to counteract injustice, they needed to

first understand and feel comfortable talking about it. She said that one of her "big goals" was for

students to be able to "identify things that are racist in history . . . and recognize or call bullshit

when they see it" and that one way she did so was by

> being really upfront with them about when I personally see things or feel things that are
> unjust. And not being afraid to answer their questions about "why is this this?" and "how
> come this is?" with like, "Because of racism" or "Because this person or group wanted to
> hold on to their economic power." . . . I think they have maybe in the past, from earlier

teachers, gotten a lot of like, "Well, it's complicated." Or "Well, I can't really explain that right now" or whatever. And I don't mean to say that I want to boil everything down to saying "Oh it's because of racism or because of classism or homophobia or whatever." But being able to verbalize and call out those things when they occur in history. I think hopefully will make students—or I hope that it will make students more willing to call those things out in the present. And then to act on them. (interview, 9/19/2015)

These quotes illustrate that Ms. Ray did not choose to call out power imbalances because she wanted to make students aware of them. They were already aware that these exist. Rather, she wanted to make sure they understood how seemingly isolated injustices are sometimes symptoms of a larger, structural issue—institutionalized racism for example. Her explicit approach then served two pedagogical goals: 1) to help students recognize when structural forces are underlying individual instances of injustice, and 2) to model the skill of publicly denouncing oppression so that they would become accustomed to doing the same.

The explicit approach in action. Throughout my ten weeks of observations, there were many instances of Ms. Ray calling out both historical and contemporary injustices. Critiquing historical examples—such as slavery, Indian removal, or denial of women's suffrage—as opposed to contemporary ones may be easier for teachers, and thus more likely to occur, because they present less risk of offending or inciting heated disagreement (Epstein & Lipshultz, 2012). However, Ms. Ray regularly called out current examples because she wanted students to understand "historical grounding of why certain things are the way they are" (Interview, March 28). She clarified, "I don't feel like it's my place to shape their personal values, but to give them the tools and the understanding and the historical background needed to act on [their own] values when they're adults."

One example of a lesson in which she tied injustices of the past to those of the present occurred the day of the announcement that Officer Darren Wilson would not be indicted for the killing of Michael Brown. This event occurred prior to the start of this ethnography, but Ms. Ray

supplied me with the teacher-made video that students watched that night in preparation for the

next day's lesson on Reconstruction. Ms. Ray opened her video with these words:

> Before I start this video, which will be about the politics of Reconstruction, I want to
> address the historical moment that we're in as I record and as you watch. About 4 hours
> ago, a grand jury decided not to indict officer Darren Wilson in the killing of Michael
> Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Like many of you I am running through a range of
> emotions like this, from anger, to sadness, to hopelessness, to motivation to change the
> system, and back to sadness and despair. I recognize that society has granted me privilege
> as a White person to feel these things as empathy rather than a direct threat to my
> physical safety. I was amazed tonight as I watched protesters put their lives and bodies on
> the line to remain calm in the face of what seemed like astonishing injustice.
>
> This is how I felt as an American, and a human. As a teacher, my job is to try my best to
> shed light on how we got here. I have to ask us now, as a class, to investigate a time that
> should feel more distant by now. It should be more difficult, in 2014, for us to connect
> the failure of Reconstruction, the failure of White policymakers to ensure justice for
> Black and Brown Americans, to current events. (class artifact from 11/24/2014)

Ms. Ray informed me that the day after a grand jury decided not to indict Officer Daniel

Pantaleo for the death of Eric Garner, she allowed students to create #BlackLivesMatter posters,

which then hung outside of her classroom for the remainder of the year. While studying the

Black Panther movement, Ms. Ray asked students to read their Ten-Point Program and highlight

any points that students felt are still problems today. In all of these examples, Ms. Ray carried

out her intentions to model for students the act of naming injustice when she saw it, and then

speaking out against it.

Student responses.

