CONTEXT, CONTENT, AND PRACTICE: FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SOCIAL LITERACY OF STUDENTS IN ONE, ALL-FEMALE, COLLEGE-PREPARATORY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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This study explored the ways teachers and students at one, all-female, college-preparatory Catholic high school have engaged with principles of social literacy through curriculum and pedagogy. Social literacy is a principle of social justice, which seeks to develop awareness of identity, and the connections one shares with others; furthermore, social literacy strives to develop one’s understanding of “ideas and concentric circles of context—economic condition, historical flow, cultural surround—within which our lives are negotiated” (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009, p. xiv). To explore the influence of curriculum and pedagogy, as it relates to social literacy, I observed students within one, all-female, college-preparatory classroom, interviewed students and teachers, and then analyzed school documents as they relate to principles of social literacy. My review of literature, analysis of data, and discussion of results were guided by principles of critical theory, critical pedagogy, and social justice education within the United States. An analysis of the data revealed specific complexities, outcomes, and possibilities of developing social literacy within a single-gender, privileged, parochial context. While students and teachers alike conveyed awareness of social issues and progressive transformation, students have yet to realize the ways in which their lives are negotiated within economic condition, historical flow, and cultural surround.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

In the fall of 2011, I conducted a pilot study at a co-ed, K-8 Catholic school to better understand how a private institution’s curriculum and cultural norms, practices, and policies may differ from those of a public institution. I was interested in conducting research at a private parochial school, as all of my previous teaching experiences took place in public schools. When I first entered the co-ed, K-8 Catholic school, my intent was to study gender-based learning styles and pedagogical approaches to these styles. However, I immediately observed a group solidarity and social privilege, which captured my interest and led to the formation of this study, which took place at St. Eileen’s¹, an all-female, college-preparatory Catholic high school. I began thinking deeply about the ways curricular content and pedagogical practice may influence the beliefs, values, and attitudes of students, and how students may experience transformation within a context of social privilege. Simultaneously, as I conducted my pilot study, I was introduced to critical theory, critical pedagogy, and implications of social justice education within the United States in schools or classrooms of privilege. I utilized these theoretical frameworks through the course of this study, including my review of literature, analysis of data, and discussion of results.

Statement of Problem and Rationale of Study

Curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social context have long influenced educational outcomes for students and teachers alike (Lingard & Mills, 2007). A review of literature centered on critical theory, critical pedagogy, and social justice education within the United States revealed a pressing need for student engagement with regard to (political) social issues and complexities educators often face within stratified educational contexts (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011; hooks, 1994; Howard & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2010; Nurenberg, 2011).

¹ The school’s name has been replaced with a pseudonym
Furthermore, as progressive technology, global markets, and international politics offer new access, opportunities, and relationships between diverse individuals and groups, students may benefit from a developed sense of personal identity in relation to economic, political, and social structures. While this need is present and acute, education legislation has grown increasingly fixed on assessment and achievement, which often negates content and practice related to issues of social justice (Griffin et al., 2012). Griffin, Brown, and Warren (2012) note that many teachers and administrators simply do not have the knowledge, skills, or incentive to prepare young people from a range of social, economic, and cultural backgrounds to engage the world around them in ways that are critical, deliberative, and dialogic. (p. 162).

The literature, furthermore, revealed ways educational contexts shaped by social privilege largely influence students’ understandings of self and relationship to greater societal structures (Gutmann, 1987; Johnson, 1997; Maher & Thompson-Tetreault, 2007; Messner, 2011; Thompson & Austin, 2010).

Gaztambide-Fernández and Howard (2010) asserted that educational researchers have “seldom considered (class) privilege and educational advantage in their attempts to understand inequality and foment social justice through education” (p. 2). As graduates of elite, parochial schools are often endowed with high levels of social capital, greater civic participation, and positions of public leadership in finance and government (Howard & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010; Sikkink, 2004), it is important to recognize the ways in which curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social context influence one’s awareness and understanding of self in relation to society. These assertions within the literature, personal experiences teaching within
public schools, and pilot study conducted within a private, K-8, co-ed Catholic led me to develop the following research questions, which guided my study at St. Eileen’s.

**Research Questions**

1. How do students and teachers within a context of social privilege exemplify social literacy? How may curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social context influence one’s understanding of self and society?

2. How may students and teachers within a context of social privilege experience authentic transformation through curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social norms?

**Definition of Terms**

1. **Activism:** Agency; full participation; preparing students to see and understand and, when necessary, change what is before them; a move away from passivity, cynicism, and despair (Ayers et al., 2009, p. xiv)

2. **Authentic Transformation:** Knowledge and understanding that produce change in the life of the learner; authentic transformation is a result of knowledge, understanding, and experience that intentionally and deeply connect with a person’s physical, emotional, spiritual, and/or psychological needs and capacities; authentic transformation influences an individual to reflect upon both the known and unknown; transformation is authenticated when an individual responds to or acts upon *a priori* knowledge in a new or different way

3. **Critical pedagogy:** An educational theory founded on principles of egalitarianism; committed to the development and evolvement of schooling (with regard for all of its cultural components) that “supports the empowerment of culturally marginalized and
economically disenfranchised students” (Darder et al., 2003, p. 11); diverse dialogue is the primary means by which society’s status quo (that which is taken-for-granted) is challenged

4. Curriculum: Any avenue by which an individual acquires knowledge, understanding, and/or experience; curriculum may be explicit or hidden (i.e. written text; dialogue; processes and political structures of a given institution)

5. Equity: Fairness; equal access to the most challenging and nourishing educational experiences; the demand that what the most privileged and enlightened are able to provide their children must be the standard for what is made available to all children (Ayers et al., 2009, p. xiv)

6. Pedagogy: Methods used by an educator or institution to implement and engage with curriculum

7. Preferred status: A social preference (e.g. fondness, predilection, or inclination) toward a favored group (Black & Stone, 2005, p. 245)

8. Social literacy: Nourishing awareness of our own identities and our connection with others; understanding the link between ideas and concentric circles of context—economic condition, historical flow, cultural surround—within which our lives are negotiated (Ayers et al., 2009, p. xiv)

9. Social justice: Knowledge and understanding of social inequalities; the eradication of social oppression, inequality, and injustice

10. Social privilege: Any entitlement, sanction, power, immunity, and advantage or right granted or conferred by the dominant group to a person or group solely by birthright
membership in prescribed identities. It is not earned by intelligence, ability or personal merit (Black & Stone, 2005, p. 245)

Chapter Summary

To explore the influence of curriculum, pedagogy, and social context upon student beliefs and perspectives related to self and society, I observed teaching and learning within one, all-female, college-preparatory Catholic high school, interviewed students and teachers, and then analyzed specific school documents connected to social awareness and activism. Outcomes of this study were intended to provide educators with insights into the ways curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social context may influence social literacy within a given educational context.

Though the study encompassed certain limitations, information provided by the study may still influence the creation and implementation of curriculum and pedagogy, as it relates to issues of social literacy. In Chapter Two, a review of literature explores the historical foundation of private, Catholic schools in the United States, as well as themes of critical theory, critical pedagogy, and social justice education. Specifically, this review considers peer influence within a context of social privilege, critical pedagogical practice, approaching curricular content through a critical lens, and intended learning outcomes of social justice education. Chapter Three outlines my methods and procedures, including the research design, participants and field location, data collection, data analysis, and limitations of the study. Data was coded to identify themes, and then analyzed against themes of critical theory, critical pedagogy, and social justice education, as presented in the review of literature. An analysis of the data revealed specific complexities, outcomes, and possibilities of teaching social justice in a single-gender, privileged, parochial context in Chapter Four. While students and teachers alike conveyed awareness of
social issues and progressive transformation, students have yet to realize the ways in which their lives are negotiated within economic condition, historical flow, and cultural surround. Finally, Chapter Five offers a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature was contextualized within principles of critical theory, critical pedagogy, and social justice education within the United States. Specifically, this review of literature explores the historical foundation of private, Catholic schools in the United States, peer influence within a context of social privilege, critical pedagogical practice, approaching curricular content through a critical lens, and intended learning outcomes of social justice education.

Theoretical Orientation of the Study

While theories of critical pedagogy and social justice both encompass a wide ideological spectrum, each prioritizes diverse experiences, equal access and opportunity for all students, the dismantling of personal biases, and preparation of critically engaged citizens (Adams, 2000; Ayers et al., 2009; Darder et al., 2003; Griffin et al., 2012). Furthermore, both frameworks assume student’s encompass political potential and power, students should be prepared to actively participate in a vibrant public sphere, and students should not only be exposed to the realities of social injustice, but the ways in which they may mobilize and act upon issues of social justice (Ayers et al., 2009; Darder et al., 2003). Rooted in the work of Freire (1970), critical pedagogy helps students “develop a critical consciousness of inequitable distributions of power and learn to situate their own lived experiences in the context of the larger social system” (Griffin et al., 2012, p. 160). Critical pedagogy assumes educators—teachers and students alike—play a critical role in the endorsement, rejection, and/or transformation of social realities (Darder et al., 2003). Furthermore, “Critical pedagogy creates space for dialogue that questions the dominant norms that privilege, exclude, oppress, and marginalize and has the ultimate goal of empowering oppressed groups to take liberatory action” (Griffin et al., 2012, p. 161).
Freire (1970) wrote:

Education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. (as cited in Cahn, 1997, p. 467)

Social justice is founded on the principle that humans have a propensity for intolerance, and, as such, prejudice develops easily from our natural tendency toward ethnocentrism, our lack of meaningful contact with other groups, and our need to categorize and classify people (Black & Stone, 2005). A democratic society is intended to promote equality for all people, regardless of class, race, and gender. Social justice, therefore, seeks to illuminate and eradicate social inequalities founded upon factors such as class, race, and gender.