Students calling out. As she had hoped, most of the students in Ms. Ray's class,

regardless of racial background, appeared comfortable calling out social inequities, both in front

of their peers in class, as well as in interviews with me, a White researcher from outside their

school community. In one of her other classes, while role playing a tea party for the founding

fathers, one student declared the type of tea called "plantation mint" to be racist. Ms. Ray took

this as evidence that students were picking up on subtle remnants of racist legacies, no longer

overlooking what many accept as normal and thus fail to question. Another day, I observed the

following conversation in class:

>Kiara: Do White people ever get mistreated in history?

>Dakota: The women do.

>Ms. Ray: Um yeah, the women do. The poor do. Jewish people do.

>Kiara: I'm talking about *everybody*.

>Ms. Ray: Systematically, not really. Not in the same institutional way. Unless you're a woman, which is 51% of the White population. . . . Straight, White, wealthy men? Not really. (class observation, April 16)

Although Kiara was asking a question, rather than making a statement about racism, the question

reveals her observation that in the many discussions of mistreatment in American history, there

had not yet been an instance in which White people were the subject of the mistreatment. That

she felt comfortable asking her White teacher this question suggests that Ms. Ray's strategy of

calling out racism had indeed assured students they could do the same without fear of offending

her or other students in the class.

During interviews, most students openly discussed their impressions that racism

continued to be a systemic problem in the United States. The following excerpts from interviews

with Diane and Amina provide just two examples:

>Interviewer: Do you think we have racial equality now?

>Diane: Definitely not.

>Interviewer: Do you think we'll ever have it?

>Diane: Umm, maybe. As of right now, it really doesn't look like we will. Because people are still caught up in bad, old school "Blacks are below, Whites are above." (interview, 4/8/2015)
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Interviewer: Do you think the ability to actually go from rags to riches has changed throughout history?

Amina: Yes because when America was first up-and-coming there was a lot more opportunities. Now we have our society in place—not saying that it can't change, or won't change. But we have like a system set up. And it might be easier for someone from Europe to come over here and be successful than someone from Africa or even Mexico or something like that.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Amina: The way America is set up. (interview, 4/1/2015)

Here Amina hints at racism and colorism, saying later in her interview, "Like Ms. Ray and I were talking about . . . racism isn't 100% gone." She went on to share that "Ms. Ray has reinforced the idea that, as an American citizen, it *is* your job to stand up and do better." These excerpts illustrate, not only that students felt comfortable talking about race-based oppression, but also that they saw how it operates at an societal level. In other words, they saw beyond common perceptions of racism as a character flaw of a subset of White people, or a form of prejudice that affects individuals on a case-by-case basis, depending on whom they interact with (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Rather, their references to social hierarchies and the fact that we have a "system set up" indicate at least an initial understanding of the structural nature of racism.

Reluctance to call out. There were a few other times when these same students would show reluctance to use words such as racism or sexism. Several would avoid using terms like race, Black people, or White people by substituting phrases like "certain racial groups" (Diane, interview, 4/8/2015). Even students who openly critiqued racism and sexism in class and in interviews avoided labeling the country racist at other points in their interviews. Amina was one such student. Having a mother from Egypt and father from Jamaica, she drew from both her parents' and her own experiences in critiquing nativism and racism. However, at one point in her interview she said,

I don't want to say America is racist. Because I don't think America is racist. But I do

think America does favor White people. Yeah. But I think every country pretty much

favors White people, so. Or favors lighter-skinned people and European features and stuff

like that. (4/1/2015)

We cannot be sure what Amina saw as the distinction between racism and favoring one race or

skin-color over another. Perhaps she viewed the first as conscious and the second as

unconscious. Or perhaps, despite her recognition that a racial hierarchy exists, she was hesitant

to level the accusation of racism on her country—the country that her parents chose to migrate

to. Ms. Ray was not concerned or surprised to read instances of her students' hesitations in

interviews. As she stated in her own interview, she understood that students may be reluctant to

use such emotionally charged terms, and she did not expect one year of her class to completely

eliminate this reluctance. Her hope was to lay foundations upon which students might continue

to build capacity for challenging hierarchies. The data presented here suggests that, even in

classes where students become more confident in calling out injustices, it may be unrealistic to

expect all students to do so all the time. It also underscores how formidable this goal is, and that

progress should be measured in any brief assertion students are able to make, rather than radical

shifts in perspective or action.

Ms. Bowling's Facilitation Approach

   Contextual considerations and curricular goals. The students in Ms. Bowling's class

were more racially diverse than those in Ms. Ray's class (see Table 1). This, along with Ms.

Bowling's curricular goals, influenced Ms. Bowling to choose a different approach to discussing

sensitive social issues. When I asked whether she would outright call something racist in class,

she answered, "Like me leading the discussion? Probably not—I would be like, 'Is this racist?'

right? And then get them to call it out." She explained:

> Something I was cognizant of in this class. . . was I do have a population of White middle class kids that probably have conservative backgrounds. So I wanted . . . to be able to present issues from multiple perspectives. That way they could figure it out on their own, and it wasn't me preaching a certain mindset. So with a lot of the controversial things it would be like, well let's hear opinion one and then opinion two. And then let's kinda figure out where your opinions fall in that spectrum. (interview, 9/26/2015)

When I asked what she would do if they were discussing something that was clearly racist and no student pointed this out, she replied that she would "play devil's advocate at that point and be like, alright well let's look at it from this perspective right?" (interview, 9/26/2015). She also described how she capitalized on the heterogeneity of her class, after I asked her how she strives to reach her stated goal of enhancing critical thinking and well-rounded understandings:

> [By] letting them have a voice. And relying on the fact that there's numerous backgrounds in every class. And. . . pushing them to engage in some kind of dialogue with one another. So even though you might take a student that wasn't really thinking from a different perspective, they're being matched with a student that is. So forcing them to really think from a different perspective. And how maybe historically, different populations of people also had different perspectives on different events that were going on. (interview, 4/3/2015)

Ms. Bowling's prioritization of dialogue and multiple perspectives arose both from her belief that these best suited the class makeup, as well her curricular goals:

> I would say my biggest goals in general are not just US history teacher goals. I mean genuinely I feel like as a teacher, most of what you're teaching them, as far as content goes, they're not going to remember it. Unfortunately. But what they will remember, hopefully, is thinking critically, evaluating things from different sides, trying to analyze if there are different points of view. Having conversations with people. . . And where did they fit in the process? Like how does it impact them today? Or how can they impact it in the future? So really making it more active. That they play a role this somehow, like history is not ancient. (interview, 4/3/2015)

The focus on understanding the impact of history on the problems we continue to face overlaps with Ms. Ray's goals. They differ in that Ms. Bowling did not place the same emphasis on helping students become comfortable calling out injustices in the past and present. Rather, she

hoped that students would feel comfortable talking across differing viewpoints, that they would critically reflect on their own views in light of growing awareness of others', and that they would "deviate from the social norm" and "trust the fact that you have your own opinion and it's ok to not agree with everybody else" (interview, 4/3/2015). Her rationale was that these were skills that would benefit them both personally as well as in their development as citizens.

       The facilitation approach in action. Ms. Bowling used several strategies to facilitate class conversations in which students felt comfortable expressing divergent opinions and dissenting from the majority view. As mentioned above, one key strategy was playing devil's advocate. For instance, when one student, Angela, stated that John F. Kennedy was her favorite president, Ms. Bowling replied, "Angela, I'm going to play devil's advocate for a minute. . . What if I told you that on the surface he fights for civil rights but he doesn't actually do a lot to achieve that?" (class observation, 4/16/2015). Even though Ms. Bowling shared the students' positive opinion of JFK, she took up the opposing viewpoint to make up for the fact that no one in the class was presenting that perspective. Her strategy was so consistent that several students even mentioned it in interviews. In an interview with Angela in which she also had a friend from another history class present, the following exchange took place:

    Angela: In a way she puts her opinion in there. Well she doesn't put it in there. She wants—she pushes you to think about what it is.

    Friend: Is she like a devil's advocate?