**Historical Context of Private, Catholic Schools in the United States**

Between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, the American Catholic community experienced a great deal of political challenge and change. Prior to the formation of the United States and common school movement, the Catholic Church significantly influenced and controlled the knowledge and rights of most European individuals (Ishay, 2004). As the United States formed, however, every township with fifty or more households was required to appoint a teacher and set up a school under the 1647 Old Deluder Satan Act (McCluskey, 1964). This was one of the first instances in the “new world” that gave public authority to communities to establish and maintain schools (McCluskey, 1964). This change in authority (and therefore, curricular content) strongly influenced Catholic communities to create and maintain private schools for the purpose of religious instruction.
Prior to the formation of the United States, Protestant colonists viewed “the Papist” as “the common enemy of all free-born Englishmen, and for such there could be small welcome on the shore of New Canaan” (McCluskey, 1964, p. 3). President Adams claimed, in the eighteenth century, that to possess “the genuine character of true Americans” one must “have no attachments or exclusive friendship for any foreign nation” (Behdad, 2005, p. 11). Maryland’s law of 1704, “An Act to Prevent the Growth of Popery” asserted that any Catholic who should “keep school, board students, or instruct children” could be deported (McCluskey, 1964, p. 3). For maintaining allegiance to the Pope, Catholic immigrants were often considered disloyal and, therefore, unsuitable for citizenship (Behdad, 2005). Only four of the original thirteen states gave Catholics the unrestricted right to vote and hold office (McCluskey, 1964).

Between 1800 and 1850, Catholics jumped from one percent of the total American population (50,000 individuals) to the single largest religious group in the nation (2,000,000 individuals) (Leahy, 1991, p. 1), and between 1850 and 1920, the American Catholic community grew to 18,000,000, making every sixth person in the nation a Roman Catholic (Leahy, 1991).

Prior to the common school movement, McCluskey (1964) writes, “Catholics and non-Catholics had been in essential agreement regarding parental responsibility for the education of children;” the common school awakening, however, shifted from schools providing religious teaching to primarily developing youth for the duties of citizenship (p. 11). McCluskey (1964) brings to light that, as the common school movement was forming, “radical social changes” were also taking place in Europe (p. 11). Political control was gradually shifting away from the Church in matters of marriage, which Catholics rejected on account of belief. In light of these changes, Bishop McQuaid of Rochester said, “The Catholic is unwilling to transfer the responsibility of the education of his children to the state. His conscience informs him that the
state is an incompetent agent to fulfill his parental duties” (McCluskey, 1964, p. 9). In addition to the educational authority deemed appropriate by members of the Catholic Church, the Catholic community asked for school taxes paid by Catholics to be used for the education of their children in church schools (McCluskey, 1964, p. 13). Catholics attested to the Board of Aldermen at New York:

> They bear, and are willing to bear, their portion of every common burden; and feel themselves entitled to a participation in every common benefit. This participation...has been denied them for years back, in reference to Common School Education in the city of New York, except on conditions with which their conscience, and, as they believe their duty to God, did not, and do not leave them at liberty to comply. (McCluskey, 1964, p. 9)

Even though Catholics did not secure public tax dollars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to help fund parochial schools, Vinyard (1998) writes, “they preferred the hardships of paying for their own schools rather than accepting the risks they perceived in the Protestant-run public schools” (p. xvi). In addition to matters of conscience, curriculum, pedagogy, and funding, the Vatican exercised a profound influence in the lives of American Catholics with regard to education in the late nineteenth century.

**Historic Vatican Influence.**

Under the 1875 jurisdiction of the Propaganda de Fide (Propagation of the Faith), the United States was classified as a mission country by the Vatican (Carper & Hunt, 2007). American bishops appealed to the Vatican Congregation on many occasions that “evils of the gravest kind are likely to result from the so-called public schools” (Carper & Hunt, 2007, p. 37). The American public school, bishops argued, was opposed to Catholicism because it excluded all religious instruction and thus “constituted a great evil if children were allowed to be exposed to
it” (Carper & Hunt, 2007, p. 37). The Congregation, therefore, instructed bishops to use “every means to prevent Catholics from all contact with the public schools” and that the public school “must be shunned at whatever cost, even life itself” (Carper & Hunt, 2007, p. 37-38). Parents who neglected to give their children Catholic training, or who would allow their children to go to public schools—“in which the ruin of their souls is inevitable,” would not be absolved (Carper & Hunt, 2007, p. 38). By 1960, over 90 percent of the children in private schools were in Roman Catholic schools (Lines, 1986).

### Boston: A Brief Case Study of Collegiate Competition Between Catholic and Protestant institutions.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the archdiocese of Boston included one million Catholics. In light of the significant tensions present between the dominant Protestant culture and growing Catholic culture, the Catholic Church preached “twin gospels of respectability and resignation” (Kane, 1994, p. 2). Kane (1994) writes that the sense of being excluded from the dominant culture, while at the same time desiring positions of influence and leadership, led to the Church’s strategy of separatist integration (p. 2). This was evidenced in institutions of Catholic higher education.

The College of the Holy Cross in Worcester (1843) and Boston College (1863) were Jesuit schools for men, founded to mold students into “whole men” for the purpose of service to the whole community (Kane, 1994, p. 89). Boston College advised its students to “equip [oneself] morally and intellectually, to fill [one’s] place in the city’s life and honor to [oneself], win credit to the Church, who through him, emphasizes its power in molding the ideal man and citizen” (Kane, 1994, p. 89). These institutions sought to retain the religious ideals of the Catholic Church, while at the same time providing a means to the economic needs of
assimilating Catholics (Kane, 1994, p. 89). Between 1880 and 1900, a Catholic-educated professional class emerged, with the potential to professionally compete against graduates of Ivy League institutions (Kane, 1994, p. 91). Between 1872 and 1923, Boston College grew from awarding 30 Bachelor of Arts per year to 400; during this 51 year span, less than one percent of graduates had non-Irish surnames (Kane, 1994, p. 91). The Church used the successes of Catholic college graduates as propaganda to reinforce claims of Catholic educational superiority (Kane, 1994, p. 91). In doing so, the Catholic educational institution promoted both social respectability within the dominant society and resignation from.

To protect the female’s role as mother and housewife, the Catholic man was responsible for generating wages that would allow the family unit to remain consistent with Catholic ideals; the economic competition of American society demanded Catholics assimilate (by way of education) if they were to compete for jobs that could sustain the family ideal (Kane, 1994).

**Current Education Law within the United States Regarding Private Institutions.**

With regard for current education law in the United States, Shaugnessy (2001) writes: No Constitutional protections existed in the past or exist now for those in private educational institutions. The Constitution is concerned with what the government can and cannot do, not with what private entities can do. Because the private school is not an extension of the state, students and teachers cannot generally claim Constitutional protections. Although well established by law, this reality is not commonly known (p. 439-440).

From a civic standpoint, private institutions embody a unique complexity, as they are without protections of the law. However, while private institutions are not protected by or held
accountable to public education laws, recent legislation has implicated private schools in the discourse and legislation of public schools (i.e. No Child Left Behind; school choice; vouchers).

**Educational Purpose within a Democratic Society**

Critical pedagogy, or critical educational thought, is founded on principles of community and liberation and seeks to illuminate and explicate the purpose of education in a democratic society (Darder et al., 2003). Education within a democratic society, described by American philosopher and educator, Dewey (1916), is centered on the notion that education must engage with and enlarge experience; that thinking and reflection are central to the act of teaching; and that students must freely interact with their environments in the practice of constructing knowledge (as cited in Darder et al., 2003). Individual and social (cooperative) intelligence are inseparably linked within a democratic society; as such, schools embody a tremendous political potential in the shaping of individuals and communities (Darder et al., 2003). One of the ultimate goals of education is to help “every human being reach the full measure of his or her humanity” (Ayers et al., 2009, p. 725). Critical pedagogy is one framework by which teachers and students may come to know and better understand the meaning and “measure” (i.e. extent of freedom—in relation to culture and the law) of one’s humanity in relation to others.

Dewey (1916) argued that schools do not exist apart from society and that the primary responsibility of schools is to involve students in ongoing inquiry regarding social issues (as cited in Boyles, Carusi, & Attick, 2009). An inquiry of such issues is ultimately intended to develop sound awareness and political potential for the purpose of creating and sustaining a free, just society (Leistyna, 2009).
Teaching and Learning: Implications of Social Context and Peer Influence

Whether or not they are aware of it, young people are continuously initiated and integrated into particular cultures and practices. Leistyna (2009) asked, “What kinds of cultural practices are [students] being apprenticed into, what notions of youth are they subjected to, and what effects can young people have on such processes?” (p. 51). As the practice of schooling conveys specific norms, expectations, values, and orientations to life (Sikkink, 2004), educational outcomes may embody results that are intended, unintended, and/or mostly invisible to participants. Educational outcomes are largely shaped by social context and peer influence, which may come to serve as an important model for participation in public life (Dewey, 1916; Sikkink, 2004). Nurturing democratic dispositions depends in part on how schools are organized and how schools are experienced by students (Sikkink, 2004).

As we form, assess, and reform our identities, we look to our immediate environment (i.e. educational institutions), peers, and leaders for an indication of the values, beliefs, and norms we may embody. Social experience as a member of the majority, or as a member of the minority, comes to bear significant weight on the identities we form as individuals and groups (Adams, 2000). Solidarity, or participation in the school ‘commons,’ Sikkink (2004) writes, often “trumps self-interest” (p. 350). As such, social justice education seeks to build an awareness of individual and group identity and the relations that bind constituents to one another.