    Angela: Yeah she plays the devil's advocate. That's what I'm looking for. (4/13/2015)

Of note in Angela's interpretation of the devil's advocate strategy was that she thought Ms. Bowling actually did want students to figure out her opinion. Indeed in interviews with the other students, many said they had discerned Ms. Bowling's opinions even when she did not share them. For instance, Roman said, "The way she plays devil's advocate brings out points, but it's

also—it's not just points. I think sometimes it's her own belief, by like her facial expressions or her movements" (interview, 4/23/2015). Although some have contended that the devil's advocate technique is a method of disguising the teacher's viewpoint (Kelly, 1986), this suggests that the teacher may be fairly transparent with her opinion but still use the technique primarily to ensure consideration of counter-perspectives in the absence of any students voicing these themselves.

Another strategy Ms. Bowling used was to speak primarily in questions, rather than statements. To elicit students' recognition of sexism during the 1950s, as well as today, she asked students to state whether the content of "The Good Wife's Guide" still applies today. This list of advice, which was said to have appeared in *Housekeeping Monthly* (although there is some evidence it is a hoax), gave women recommendations such as, "Let him talk first. Remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours." Rather than labeling the guide sexist, Ms. Bowling posed questions that might lead students to discover this for themselves. She asked the class, "Let's flip the table. . . if women are also working . . . can we say if this goes for women, it should go for men? That men should be more interesting for their wives?" (class observation, 4/13/2015). She also asked if any of the points still apply today. Through asking probing questions, Ms. Bowling attempted to induce her students to detect the sexist expectations coded in the text, as well as those that have carried over to today.

This strategy of continually questioning the class was even noticed by some of the students. Kiya said of Ms. Bowling:

> I love her. She is so insightful and it teaches me a lot. She makes you think. Like with her kinda ending off with a question, like "how would you think about this?" or "how would you think about that? . . . And comments keep rolling and rolling. And hearing other people talk from what she just said. It's very powerful. I like it. (interview, 4/9/2015)

On another occasion Kiya had expressed frustration that some of her peers made immature comments in class, so it was somewhat surprising to hear that she appreciated Ms. Bowling's

facilitation approach despite its tendency to invite comments both thoughtful and hastily made

(discussed further below).

Student responses.

Questioning dominant narratives. We found evidence that students were, as Ms.

Bowling had hoped, developing their abilities to interrogate rather than accept narratives at face

value. In particular they questioned the dominant narratives around the American Dream

ideology and the United States' claim to equally protect all. Most students viewed the American

Dream as a false, but widely held, belief that wealth and social status can be attained through

hard work. In his interview, Roman expressed doubt in this ideology:

> Interviewer: So do you believe in the American Dream idea that hard work gets you a good position in life?
>
> Roman: No.
>
> Interviewer: Can you tell me more why you say no?
>
> Roman: Honestly because even though hard-working people work hard every day, still they are stuck in the same spot. Unless you have friends who could boost you, or you make connections, or in some cases you make a deal with the devil, you aren't going to really get to where you thought your dreams would take you.
>
> Interviewer: What do you mean by make a deal with the devil?
>
> Roman: If you have to do something illegal. (4/23/2015)

Other students pointed out structural barriers to social mobility, such as nativism:

> Isabel: I mean people don't get paid right, even though they work. In fast food restaurants they still don't get paid right. . . And they're not giving everybody opportunities to move from . . . their social level. Like for example, immigrants. It's hard for them to move from their social level. Because like Ms. Bowling says, some of them work in farms and they get threatened to get sent back if they say they want more money. That's basically treating them like a slave. (interview, 4/15/2015)

These quotes illustrate how students were skeptical of the popular belief that the United States is

a meritocracy in which hard work is rewarded no matter your background. They were beginning

to understand how both systemic and individual discrimination along lines of nationality, race, and class interfere with this formula.

In addition, students questioned the notion that all are treated and protected equally in the United States. In response to the interview question, "Do you think the United States equally protects all citizens?" all seven of the students from Ms. Bowling's class said no. (All of the students in Ms. Ray's class to whom I posed this question also said no). In elaborating on their responses, four of the seven mentioned immigrants, one mentioned gay people, and the other two talked about racism more broadly. In terms of the latter, Roman referenced class discussions of Trayvon Martin and Ferguson, and Isabel explained,

> For example cops—because of racism, they go towards people or blame people for something they didn't do. And then kill them and then make an excuse. And then usually the government -- well court, accepts it because they're cops. So they'd be like, "Aw," and they'd just get like two years in jail. (interview, 4/15/2015)

Here Isabel points to both individual acts of discrimination as well as ways in which institutions such as the judicial system contribute to systemic inequality.

Defending undemocratic viewpoints. Students in Ms. Bowling's class sometimes took dissent to the extreme—questioning viewpoints solely *because* the majority of the class agreed on them, even if the counterview was morally indefensible. For instance, the majority of the class agreed that the internment of Japanese American citizens during World War II was reprehensible. Two students, however, defended the government by stating, "They were just being safe." They argued that, unlike the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, the interned Japanese Americans were not murdered. Ms. Bowling, as always careful to prompt her students to identify the counterargument rather than doing so herself, replied:

> Imagine if I told you this. Somewhere in your ancestors' history—you may have been born here, your parents may have been born here, but I'm the US government and I've traced your lineage. And I found out that somewhere down the line, your family came

> from Japan. And that's too risky so I'm going to take you and you're going to live in this camp until I tell you that you can leave.

This only seemed to feed two of the students' desires to defend the policy. One student said, "We didn't put them in railroad cars and we didn't put them in fires and put them in gas chambers. . . They just put a barbed wire fence around them," and the second added, "We gave them food, shelter. They should feel lucky." (class observation, 4/8/2015)

After class, Ms. Bowling told me she was frustrated that these students showed so little empathy. I wondered aloud if they were trying to play the devil's advocate role that she so often plays, and Ms. Bowling agreed that this was likely the case. I also wondered if they were primarily attempting to argue that there were, in fact, differences between Japanese internment camps and Holocaust concentration camps—a drive they might have cultivated by being in a class in which dissent was so highly encouraged. Unfortunately in this case, their dissent took the form of defending an undemocratic, unconstitutional action, suggesting that teachers should help students understand the difference between critique in the service of democracy versus critique that undermines it.

Cross-Approach Impacts on Students' Citizenship Education

Regardless of pedagogical approach, students in both classrooms appeared relatively comfortable speaking out about sensitive social issues, calling out injustices, and arguing from differing viewpoints. Most cited racism, racist nativism, or homophobia in elaborating on why they thought the United States does not equally protect all citizens. Such candid critique may raise fears that students will not develop positive affiliation with the nation, or that it will engender cynicism or helplessness to effect social change (Hackman, 2005; Parker, 2011). Even both teachers expressed this concern in their interviews. Ms. Ray said,

> I worry all the time that my students are going to reach this saturation point for learning

about past atrocities or injustice, where they're just going to believe that things have always been bad and will always be bad. And there's nothing they can do. (interview. 3/28/2015)

Ms. Bowling expressed a similar concern and added that her tack was:

. . . trying to take that disillusionment and getting it to go into action. Not for us to just be like, "Alright I don't understand what America is doing so I'm not going to participate." But rather taking it and saying, "Ok you have the power to change this, so do it." (interview, 4/3/2015)

Indeed, the data suggests that both teachers were largely successful in preventing their students from feeling frustrated, helpless, or hopeless. Quite the contrary, the teachers' candidness in discussions seemed to both inspire greater civic empowerment as well as intellectual curiosity and confidence. This supports prior research positing that students' political knowledge and engagement increase when teachers acknowledge injustices and help students identify ways to address them (Levinson, 2012; Moya, 2012; Rubin, 2007).