In addition to shaping the identities of individuals and groups, schools largely inform our knowledge and understanding of others—from those who are omitted to those who are present, and why these individuals and groups may be omitted or present. Adams (2000) writes that we come to develop stereotypes, attitudes, and understandings through the process of socialization, and that our knowledge of targeted social groups (i.e. women, communities of color, non-English
speakers, gays, lesbians, lower- or working- class people) are “reinforced throughout our experience by organizational and societal structures of privilege and of disenfranchisement” (p. 6). Institutions that are highly selective in nature (regarding class, race, gender, religion, and/or academic ability) may lend to institutionalized worldviews that embody components of deficit ideology and preferred status (Black & Stone, 2005; Gorski, 2010).

Deficit ideology (Gorski, 2010) is a worldview that believes “inequalities result, not from unjust social conditions such as systemic racism or economic injustice, but from intellectual, moral, cultural, and behavioral deficiencies assumed to be inherent in disenfranchised individuals and communities” (Gorski, 2010, p. 4). Power and hierarchy create the foundation of deficit ideology, and its purpose, Gorski (2010) writes, is to “manipulate the popular discourse in ways that protect and reify existing sociopolitical conditions” (p. 7). Principles of deficit ideology largely stem from a context of social privilege, in which individuals are accustomed to engaging with a favored community of people (Black & Stone, 2005).

Exploring the social constructions of one’s identity and environment—and ways in which they relate to others—is a key principle of social justice education. Intergroup contact theory suggests that knowledge and understanding of others may be positively developed through systematic contact in a cooperative environment (Griffin et al., 2012). When students dialogue with individuals of diverse backgrounds, they may come to find commonality with a greater range of people, think in more complex ways about intergroup relations, employ positive approaches to conflict, and become increasingly confident in their ability to address social justice issues (Gurin, Peng, Lopez, & Nagda, 1999; Griffin et al., 2012; Nagda, Kim, & Truelove, 2004). While it is possible and critical for students and teachers of diverse backgrounds to
endorse intergroup contact theory, the literature revealed specific obstacles that may be present for individuals within a context of social privilege.

**Teaching and Learning: Within a Context of Social Privilege.**

Historically, academia has contextualized privilege within discussions of race and ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Black and Stone (2005) have expanded the definition of social privilege in recent literature to include the following domains: “race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, differing degrees of ability, and religious affiliation” (p. 243-244). A review of literature reveals significant attention given to race and ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, and, though socioeconomic status, age, degrees of ability, and religious affiliation are critical to the discussion, less literature is available regarding these domains (Black & Stone, 2005).

Privilege, among other qualities, is a special advantage, which is neither common nor universal; granted, not earned or brought into being by one’s individual effort or talent; exercised for the benefit of the recipient, and to the exclusion or detriment of others; and, often, outside of the awareness of the beholder (Black & Stone, 2005; Johnson, 1997; Maher & Thompson-Tetreault, 2007; Messner, 2011). Privilege is a complex phenomenon because it can encompass both visible and invisible qualities: visibilities such as race and gender, and invisibilities such as sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religious affiliation, and abilities. Furthermore, individuals can simultaneously possess identities which bestow privilege, as well as those which do not (Black & Stone, 2005; Johnson, 1997; Maher & Thompson-Tetreault, 2007; Messner, 2011). Significant to the framework of privilege, as it pertains to parochial education, is Black and Stone’s (2005) assertion that “A privileged status allows the privileged to remain insulated and distant from the oppressed” (p. 245-246).
Historically, normative groups have viewed their values, beliefs, and behaviors as universal, neutral, and correct, and non-normative groups have been viewed as deviant or disruptive. The normative group warned the non-normative group through threats, intimidation, and oppression and communicated that a penalty would result for not assimilating into the dominant culture (Black & Stone, 2005). Individually, social privilege may impact privileged persons by creating an exaggerated sense of self-worth, or a distorted sense of self. Individuals or groups may misperceive that they have completely earned the benefits, status, and or rank conferred upon them by society. Adversely, individuals without privilege may lack access to the economic and social mainstream, feel divisiveness, or cultural mistrust and hatred (Black & Stone, 2005).

Historical White supremacy, as Black and Stone (2005) assert, means that “White has been and is viewed as culturally valued and the norm against which all other races are evaluated” (p. 246). At our country’s inception, our constitution’s benefits, rights, and privileges were largely reserved for the White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant male. As indigenous persons, enslaved Africans, and female Euro-Americans were prohibited from the equality and justice of the law, the White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant male became the “normative group against which all other social groups were compared” (Black & Stone, 2005, p. 247). In describing racial privilege, Black and Stone (2005) emphasize that “the cultural experiences and social expectations of person’s from non-White racial and ethnic backgrounds are qualitatively different, one from another, as they are “imbedded in the relative value each group holds in relation to the dominant (White) culture” (p. 247).

In addition, society’s view of men as the more powerful, influential, and valued gender of society has long been supported by the financial advantage and overall opportunities (e.g.
political, career, etc.) afforded men (Cheeseman-Day & Newburger, 2002). Historically, stereotypic male attributes (e.g. logical, rational, assertive, dominant) have been viewed and supported as the cultural norm, whereas stereotypical female attributes (e.g. emotionally-sensitive, nurturing, submissive) have been viewed as less desirable (Black & Stone, 2005; Messner, 2011).

Griffin et al. (2012) found that privileged students and students who come from very disadvantaged backgrounds do not always understand how interpersonal relationships and experiences are connected to larger institutional structures. Many of these students simply lack the historical and social scientific knowledge to build an understanding of structural inequality, privilege, or oppression (Griffin et al., 2012). While students may understand that a specific social concept is “bad” or “good,” they typically cannot verbalize why it is such or the historical context from which it emerged (Griffin et al., 2012). Critical pedagogical practice is one theory and process by which educators—students, teachers, administrators, and parents—may engage with the realities and implications of social-political structures.

**Critical Pedagogical Practice.**

Critical pedagogical practice, founded on principles of egalitarianism, is committed to the development and evolvement of schooling (with regard for all of its cultural components) that “supports the empowerment of culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised students” (Darder et al., 2003, p. 11). Within a context of social privilege, critical pedagogy seeks to raise a critical awareness of society’s status quo, or that which is taken-for-granted.

Freire (1970) stressed how a system of education (especially the process of teaching and learning) can either liberate or enslave citizens. A society’s method of liberating or enslaving its youth becomes symbolic of the way in which society functions as a whole. Freire (1970)
described a method of academic enslavement through a banking metaphor. Within the banking system of education, students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor. The teacher is viewed as the exclusive contributor of information, and the students are viewed as “receptacles,” awaiting a fulfillment that may only come from the teacher. Knowledge is experienced superficially within the banking system, and does not create significance or transformation within the minds and lives of students; it prevents the development of critical consciousness—an awareness of the world that requires challenge and change. Outcomes of this method are “motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable” conceptions of reality (p. 461). Freire (1970) asserted that in controlling the consciousness of the oppressed, the oppressors can more easily dominate the oppressed, because the oppressed are not enlivened to the situations which oppress them. Educating youth through the banking system will eventually create or substantiate a “motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable,” society, which is divided between the oppressors and the oppressed (Freire, 1970, p. 462).

**Dialogical Method.**

In contrast to the banking system of education, Freire (1970) advocated for the use of a dialogical method, which enlightens men and women to become conscious of their selves and society. In contrast to the banking system, the dialogical method is an opportunity for the teacher to approach knowledge and understanding alongside his or her students. Approaching knowledge alongside students symbolically transforms the hierarchical relationship teachers have historically held over students (Freire, 1970; Shor & Freire, 1987). As educators place problems, skill, processes, and information before all to see and discuss, students and teachers jointly reflect upon what is known and unknown, analyze and evaluate reality, and seek to transform reality based on the connections one shares with reality (Shor & Freire, 1987). Education as the
practice of freedom ultimately strives for the “emergence of consciousness”—the power to perceive critically the ways in which we exist with and in the world, so that individuals may conceptualize the present and future as both alterable and unlimited (Freire, 1970, p. 467 and 469). Dewey (1916) complimented this stance by advocating for the deliberation of social inequalities in place of isolated curricular content. He wrote:

Democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living; of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. (as cited in Boyles et al., 2009, p. 89)

Social literacy seeks to nourish an awareness of individual and collective identity, make explicit the connections individuals share with one another, and cultivate a climate of respect amidst difference and the conditions that have historically divided people (Ayers et al., 2009). Education in this sense engages individuals as agents for social change in a participatory democracy “complete with dissension, restructuring, and change” (Boyles et al., 2009) and advocates for “a vision of school that does not separate the world from the world of school” (Calderon, 2009, p. 722).

As such, critical pedagogical practice addresses principles of social privilege. Social privilege can be difficult to tackle within the curriculum, as recipients of privilege may or may not be aware of their privileged status; or, in some cases, aware but disinterested (Black & Stone, 2005). McIntosh (1988) argued:
One way of understanding how privilege works—and how it is kept invisible—is to examine the way we think about inequality...we typically think of inequality from the perspective of the one who suffers the consequences of subordination or oppression, not the one who receives the benefits; hence, those who receive privilege are not in our focus. (as cited in Howard & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2010, p. 79)

Through intergroup dialogue, two or more groups may come together to intentionally explore, challenge, and work toward understanding the biases that have historically separated specific individuals and groups (Griffin et al., 2012; Shor & Freire, 1987). Unlike discussion or debate, intergroup dialogue seeks to transcend basic intellectual investments and draw upon emotional experiences and responsive listening (Griffin et al., 2012). Students are encouraged to communicate by: Listening with an open mind, Affirming a point of common ground, Responding, and Adding information, which may be called the LARA method (Griffin et al., 2012). The ultimate goals of this method is to develop peaceful, non-violent understanding and negotiation between (diverse) individuals and groups for the purpose of building friendship, social justice, and equality (Griffin et al., 2012).