Intellectual Confidence and Curiosity

To become empowered citizens, students need to be informed—and feel informed— about the aspects of society they perceive as needing action. Students from both classrooms used the metaphor of vision to describe how exposure to sociopolitical inequalities, both past and present, gave them a new sense with which to take in the world. One of Ms. Ray's students spontaneously wrote her a thank-you letter at the end of the year in which she said that Ms. Ray had changed the way she saw things and made her "more aware." Isabel said by learning both "the positive and negative", she felt that now she could "see" (interview, 4/15/2015). This was in contrast to the history lessons from their prior teachers, which Isabel described as "fairy tale stuff." Josephine explained, "I became more, I guess, comfortable because I knew the information now. So I can have more of a true perspective to look from, because I actually knew what was going on now" (interview, 4/6/2015). Several students expressed the opinion that

teachers should be honest, even if it meant sharing negative features of history and society. Roman contended, "The teacher shouldn't be compelled to like make the US seem like, 'Oh it's awesome and whatnot.' It's just supposed to show realistic and real-life facts" (interview, 4/23/2015). While discussing the same topic, Matt said, "Knowledge is power. People need to know the truth, [not just] what they want to hear" (interview, 4/28/2015).

Exposure to a U.S. History curriculum that openly acknowledges mistakes and failures, both past and present, also motivated students to take a more active role in their own pursuit of knowledge. After Feisty Rebel (self-selected pseudonym) said that Ms. Bowling's class taught her that presidents were not always doing as much for civil rights as she had previously thought, I asked how it made her feel to discover that versions of history she had learned before were not the full story. She answered, "It just makes me want to know the truth behind it. . . It just like makes you want to know more about what country you're living in" (interview, 4/22/2015). Similarly, Isabel said, "since [Ms. Bowling] teaches the positive and negative, I pay more attention. I be like, 'Oh! That's interesting. I didn't know that'" (interview, 4/15/2015). Candid discussions of the United States' shortcomings motivated these students, not only to want to make a change in the future, but also to "pay more attention" and learn more about historical and contemporary social realities. This is consistent with prior research that found that students who regularly participate in controversial class discussions are more likely to follow political news and take part in political discussions (Barton & McCully, 2007).

Critical Citizenship

When I asked Amina how she would define a good citizen, she answered, "a person who if they see something wrong, they can say, 'This is wrong'." Amina went on to say about her teacher:

> Actually [Ms. Ray's] class makes me love America more because people like her are what make America better. Because if there was nobody in America saying segregation is wrong, we would still be segregated. . . [Since] she teaches her students to stand up, . . . I think she's making America a better place. And eventually if someone isn't patriotic, they will begin to love America because there are people saying "this is wrong" and then, "We're changing it to fix it and make it better." (interview, 4/1/2015)

This perception that the ability to critique elements of one's society is a key component of patriotism stands in direct opposition to the fear many have that curriculum emphasizing inequities will foster cynicism or disillusionment in students (Hackman, 2005; Parker, 2011). In fact, Ms. Ray had this concern, and actually mentioned Amina in particular: "the person that I would worry about being cynical would be like Amina. Someone who is . . . super in-tune and sees almost all the different systems operating at once" (interview, 9/19/2015). This data suggests the opposite to be true: that students may perceive critique as a sign of love for one's country, that critique is a necessary prerequisite to improving society, and that working to improve society is a sign of patriotism. The students here described what Westheimer (2011) called democratic patriotism, as opposed to authoritarian patriotism. The former encourages dissent and critique to reinforce principles of equality and justice, whereas the latter consists of unconditional loyalty and suppression of dissent (Westheimer, 2011).

Like Ms. Ray's students, Ms. Bowling's students too viewed social critique as an element of active citizenship. Several recognized that the class had given them a new perspective on the United States, often including a deeper awareness of some of its shortcomings. Roman said that Ms. Bowling "shows us what's really going on beyond what's been said and think past, instead of just taking information, like gullible people would" (interview, 4/23/2015). At the same time, this did not diminish their appreciation for the strengths of the United States and benefits of living here. Isabel said, "I'm still proud to be a citizen. Even thought there's like a whole bunch of corruption" (interview, 4/15/2015). (She later clarified that, by corruption, she meant unfair

wages, lack of social mobility, and discrimination against immigrants). She went on to say that it is important that teachers "give you the positive and negative . . . because if they only tell you the positive, it's like all fairy tale stuff." I asked her if it was okay that students might learn negative things and form critical opinions about the United States, to which she replied, "Yeah, it is ok. Because maybe they could make a change in the future." Kiya's response to my question about whether she thought Ms. Bowling was patriotic indicates that she did not see patriotism and a critical stance as in conflict: "I think she has pride in the US, but I think she has things that she thinks could change. To make things better" (interview, 4/9/2015). Like Ms. Ray's students, both students here suggested that critique is actually integral to active citizenship—not a threat to it.

Students also talked about recognizing the power that ordinary people have to take action in response to these critiques. Isabel stated that understanding both "the positive and the negative" is what allows youth to "make a change in the future" (interview, 4/15/2015). Students expressed beliefs that ordinary people, and even young people, have power to influence social change. Angela said, "kids actually have a little more power than they think they do" (interview, 4/13/2015). After Josephine mentioned that youth have power, I asked if that was something she knew before Ms. Ray's class. She answered, "I *knew* it, but I didn't know how important it was, until I came to Ms. Ray's class. Like I knew the youth—that we have power, but using the power was the thing I didn't really understand before" (interview, 4/6/2015). Some planned to take action in the form of educating young people in the future. Angela said she planned to tell her children, "I'll set you straight. This is why you have to pay attention and read everything."

Implications for Teaching and Future Research Directions

This study has several implications for teachers and scholars interested in the pedagogical uses and impacts of curricular inclusion of contemporary social inequities as a means of critical

citizenship development. To date there has been little empirical research on how varying

approaches to addressing social justice issues might result in different outcomes for students.

One important finding therefore is that, although the two teachers used different approaches, the

effects were similar in terms of students' deepened abilities to analyze power imbalances while

not compromising critical hope (Freire, 1992) or their appreciation for American democracy. At

the same time, the criteria the teachers considered in deciding the type of approach to use can

help guide other practitioners seeking guidance in how to approach such conversations in their

own classrooms.

Crafting a Pedagogical Approach

Classroom contexts. Among other considerations, teachers should take into account the

makeup of their classrooms in crafting a contextually-appropriate approach to curricular

incorporation of social issues. We use the term craft, rather than select, to highlight the

importance of creating an approach that is uniquely adapted to one's particular context, rather

than selecting an approach already in use, either by these teachers or others. The small sample

size limits the generalizability of this study, but the findings suggest that there may be defensible

reasons for a teacher to choose the explicit approach particularly in discussions of racism in

predominantly minority classrooms, and other defensible reasons for a teacher, in other contexts,

to choose the facilitation approach. Given the controversial and personal nature of such topics,

young people may be more amenable to opposing views if they first come from peers rather than

the teacher. Ms. Bowling felt that, since her students wanted to "fit in" and "hide in the group"

(interview, 4/3/2015), they were more likely to consider alternative opinions if they were

presented by other young people, rather than an adult. Moreover, if a teacher makes a declarative

statement about the pervasiveness of racism in America, for instance, students who disagree may

worry that speaking up will incur censure or a negative impact on their grades.

Teachers should weigh the potential risks against the benefits for student civic development when deciding how much of their own opinion to disclose to students (Journell, 2016). Although she did not hide her political beliefs, Ms. Bowling felt she needed to be less explicit than Ms. Ray was in order to "allow competing views to receive a fair hearing within the classroom" (Journell, 2016, p. 9). Her concern was particularly tied to the racial demographics of the class and the limits of her personal knowledge of inequities such as racism as a White person. Equally shaping her choice of approach was her goal of getting students more comfortable disagreeing with one another and even with the teacher. Although several studies have cited the value of controversial discussions for helping students tolerate differing perspectives (Avery, et al., 2003; Waterson, 2009), fewer have examined Ms. Bowling's point that it may also help them gain confidence in differing from their peers—during a developmental stage in which fitting in is highly prioritized (Lashbrook, 2000). More research is needed to explore how teacher disclosure decisions interact with approaches to controversial issue incorporation. For instance, Ms. Bowling implicitly disclosed her opinions through the facilitation approach, but we do not know how the approach might have differed had she been more explicit (or more implicit, for that matter).