Given the notion that most people have literal voices, the challenge for educators rest in creating dialogical spaces where all lived experiences and worldviews can be heard and that allows students of all walks of life to explore, theorize, and reveal the world in which they live (Leistyna, 2009). Voice and dialogue are among the most powerful creators and sustainers of identity, relationship, and community. Within the context of education, the use of voice allows one to ask, “Why is this knowledge being taught in the first place?” (McLaren, 2003, p. 71).

Griffin et al. (2012) also found that many students have fairly limited life experiences to reference in dialogue. Intentionally diversifying opportunities for peer-interaction is critical, so
that students are exposed to peers who have different experience and backgrounds from their own (Griffin et al., 2012). However, for students to best understand larger institutional structures, it would be helpful for them to experience political and economic processes and policies and gain exposure to individuals outside of their immediate social community (Griffin et al., 2012).

**Approaching Curricular Content Through a Critical Lens**

The use of curriculum and pedagogy, in particular, are powerful avenues by which ideas, identity, and culture are disseminated. Individuals and groups have long “struggle[d] over the representation and retelling of history and that these representational contests over the meanings of the past are inextricably tied to broader material and symbolic struggles, forces, and structures of power (Ayers et al., 2009). As such, critical pedagogy seeks to address the stories and experiences of marginalized populations, social consequences that result from classism, racism, and sexism, and the ways in which schools perpetuate existing structures of domination and exploitation (Darder et al., 2003). Notably, critical pedagogy considers how the reproduction of “official knowledge” sustains cultural capital and societal inequalities (Darder et al., 2003).

Exposing students to the history of activist efforts and youth participation in events such as: the 1899 Newsboy Strike, 1903 Children’s Crusade, 1930s Development of American Youth Congress, 1950s: Desegregation of schools, and 1970s National Commission on Resources for Youth has the potential to raise social awareness and activism within the lives of students (Leistyna, 2009, p. 54). Bringing students’ lived experiences and concerns to the fore, furthermore, is one way educators may approach curricular content through a critical lens (Ayers et al., 2009; Griffin et al., 2012; Messner, 2011).
Capitalist Influences on American Schools

In conjunction with research that has been presented on social privilege, it is important to address research that relates to capitalist influences on American schools. Whether public or private, Bowles and Gintis (1994) suggest that democratic ideals are difficult to practice in a culture (i.e. education system) “controlled by top-down corporate capitalism” (p. 65). Instead of promoting equality and opportunity, our education systems promote the “values, beliefs, modes of personal behavior, and patterns of social and economic loyalties” of the hierarchical, politically autocratic, capitalist enterprise (p. 66). Bowles and Gintis (1994) write:

The [educational] system, as it stands today, provides eloquent testimony to the ability of the well-to-do to perpetuate in the name of equality of opportunity an arrangement which consistently yields to themselves disproportional advantages, while thwarting the aspirations and needs of the working people of the United States (p. 56).

The ideology of the capitalist enterprise, Bowles and Gintis (1994) assert, has proved a greater influence over American education than the democratic ideology proposed by Dewey (1916) and advocates of the technocratic-meritocratic view.

The ultimate outcome of a private, college-preparatory high school education is admission to a “prestigious” college or university (School website), which has historically generated higher levels of social capital, greater civic participation, and positions of public leadership in finance and government for graduates of these institutions (Howard & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010; Sikkink, 2004). In a report issued by the US Census Bureau, Cheeseman-Day and Newburger (2002) found:

Over a work-life, individuals who have a bachelor’s degree would earn on average $2.1 million — about one-third more than workers who did not finish college, and nearly
twice as much as workers with only a high school diploma. A master’s degree holder tops a bachelor’s degree holder at $2.5 million. Doctoral ($3.4 million) and professional degree holders ($4.4 million) do even better. (p. 4)

In addition to the gap between educational attainment and work-life earnings, race, gender, and socio-economic status have also long contributed to structures of social privilege and class divide within the United States (Bowles & Gintis, 1994; Cheeseman-Day and Newburger, 2002).

Chapter Summary

This review of literature was contextualized within principles of critical theory, critical pedagogy, and social justice education within the United States. While theories of critical pedagogy and social justice both encompass a wide ideological spectrum, each prioritizes diverse experiences, equal access and opportunity for all students, the dismantling of personal biases, and preparation of critically engaged citizens (Adams, 2000; Ayers et al., 2009; Darder et al., 2003; Griffin et al., 2012). In addition to considering the aforementioned theories, this review of literature explored the historical reasoning of private, Catholic schools in the United States; the Vatican’s influence in this reasoning; and competition that was present between Protestant and Catholic institutions of American higher education between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Furthermore, this review of literature considered the ways in which schools—social environments—shape the beliefs, values, and attitudes of individuals and communities, and the purposes of schools within a democratic society. Given these purposes, this review of literature explored the intentions and outcomes of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogical practice, most importantly, is founded on principles of egalitarianism; is committed to the “empowerment of
culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised students” (Darder et al., 2003, p. 11); and seeks to raise a critical awareness of social privilege, the status quo, and/or that which has been historically taken-for-granted.
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter describes the methods and procedures I utilized to explore the following research questions:

1. How do students and teachers within a context of social privilege exemplify social literacy? How may curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social context influence one’s understanding of self and society?

2. How may students and teachers within a context of social privilege experience authentic transformation through curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social context?

In addition to defining my research design, intention for research, and process by which I acquired access and approval to conduct research, I have described the participants and details of the selected field site, including its mission and vision, admissions process, and available co-curricular activities. I have explained the ways in which I collected data through non-participant observation, structured interviews, and documents as data, and then analyzed the data through examination, coding, and reduction. Lastly, the reliability, validity, and limitations of the study are discussed.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, ethnographic research design, for the purpose of “describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group’s shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language” (Creswell, 2012, p. 462). While the length of time I devoted to observation, interviews, and document collection was limited, my research was designed to acquire insights about one culture and the ways in which their behaviors and beliefs are connected to significant social and educational issues that have historically and presently shaped
human experience, cultural structures, and individual perspectives (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Glesne, 1997). Key characteristics of ethnographic research, evidenced in this study, included: cultural themes; a culture-sharing group; shared patterns of behavior, belief and language; fieldwork; description, themes, and interpretation; context; and researcher reflexivity (Creswell, 2012, p. 468). In addition to observing and interviewing a small population of participants within one, all-female, college-preparatory Catholic high school to better understand a culture’s beliefs and values, I simultaneously reflected upon my personal principles and identities within multiple cultural contexts of my life. As such, this design encompassed elements of critical ethnography, ethnographic case study, and autoethnography (Creswell, 2012).

Critical ethnography, Creswell (2012) writes, seeks to understand how social identities may relate to structures of power and privilege, and the ways in which these structures may contribute to (long-standing) struggles within education and society. In studying issues of power, empowerment, inequality, and hegemony, the critical ethnographer strives to identify personal biases and values, and the ways in which she/he is a subjective participant in the collection and interpretation of data (Creswell, 2012). Ultimately, Creswell (2012) writes, the critical ethnographic report will be a “messy, multilevel, multi-method approach to inquiry, full of contradictions, imponderables, and tensions” (p. 467). Like critical ethnography, certain principles of ethnographic case study were utilized in the design of this study—namely, studying the shared patterns of thought and behavior within one “case” of students (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Lastly, in designing, implementing, and reporting this study, I attempted to engage in reflexivity. Researcher reflexivity, Creswell (2012) states:
refers to the researcher being aware of and openly discussing his or her role in the study in a way that honors and respects the site and participants…As individuals who have a history and a cultural background themselves, they realize that their interpretation is only one possibility, and that their report does not have any privileged authority over other interpretations made by readers, participants, and other researchers. (p. 474)

Given this intention, I openly acknowledge my personal experiences as a public middle school teacher and interpretations in my discussion of results, and recognize that such admissions will encourage the reader to consider additional viewpoints (Creswell, 2012).

**Intent, Access, and Approval**

In the fall of 2011, I conducted a pilot study at a co-ed, K-8 Catholic school to better understand how a private institution’s curriculum and cultural norms, practices, and policies may differ from those of a public institution. I was interested in conducting research at a private parochial school, as all of my previous teaching experiences took place in public schools. When I first entered the co-ed, K-8 Catholic school, my intent was to study gender-based learning styles and pedagogical approaches to these styles. However, I immediately observed group solidarity and social privilege, which captured my interest and led to the formation of this study. I began thinking deeply about the ways curricular content and pedagogical practice may influence the beliefs, values, and attitudes of students, and how students may experience transformation within a context of social privilege. Simultaneously, as I conducted my pilot study, I was introduced to critical theory, critical pedagogy, and implications of social justice education within the United States in schools or classrooms of privilege.

A review of literature revealed the pressing need for student engagement with regard to political social issues, and the challenges educators often face with regard to social justice
education in contexts of social privilege (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011; Gutmann, 1987; hooks, 1994; Howard & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2010; Nurenberg, 2011; Thompson & Austin, 2010). Given these findings, I intended to develop my initial pilot study of the privileged, parochial educational context. I was especially interested in this population’s social literacy, as research has evidenced graduates of elite, parochial schools encompassing high levels of social capital, greater civic participation, and positions of public leadership in finance and government (Howard & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010; Sikkink, 2004).