More research is also needed on how other factors, other than racial heterogeneity, play into teachers' decisions and how these considerations interact. For instance, in a class that is somewhat diverse but predominantly white, would a teacher need to take a more explicit approach to empower racial minority students to feel comfortable defending a perspective that may be challenging to the White students making up the majority of the class? The need to create a welcoming environment for nondominant viewpoints is exactly the reason Ms. Ray gave for

taking an explicit approach to describing topics such as racism. How might diversity along other lines, such as national origin or ideology, play into teacher decision-making?

At the same time, the ideological backgrounds of the students would also need to be taken into account. Although students are generally approving of teachers' decisions to share their political opinions (Hess & McAvoy, 2009), students from conservative backgrounds may display resistance to conversations on emotionally charged topics such as racism, as some students in prior studies have shown (Bolgatz, 2005; Harlow, 2009; Kleinman, Copp, & Sandstrom, 2006; Kumashiro, 2002; Tatum, 1992). Teachers of such students may have to develop a third approach that is proactive in ensuring marginalized perspectives are shared (i.e. more direct than Ms. Bowling's facilitation approach) but careful to lay necessary groundwork so that all students are open to ideas that challenge their own (i.e. less direct than Ms. Ray's explicit approach). Future research in a variety of classroom contexts would be an important addition to this growing body of literature.

Pedagogical goals. The teachers also mentioned differing pedagogical goals as underlying their choices of approach. While Ms. Bowling wanted to encourage students to "deviate from the social norm" and "question their preconceived notions," Ms. Ray wanted students to be able to "call bullshit when they see it." These goals arose in part, however, from the differing makeups of the class. The data supported Ms. Ray's concern that students were sometimes afraid to make statements about race or racism in front of their White teacher, and perhaps in other contexts as well. Although this was not completely eliminated through Ms. Ray's explicit approach, students did appear comfortable critiquing elements of American society, including racism and the erosion of the American Dream. Ms. Ray's hope was that this confidence would translate to a willingness to speak up in the future when they identified racism

or other injustices operating. Longitudinal research is needed to investigate the extent to which this indeed occurs.

Ms. Bowling, on the other hand, was concerned less with students' abilities to "call out" injustices as their abilities to question and diverge. Deviating from the dominant perspective could be thought of as a prerequisite skill to identifying injustice because it places us outside of our cultural assumptions and norms, which may allow a clearer view of how those cultural norms may be problematic (Tatum & Brown, 1998). One unintended consequence of this is that some students took up the charge to dissent so enthusiastically that they defended closed issues—or issues that have been largely settled in public opinion (Hess, 2009)—such as the decision to intern Japanese Americans during World War II. Educators, then, may need to teach the distinction between open versus closed issues and explain that disagreeing about closed issues is not likely to have the same civic benefits as debating issues for which multiple viewpoints are still viable.

Conclusion

The present study lends further support to research that has found that if social studies teachers candidly discuss power and injustice, students who perceive a disjuncture between American ideals and their own realities become empowered, rather than discouraged or cynical (Rossi, 2006; Rubin, 2007). This study suggests, more specifically, that to help students become empowered, teachers can take an explicit or facilitation approach to addressing social justice issues. In other words, identification of such issues can come from the teacher or the students. If teachers sense students will be better able to identify these if their teachers first normalize it (as Ms. Ray normalized calling out racism), then the explicit approach may be better. If teachers sense that students would be more open to reconsidering their own viewpoints if they are

challenged by peers, rather than the teacher, then the facilitation approach may be preferable.

Students in both classes espoused a belief that ordinary individuals, even youth, have the power to effect change and saw their teachers' acknowledgement of inequities as examples of ordinary people doing just that. This shifted their definitions of a good citizen from a person who "obeys laws" and "pays taxes" to someone who says "this is wrong" and "fixes it to make it better." If teachers call out, and encourage their students to do so as well, the citizenry can be trusted to admit shortcomings within our democracy, and then work to strengthen it.

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