Through a university mentor, I was introduced to the principal of one, all-female, college-preparatory Catholic high school. The principal of this high school pro-actively connected me with the Chair of two respective departments. Both teachers demonstrated interest in my research topic, and welcomed me to pursue my study with any/all of their respective classes. Gaining permission from this institution and these individuals allowed me to pursue approval from Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). Upon approval from HSRB, I shared the focus and details of my study—verbally and in writing—with one college-preparatory History class. These students were chosen to participate in the study, as they were enrolled in “an academically-rigorous University preparatory program…[which] aims to develop critical thinking skills, research skills, and international-mindedness: an ability to respect those different from oneself, and a desire to make a difference in the world” (School website). Like the institution, the intended learning outcomes of this class aligned well with the focus of my study and specific research questions. Ten students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) gave me assent (Appendix A) and consent (Appendix B) to fully participate in this study, as well as both of the teachers who originally agreed to work with me (Appendix C). To ensure the confidentiality of participants and study site, I have omitted any specifics that could compromise an individual’s or
group’s identity. Creswell (2012) acknowledges the ethical implications of this decision, the importance of preserving individual and collective dignity, and necessary steps of ensuring privacy.

**Field Site: St. Eileen’s**

**Mission and Vision of the Catholic Church Regarding Education.**

In 1977, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education asserted that “All who are responsible for [Catholic] education—parents, teachers, young people and school authorities” must “pool all their resources and the means at their disposal to enable Catholic schools to provide a service which is truly civic and apostolic” (Javierre). The purpose of utilizing the comprehensive resources and means available to members of the Catholic Church, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) declared, is to “serve humanity; proclaim the good news of salvation to all; and carry out her saving mission” (Javierre). To accomplish her mission, the Congregation for Catholic Education (1977):

- encourages the co-existence and, if possible, the cooperation of diverse educational institutions which will allow young people to be formed by value judgments based on a specific view of the world and to be trained to take an active part in the construction of a community through which the building of society itself is promoted. (Javierre)

The Second Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) envisioned the Catholic School as a place that would promote the “Gospel of Christ” to “take root in the minds and lives of the faithful,” so that participants may best understand and act upon “the cultural conditions of the times” (Javierre).

Complicating this vision and mission, however, was the Second Congregation for Catholic Education’s (1977) statement that:
In some countries Catholic schools have been obliged to restrict their educational activities to wealthier social classes, thus giving an impression of social and economic discrimination in education. But this occurs only where the State has not weighed the advantages of an alternative presence in their pluralistic society. From such nearsightedness considerable difficulties have arisen for Catholic schools. (Javierre, section 21)

This assertion demonstrates the complexities, history, and values afforded Catholic schools on a national and international level.

St. Eileen’s vision and mission reflects numerous principles forth by the Second Congregation for Catholic Education (School website). One of St. Eileen’s primary goals was to blend “Christian values” with “all areas of knowledge,” that self and society may be transformed (School website). As such, “Awareness of world realities, a sense of social justice and concern for the environment” are integral to this school’s mission and vision.

**Admissions Process.**

The Admissions Process, outlined on the school’s website, included a High School Placement Test, written application, submission of evaluation by the student’s eighth grade teacher, and interview. The evaluation is first and foremost described as “highly regarded,” (School website) which includes references of past disciplinary and academic information, and provides an opportunity for the referencing teacher to discuss “specific concerns” (disciplinary, academic, or otherwise) about the applicant over the phone (School website). This detail alludes to the selectivity and subjectivity of the application process. The evaluator is asked to provide information regarding discipline in the first section of the evaluation, including: the number of days the student has been suspended or expelled in the 7th and 8th grade, and the reasons for
suspension and/or expulsion (School website). The academic evaluation includes: “Reading
Achievement; Mathematical Achievement; Oral English Achievement; Written English
Achievement; and Mental Ability;” furthermore, if the student has attended a public school, the
evaluator is asked to provide standardized test results and the student’s permanent record
card/transcript (School website). Finally, in a section titled, “Summary Information,” the
evaluator is asked to provide information regarding: instances of tardy behavior; excused and
unexcused absences in 7th and 8th grade; significant health problem; physical and/or learning
disabilities; and educational accommodations (School website).

The first section of the written application is to be completed by parents and requires the
following information, in the following order: the student’s Religion and Church; the Father,
Step-Father, or Legal Guardian’s name, and whether he is an alumnus of this school; his
Religion and his Church; the Company he is Employed by; and the type of work he does; the
Mother, Step-Mother, or Legal Guardian’s name and whether she is an alumna of this school; her
Religion and her Church; the Company she is Employed by; the type of work she does; relatives
who are attending or have attended this school; and reasons for applying (School website).

Students complete the second section of the application, in the following order: Interest in
playing a musical instrument, choral work, athletics, and hobbies; why they have selected this
school; and factors that influenced this choice (School website).

The “highly selective” admission process, and intent of St. Eileen’s is to provide an
experience that will be “perfect; premier; [and] recognized by the most prestigious colleges and
universities,” (School website) aligns with Black and Stone’s (2005) definition of social
privilege. In 2011, 98% of this high school’s 125 graduates went on to four-year colleges and
universities, and earned approximately $14 million in college awards (School website). In 2009,
roughly 150 graduates of this institution earned $13.5 million (plus) in college awards and gave 11,000 service hours to local, national, and interactional communities (school website). Alums of this institution remain connected to one another via professional networking sessions, holiday and community festivities, and religious activities. Such opportunities are projected to grant “special advantages, which are neither common nor universal, for the benefit of the recipient, and to the exclusion or detriment of others” (Black & Stone, 2005, p. 244).

Co-Curricular Activities

With the understanding that “Universities and colleges look for individuals who have actively participated in school activities and can demonstrate the ability to balance daily schedules,” approximately forty-five co-curricular athletic teams and clubs are available to students at St. Eileen’s (School website).

In recent history, a multi-million dollar capital campaign sourced the renovation of the performing arts center on campus, and the construction of a new gymnasium, fitness center, locker rooms, and athletic offices (School website).

Participants

Participants in this study were White, female, in the 11th grade, participants of the Catholic tradition, and enrolled in the most challenging courses the school offered. Of the six students I interviewed, one had attended a public school for the duration of elementary and middle school (Appendix D). Five of the six students I interviewed had attended Catholic schools since pre-school or Kindergarten (Appendix D). One of the teachers I observed and interviewed, Mrs. Kennedy², had attended private Catholic schools from Kindergarten through twelfth grade, and had taught at her high school Alma matter for almost twenty-five years

² Participant names have been replaced with pseudonyms
The second teacher I interviewed, Mrs. Goulding, had taught at a private, Catholic school for twelve years, but had also taught at a public high school for three years.

In addition to the cost of tuition (approximately $10,000 a year), students wore a required school uniform, which exceeded $100 per outfit (one skirt, one long sleeve knit, and one V-Neck sweater), and participated in co-curricular activities (School website). Students were observed wearing above-the-knee plaid skirts, monogrammed knit tops, and V-Neck pullover sweaters. Knit tops and pullover sweaters were worn in three primary colors: white, navy, and grey. Most students wore Sperry Top-Siders, which is a “classic” leather boat shoe (Sperry Top-Sider website).

**Fieldwork: Data Collection**

A variety of research techniques were used to gather data. Data were largely collected through non-participant observation, structured interviews, content analysis of classroom curriculum (both text and visual material), and documents provided on the school’s website. My initial days in the field were spent introducing myself and study to participants, and acquiring a contextual understanding of the school, students, and teachers. From beginning to end, I attempted to share myself and study with participants in an authentic manner.

**Non-Participant Observation.**

Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2000) write, “Observation has been characterized as the fundamental base of all research methods in the social and behavioral sciences” (p. 673). In addition to observing the human activity and physical settings of research sites, social scientists “employ observational techniques to note body language and other gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of persons being [observed and/or] interviewed” (Angrosino and Mays de
Perez, 2000, p. 673). Twice a week, I observed teaching and learning at St. Eileen’s, for approximately six weeks. As a non-participant, I recorded observations (fieldnotes) of participant dialogue, interactions, and behaviors for the duration of each 90-minute block period; observations were recorded against an observation protocol based on Gorski’s (2012) “Key Characteristics of a Multicultural Curriculum” (Appendix E). Routinely, I sat near participants, but varied my location to more fully observe the verbal language and non-verbal behaviors of participants. Ten of the eleven students in the classroom, as well as the teacher, allowed me to observe their comments, instruction, discussion, and references to social justice (including principles of equity, activism, and social literacy) that ensued in the classroom. I did not video- or audio-tape my observations, but recorded fieldnotes on a password-protected laptop computer for purposes of efficiency and security. In addition to observing ten students and one teacher in one, upper-level History course, all participants were provided with an opportunity to be interviewed.

**Structured Interviews.**

After developing a presence with participants through non-participant observation, I provided all participants with an opportunity to be interviewed individually, with one classmate, or with two classmates in a small group. A sign-up sheet was provided in advance, without me present, for students to comfortably decide if they would like to participate in this aspect of the study or not. Six students (of the ten who participated in the study) signed up to be interviewed outside of the class time I observed. In addition, one teacher whom I observed teach, and one teacher whom I did not observe teach, agreed to be interviewed for the purpose of my study.

I prepared approximately twenty-five, open-ended, in-depth student interview questions (Appendix F), based on data collected via observation and themes that had emerged from my
review of literature. While I prepared interview questions in advance, I also gave participants the freedom to incorporate their beliefs and perspectives through the course of natural conversation. I interviewed one student individually for 15 minutes, two students together for approximately 30 minutes, and three students together for approximately 40 minutes. Each interview took place during the lunch period (upon the teacher’s request) in the students’ History classroom (where I conducted observations of these students). One student interview took place at the beginning of the week, and two student interviews took place at the end of the week. All of the interviews took place at the end of the academic year. Interviews were typed and verbally recorded in real time on a password-protected laptop computer to ensure accuracy and efficiency.

In addition to interviewing six students, I interviewed one History teacher (whom I also observed) and one Religion/Ethics teacher. Interviews were scheduled in advance, and took place after school in each teacher’s respective classrooms. This format provided time and space for both teachers to fully respond to approximately twenty-five, open-ended, in-depth interview questions (Appendix G), as well as leads that arose through the course of interview. My interview with Mrs. Kennedy included questions gleaned from data collected via observation and themes that emerged from my review of literature. While interviews with both teachers utilized structured, pre-planned questions, they also embodied the characteristics of a natural conversation and spontaneous questions that arose from answers to pre-planned questions (Glesne, 1997). My interview with Mrs. Kennedy lasted approximately two hours, and my interview with Mrs. Goulding lasted approximately one hour. Like student interviews, my interviews with teachers were typed and verbally recorded in real time on a password-protected laptop computer to ensure accuracy and efficiency.
Documents as Data.

In addition to observation and interview, I collected classroom assignments (written and visual), publications provided on the school website, and Vatican-issued learning outcomes, to better understand factors that may influence the social literacy of students and teachers at one, all-female, college-preparatory Catholic high school. These documents provided additional insight to my observations and interviews (Glesne, 1997) with regard for social context (i.e. demographic data; admission criteria; mission and vision), curricular content, and pedagogical practice.

Data Analysis: Examination, Coding, and Reduction

Data were examined, coded, and reduced as my study progressed (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 1997; National Science Foundation 1997). The observation protocol I created for the purpose of non-participant observation consisted of two columns: “Observations” and “Analysis.” As I recorded non-participant observations against Gorski’s (2012) “Key Characteristics of a Multicultural Curriculum” in the left-hand column, I simultaneously recorded personal comments, questions, and insights in the right-hand column. Given the length of time I spent observing participants in one sitting (90 minutes), I felt it would be best to simultaneously record my basic connections, questions, and comments for purposes of diligence and accuracy. I recorded thick descriptions in my observation column, and used color highlights to differentiate the beliefs, behaviors, and language of individual participants. At the end of each field experience, I coded every observation with a footnote and word or short phrase (Saldana, 2009). This process was intended to assign a “summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute” to each portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2009, p. 3). As I progressively collected and coded my data, distinct patterns emerged. As these patterns emerged,
I moved from an objective collector of data to a subjective interpreter of people, context, and values. These interpretations (gathered via observation and documents) were used to shape student and teacher interview questions, and became descriptors of the individuals, community, and topic I researched (Creswell, 2012).

Upon the completion of my data collection, I created a comprehensive coding guide, which consisted of four columns in table format: Codes, Themes, Analysis, and Implications (one section for teachers, and one section for students). I brought each footnote and code from its original fieldnote to the comprehensive table and placed it in the coding column. Next, I categorized the recurring codes by color, which became the themes and concepts of my findings. Within this same table, I explored and noted implications of my findings in relation to my students and teachers in light of my research focus and review of literature.

Validity and Reliability

To achieve validity and reliability, I consistently collaborated with Bowling Green State University faculty members, whose experience and expertise embody qualitative, ethnographic, and social research (Best, 1981). In addition to consulting experts in the field, I utilized a variety of refereed journals, and guidelines for conducting qualitative research, as presented in The Handbook of Qualitative Research (2000). Furthermore, as previously noted (Intent, Access, and Approval), my research proposal was approved by BGSU’s Human Subjects Review Board to ensure validity and reliability. I utilized observations, structured interviews, and documents as data through the course of my study, furthermore, to provide credibility through triangulation. Lastly, as I recorded, transcribed, and coded data, I meticulously and systematically guarded against sources of error, to ensure that the participants’ voice remained intact (Best, 1981).
Limitations of the Study

It is important to address various factors that limited the depth and breadth of this study. Limitations of qualitative, ethnographic research may include: Researcher bias—in the design of study, collection of data, and/or analysis of data; sources and/or subjects that were not equally credible; missing background information; and participant language and/or behaviors altered by the presence of the researcher (Toloie-Eshlaghy, Chitsaz, Karimian, & Charkhchi, 2011). While participant interviews encouraged individuals to share their beliefs and perspectives, the amount of time I was able to work with each group limited the extent of information and perspective I was able to glean from each individual (Glesne, 1997).

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methods and procedures I utilized to explore my research questions. Elements of critical ethnography, ethnographic case study, and autoethnography were utilized to explore the aforementioned research questions. I acquired access to St. Eileen’s through a university mentor, which was followed by approval from St. Eileen’s principal, two faculty members at St. Eileen’s, and the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University. Characteristics of the participants and field site were described, including the school’s mission and vision, admissions process, and co-curricular activities available to students at St. Eileen’s. Characteristics of the field site and participants, furthermore, evidenced social privilege, which was an intended aspect of study. I collected data through non-participant observation, structured interviews, and documents as data, and then analyzed the data through examination, coding, and reduction. Reliability and validity were utilized via consistent collaboration with experts in the field; review of refereed journals; granted approval by BGSU’s Human Subjects Review Board; and meticulous record keeping of participant voice. Finally,
limitations of this study—of qualitative, ethnographic research—were discussed, including the design of study; potential researcher bias; and limited time in the field.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS OF ANALYZED DATA AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The purpose of my research was to explore how students and teachers in one environment—an all-female, Catholic college-preparatory high school—exemplify social literacy, and the ways in which curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social context may influence one’s understanding of self and society. Furthermore, I sought to understand how students and teachers within a context of social privilege may experience authentic transformation through curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social norms. As such, I collected data that focused on human beliefs, behaviors, and language through non-participant observation, structured interviews, and school documents. After coding and categorizing my data, the following themes emerged: The evolution of social privilege within St. Eileen’s college-preparatory high school; the evolution of student demographics at St. Eileen’s; perceptions of public schools; and opportunities for engaged, critical pedagogy and curriculum.

**How does social context influence one’s understanding of self and society?**

One intent of this study was to explore how environment may influence an individual’s understanding of self and society. The environment in which an individual pursues knowledge, understanding, and experience is shaped by two, primary factors: a physical space, which is comprised of materials—ranging in age, quality, function, quantity, and value; and people, who embody physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and historical characteristics. When two or more individuals share physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and/or historical characteristics, a relationship, community, or culture may be formed. Over time, social contexts are formed as culture-sharing communities develop distinct patterns of belief, behavior, and language. Social contexts are ultimately composed of the philosophies (what could/should “be”), realities (what “is”) and progressive histories (what has “been”) of a given culture’s members.
The vision, mission, and history of the Catholic Church; mission and history of public and private institutions in the United States; and mission, vision, and cultural composition of St. Eileen’s college-preparatory High School largely influenced the social literacy of participants in this study. I will briefly discuss how the Catholic Church and history of education within the United States has influenced the current mission, vision, and cultural composition of St. Eileen’s college-preparatory high school; but more extensively examine the ways in which St. Eileen’s endorsed an environment of social privilege, which largely informed the social literacy of participants within this study.

**St. Eileen’s Evolution of Social Privilege: Admission, Enrollment, and Opportunity.**

At its inception, the American Catholic school enrolled students on account of religious teaching, irrespective of financial ability. As economic opportunities burgeoned through the Industrial Revolution, and access to higher education became more accessible, elite Catholic schools were developed to compete against graduates of elite public schools. Specifically, Catholic colleges and universities in densely populated cities (i.e. Boston; New York City; Washington, D.C.) developed institutions of higher education for the purpose of religious and moral training, as well as economic competition against graduates of Ivy League institutions (Kane, 1994). The college-preparatory high school, as a result, was developed to groom individuals—provide an educational advantage—for admission to elite institutions of higher education. Mrs. Kennedy’s account of St. Eileen’s social and economic history reflected these changes:
These nuns that worked in these schools—they got paid nothing, so they didn’t charge much tuition. And, it’s like anything, the cost of education and health care has increased disproportionally in our country.\(^3\)

Over the past one hundred years, as women have developed a more substantial presence in institutions of higher education, St. Eileen’s has evolved from an institution, as Mrs. Kennedy described, that “didn’t charge much tuition” to a “selective, private, college-preparatory high school” with extensive course offerings (School website). Admission criteria considered the student’s intellectual ability, family structure, parental occupation(s), parental education background, religion, and church (See Chapter 3: Field Site, Admission Process). These questions, in conjunction with the evaluation process, demonstrated the extent of selectivity with which the institution approached enrollment. Furthermore, admission criteria that specified the parent(s)/guardian(s) “Company” and “Type of Work,” student’s past academic and behavior record, and whether the applicant’s parents and/or relatives had attended this institution may have signified, early in the admissions process, the socio-economic standing of the applicant (School website). In addition to the written (admission) specifics, students were required to pay approximately $10,000 a year to enroll, and wear a required uniform that cost approximately $100 (per outfit). Once enrolled, students had access to a “state-of-the-art” performing arts center; new gymnasium, fitness center, and locker rooms; chapel; over 15 diverse athletic teams; and approximately 30 diverse clubs (School website) (See Chapter 3: Admissions Process, Co-Curricular Activities).

\(^3\) Reader may assume that each quotation hereafter is specifically from an interview transcript, recorded verbatim, unless otherwise noted
Enrollment: A social perception.

As the demographic/cultural composition of American colleges and universities has changed over the past one hundred years with regard for race, class, and gender (Cheeseman Day & Newburger, 2002), and states have implemented legislation to increase access to historically-privileged educational institutions, the cultural composition of St. Eileen’s has evolved as well. While percentages of specific demographics are not provided, a brochure published by the school stated that students enroll from “a wide range of economic and ethnic backgrounds, from inner city to rural farm areas” (School website). Mrs. Goulding, who had taught at St. Eileen’s for ten years, described these changes in the following way:

Over the years now we’ve taken on a lot of students from failing school districts [using vouchers], so our demographic has really changed over the last several years. We [now] cross all of the economic areas. It used to be, and it still is to some degree, a very privileged population, but that’s for those that are paying for it…We either have those that can afford to pay for it or those who are here because they cannot afford to pay for it and they’re living in a really bad part of town. We’re losing that middle, which is, I suppose, indicative of what’s going on in the country. (15, May, 2012)

Mrs. Kennedy, who had attended St. Eileen’s from Kindergarten through 12th grade and had taught at the institution for approximately 25 years, similarly described the sharp contrast between students who were able to pay for tuition, and those who utilized state support. In particular, Mrs. Goulding and Mrs. Kennedy both noted the absence of the middle class. Mrs. Kennedy stated:

Who can afford $10,000 a year for high school? You have people that can and then you have people that are here on work study or scholarship. So you have, in a way, you’re
losing more and more people from the middle, because they’re deciding that ‘my kid going to [public schools] is an okay thing.’ (11, May, 2012)

In addition to the defined separation between those who were able to fully pay for tuition, and those were not, I found it interesting that both instructors acknowledged the economic disparity between two student populations. Given my findings within the literature that all Catholic students were once mandated to attend Catholic schools, I questioned why the middle class was not present. While state legislation has made it possible for a growing number of historically underrepresented populations to enter educational contexts of privilege, and the Vatican has advocated for the inclusion of poor students within Catholic schools (Javierre, 1977), the data led me to question why an extensive gap existed between divergent populations.

The evolution of student demographics was not only evidenced in faculty interviews, but in student interviews as well. Erica, whom had attended both public and private schools, noticed the distinct differences in socio-economic background at St. Eileen’s. She asserted, “If someone is waiting for the bus, you know they live in [the city]. [You assume] their parents work or they can’t afford a car” (7, May, 2012). Given the two primary ways students arrived on/departed from campus—by public bus or parent transportation—individual socio-economic background was highly visible and apparent to others within the school community. This visibility not only accentuated distinct differences between privileged and non-privileged students, but was a source of discussion amongst students. Mrs. Kennedy provided an example of such difference and discussion:

Some [African American students] kind of meld in with the White girls, [but] the rest really do still stick together. When you look at the lunchroom, nobody says, ‘Why are all
the White girls sitting together?’ but they’ll say, ‘Why are all the Black girls sitting together?’ (11, May, 2012).

As the racial demographics of the institution diversified, students were presented with opportunities to consider the reality and significance of social literacy. While Gretchen, Lucy, and Ellen did not provide specific examples of how St. Eileen’s had diversified in relation to their grade schools, they each stated that, “There is more diversity here” (11, May, 2012). However, Lucy emphasized that the majority of her classes were still composed of predominately White students. She stated:

In the majority of my classes there’s not really anybody who is of a different race. Most of the people in my class are White. And so, even in high school, I haven’t gotten a lot of exposure [to different people] (11, May, 2012).

Like Lucy’s observation, the class I observed consisted of “ten, White female” participants (Fieldnotes, April-May 2012; See Chapter 3: Participants). As Gretchen, Lucy, and Ellen acknowledged the differences between cultural composition at St. Eileen’s and their respective grade schools, they alluded to tensions and uncertainties that had surfaced as a result. No longer were they comfortable “commenting on race” or “referencing race in a joke,” (11, May, 2012) but were distinctly attune to the presence of groups and individuals who were once missing. This finding complimented Dewey’s (1916) assertion that “associated living” has the potential to challenge and/or break down barriers that are constructed on account of social identity (as cited in Boyles et al., 2009, p. 89).

Complicating students’ perceptions of the St. Eileen student body was a sense that, in the midst of educational advantage, social limitations existed. When asked what disadvantages may be present for students attending St. Eileen’s, Mrs. Goulding stated, “You miss that interaction
with the boys” (15, May, 2012). While students did not specifically highlight the positives or negatives of a single-sex environment, Macy recognized the absence of diverse individuals in her past Catholic school experience. She said, “We weren’t very diverse. Everyone was White. Everyone was kind of the same economic standard, so there wasn’t much diversity. It was a little sheltered” (11, May, 2012). This awareness was significant, as it evidenced a starting point from which social literacy, social privilege, and homogeneity may be discussed.

As Macy recognized cultural limitations that were present at St. Eileen’s, Mrs. Kennedy, too, described the limitations of social privilege in the following way:

In our school…there’s a lack of understanding of what it’s like to be in someone else’s shoes… You may know somebody who is on welfare, you may have a parent or family member that lost a job, you may have an aunt or an uncle who is gay…[but] they have no idea what it would be like to feel like to experience life in someone else’s shoes. (11, May, 2012)

Mrs. Kennedy’s assertion (regarding student social literacy) was founded on the composition of St. Eileen’s student demographic, and considered the ways in which race, socio-economic background, and age influenced the social literacy of individuals attending St. Eileen’s.

Even though the cultural composition of St. Eileen’s had slowly evolved over the past few years, I theorized that participation within a socially privileged institution may come to shape participant perceptions of self and schooling. As such, I sought to explore participant perceptions of self, schooling, and the St. Eileen community through the course of structured interviews, classroom observations, and school publications.
**Academic caliber: A social expectation and perception.**

Through the course of my interview with Nora and Macy, Nora described her perceptions of the St. Eileen community in the following way:

It’s not just that doing well in school is expected from your teachers, but there’s a lot of pressure from your peers to do well. Here, if you’re a huge slacker, your friends are gonna think you’re weird—that doesn’t really put you in a better place in school; it just kinda makes you a little different. (11, May, 2012)

The pressure Nora experienced from peers was also evidenced in Macy’s description of the St. Eileen community:

Seeing all my friends—how well they’re doing—that really makes me kick myself, and force myself to do better, and make myself care about stuff. My grades have gotten so much better since freshman year. I’m not as good at self-motivating. But this kind of forced me to (11, May, 2012)

Furthermore, Nora’s stated:

I would agree. Definitely who your friends are and who you hang around with is going to influence you. Because I know, especially being our age, we’re influenced a lot by our peers. Who you surround yourself with is who you’re going to be. (11, May, 2012)

In citing the advantages of St. Eileen’s learning community, Mrs. Goulding named “single sex education” and “the caliber of education” (15, May, 2012); Mrs. Goulding shared that an all-female learning context enhanced the academic learning experience for students, as students and teachers alike were able to discuss topics “more openly” (15, May, 2012). When asked what disadvantages students might experience by attending St. Eileen’s, Mrs. Goulding stated, “There is a lot of competition here; probably more than you would see in your traditional public school”
(15, May, 2012). In each instance, participants evidenced peer influence as a driving force in the level of academic caliber achieved. Mrs. Goulding, who had taught at a public high school for three years prior to St. Eileen’s, related peer influence to the level of academic caliber students achieved. She stated:

I have a different caliber of student here at St. Eileen’s, which is not necessarily the case at all Catholic schools, but certainly students come here for the most part to be challenged academically. You’re not sitting there dealing with a lot of discipline issues. They’re much more respectful. (15, May, 2012)

Mrs. Goulding’s assertion connected students’ academic intent to educational environment. I, too, observed few discipline issues, and students engaged in higher-order thinking. Having taught for six years in public middle and high schools, prior to conducting this research, I perceived the relationship between Mrs. Kennedy and her students as “trust-filled, thoughtful, and fair” (Fieldnotes, April-May 2012). In addition to sharing personal thoughts and concerns with one another at the beginning of each class period (i.e. intentions for prayer), trust and intimacy were established amongst participants through “cooperative prayer, granted permission to sit in desks or on the floor, and all students choosing to sit and/or recline on the floor as a community” (Fieldnotes, April-May 2012). In addition to Mrs. Kennedy’s demonstration of trust, students were afforded the opportunity to “engage in classroom discussions in a more intimate and informal way,” on account of small class size and “responsible behavior” (Fieldnotes, April-May 2012). Sitting on the floor together, students “worked independently and cooperatively to research Latin American cultures, governments, and economies during the Great Depression” and “discussed: political fragmentation and in the United States and Canada during
the Great Depression; advantages and disadvantages of the two-party system; and defining characteristics of socialism, fascism, and communism” (Fieldnotes, April-May 2012).

In light of St. Eileen’s academic and social environment, Macy described St. Eileen’s as having “a really good focus on education and future success” and that “they do a really good job preparing you [for college]” (11, May, 2012). Nora further stated:

It’s hard to leave here without a really good education. I don’t really feel too worried about how I’m going to do in college. I’m really glad that I’ll be able to settle in a lot easier because I won’t be worrying too much about my classes. (11, May, 2012)

Both Macy and Nora emphasized ways in which an education at St. Eileen’s has prepared them to succeed in college (11, May, 2012). Furthermore, both students referenced family influence in the formation of these perceptions. Nora stated: “My parents told me that, ‘I don’t think you’re going to work this hard in college—for at least the first couple of years” (11, May, 2012), and Macy stated, “My cousin went [to St. Eileen’s] and my brother graduated from [St. Eileen’s brother institution]...and they both said their first year—their first two years—‘high school was harder than those first two years of college’ for them” (11, May, 2012). In both instances, students demonstrated the family’s integral role in shaping the student’s perceptions of St. Eileen’s academic caliber, and the way in which this caliber may create future success.

I was motivated to garner participant perceptions of the St. Eileen learning experience, as I believed these perceptions strongly influence the formation and development of social literacy. Participant perceptions of the St. Eileen learning experience were largely shaped by peer and family influence, and evidenced a strong sense of competition, academic quality, and confidence toward college admission and success. In addition to developing one’s sense of self and social environment, social literacy seeks to enhance a person’s understanding of people and structures
beyond his/her immediate environment. As such, I sought to understand how individuals within the St. Eileen community perceived public schools and students.

**Participant perceptions of public schools.**

As participants evidenced the ways in which their perceptions of the St. Eileen community had been shaped, participants also evidenced their perceptions of public schools and the students therein. In describing the differences between public and private school students, Nora stated:

I don’t want to sound one-sided because I’ve only known a private school, but, especially at St. Eileen’s, we’re a lot—I don’t want to say we’re more academically focused, because, again, I’ve never gone to a public school, I wouldn’t know…I guess this is more of a TV thing, but it seems that at public schools there’s a wider range of academic level. There’s the one group that’s really driven and they take the harder classes and then there’s just the other group that’s the slacker group. (11, May, 2012)

In referencing television as the source of her perception, Nora demonstrated a limited knowledge of individuals and institutions beyond her immediate environment. Macy, as well, demonstrated a loss for words when asked to describe the advantages and/or disadvantages of public schools. After pausing, she said: “I can’t really think of anything. I’m kind of stumped on this one” (11, May, 2012). Like private schools, public schools encompass a wide spectrum of educational advantage and disadvantage, but this was not evidenced in Nora and Macy’s perceptions. While participants may have demonstrated a typical perception of students and/or institutions beyond their immediate context, I found this finding critical, as prior research has indicated the relationship between graduates of elite, parochial schools and positions of civic leadership in business, finance, and law (Howard & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010; Sikkink, 2004).
After interviewing six different students, I interviewed Mrs. Kennedy. Toward the end of our interview, Mrs. Kennedy asked, “Were you surprised by anything the girls said?” (11, May, 2012). After sharing that “The girls’ perceptions of public school students surprised me” (11, May, 2012), Mrs. Kennedy stated:

Oh, they have a bad public school perception. I tell them, ‘Well, when you go to college, you’ll be around a lot of other people, and you know what? [In a whisper:] Most of them went to public schools, and they’re not bad…”” (11, May, 2012).

When I asked Mrs. Kennedy why students have a negative perception of their public school peers, she responded:

I don’t know why that is. I don’t know if I can put my finger on it. Its just like a general perception…if ‘you’re a public school person, you’re just not as good as I am.’ It’s almost an elitist kind of attitude that exists. I don’t know where it comes from. But I guess there is problems, in terms of, if you hear about a drop-out rate. That’s where they get the perception that there are some that are really good students and everybody else is just…you know. And maybe its the school district itself in where they live. (11, May, 2012)

I was surprised by students’ perceptions of public school students, and shared with Mrs. Kennedy that participants had communicated that they did not have any public school friends. She asserted, “Oh no, I am not surprised” (11, May, 2012). This led me to ask Mrs. Kennedy if participants “feel better than their public school peers,” (11, May, 2012) and she responded, “Oh yeah. Oh yeah” (11, May, 2012). Within these verbalized statements, I interpreted an “absolute” tone (Fieldnotes, 11, May, 2012).
Having observed participant interactions, I knew that students were “comfortable discussing their personal concerns, opinions, and questions” with both Mrs. Kennedy and one another (Fieldnotes, April-May 2012), and that the nature of Mrs. Kennedy’s relationship with students allowed her to authentically elaborate upon students’ perceptions and opinions of public school students. Furthermore, Mrs. Kennedy had attended and graduated from St. Eileen’s, which allowed her to speak of public schools and students from a genuine, personal perspective.

In addition to exploring participants’ perceptions of self and schooling, I sought to understand how curricular content and pedagogical practice may shape and transform students’ understandings of self and society. In addition to observing one teacher’s transformative, critical pedagogy, I gathered participant perceptions through the course of structured interviews.

**Transformative curricular content and pedagogical practice.**

**Observations of transformative curricular content and pedagogical practice.**

Prior to my interviews with participants, I observed the use of transformative curricular content and pedagogical practice in Mrs. Kennedy’s History class. On one such occasion, Mrs. Kennedy engaged students in an intentional dialogue regarding a “Jim Crow Museum” that recently opened in the United States ([http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/](http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/)). The Museum, Mrs. Kennedy shared, displayed a collection of racist artifacts, including “a life-size lynching tree, a t-shirt with a picture of a cartoon monkey holding a banana next to President Obama, and a portrait of nine naked black babies propped on a shelf with a caption reading, ‘Alligator Bait’” ([http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/](http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/)) (Fieldnotes, 26, April, 2012). Mrs. Kennedy asked students to discuss their thoughts, and why a museum would be made of these artifacts. Furthermore, she asked students if the museum was “a shrine to racism, or promoting tolerance?” Students responded to Mrs. Kennedy’s questions in the following ways: “Why would they make a
museum out of it?; It seems problematic that they’ve included recent memorabilia; The people going probably aren’t racist and the people who are racist probably aren’t going” (Fieldnotes, 26, April, 2012). Students asked critical questions, and made critical comments, but did not elaborate extensively on these particular opinions. However, when Mrs. Kennedy asked students if similar shrines should be made to the Confederate, students demonstrated a connection between the content and social context. Jillian stated, “A girl [at a different school] got banned from prom for trying to wear a dress made out of a confederate flag” (Fieldnotes, 26, April, 2012). Nora responded to Jillian, stating:

Not all the Confederates were bad! The girl [who wore the dress] probably didn’t know anything about that anyway. To take an entire history and tie it to fabric—that’s not very fair. People who put a confederate flag on their backpack are not the most educated. The Confederate flag should be thought of more broadly—There were more aspects that sparked the Civil War than the slavery debate. After the civil war was over, slavery continued for many years. (Fieldnotes; 26, April, 2012)

While students’ examples may have been garnered through websites, television, and/or social media (i.e. Facebook), they sought to connect a critical, political issue to a social context, and discuss a variety of opinions. Mrs. Kennedy added to the dialogue in the following way:

“Despite the constitutional amendment that made slavery illegal, many slaves chose to stay with their plantation owners because they were paid. Their life may not have changed a lot as a result” (26, April, 2012). The combination of these opinions and themes created a springboard from which students may have explored the social structures, policies and cycles of social privilege, power, (in)justice, and oppression, and the ways in which such themes and structures are connected to individual beliefs, collective attitudes, and national laws.
In addition to discussing critical curricular content, participants engaged in transformative pedagogical practices. Supporting Gorski’s (2012) Key Characteristics of a Multicultural Curriculum, Mrs. Kennedy asked students to “participate in the teaching of a topic” on multiple occasions (Fieldnotes; April-May 2012). On one occasion, students were given the opportunity to work with a partner to research a Latin American country—its government, class and social structure, industry and trade—and then teach the rest of the class how these findings influenced the (researched) nation’s political, economic, and social stability throughout the Great Depression (Fieldnotes; May 1, 2012). By empowering students to research, create, and demonstrate knowledge, Mrs. Kennedy utilized a powerful, transformative pedagogical practice, which not only gave authority to student voice, but conveyed that she, the teacher, was not the exclusive contributor of information (Freire, 1970). On a separate occasion, Mrs. Kennedy demonstrated critical pedagogical practice by utilizing forms of delivery that challenged traditional dynamics of power and privilege in the classroom (Gorski, 2012). Students were empowered to work cooperatively with one another to create charades/skits that demonstrated the meaning of the following words: “Propaganda; Democracy; Totalitarianism; Isolationism; Fascism; Imperialism; Alliance; and Appeasement” (Fieldnotes; May 1, 2012). As students worked cooperatively, Ellen asked Jillian to help her understand the meaning of Fascism and Isolationism (Fieldnotes; May 1, 2012). By allowing students to experience and demonstrate authority in the learning process, Mrs. Kennedy rejected traditional teaching practices that may be viewed as “motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable” (Freire, 1970, p. 462). Such teaching practices, Freire (1970) asserted, symbolize the political and social possibilities present in greater society.
Participant perceptions of transformative curricular content and pedagogical practice.

In addition to recording observations of transformative, critical pedagogy, I sought to understand, through structured interviews, how participants perceived authentic, transformative learning. Macy described a transformative education in the following way: “[It is] not only one that challenges you to think about stuff, but [emphasizes] you actually understanding the material and being able to use it in practical situations” (11, May, 2012). Nora elaborated on Macy’s description of transformative learning by stating, “It’s [the act of] applying cause and effect; finding answers on your own; and understanding the content on a deeper level” (11, May, 2012). Nora provided two examples of how she has explored content on a deeper level through the course of Mrs. Kennedy’s History class. She stated:

In past History classes, it was just ‘learn the facts and repeat them on the test.’ Before, we just learned how the New Americans would go [into the West] and the Indians were kind of okay with it. And now, we’re learning things from different perspectives. Like I never learned the American Indian perspective of it, and how there were a lot of struggles and just getting different sides. And same with the American Revolution. In the past, we just learned that England was [a] horrible oppressor and, really, they had their own opinions about it and they were just as right as ours. (11, May, 2012)

Results of this process, Nora explained, included “a much bigger picture [of the world]” and a desire to “find both sides of a story before taking a side [her]self” (11, May, 2012).

While Mrs. Kennedy demonstrated the use of “critical questioning with regard for political ideologies” (Fieldnotes, April-May 2012), I observed minimal [potentially transformative] discussions regarding race and class and the ways in which students’ lives are
connected to these themes. Mrs. Kennedy said, “I think it’s difficult. Because nobody wants to offend anybody. So then people are afraid to say what they really think. And then if you say what you really think, then that can be offensive” (11, May, 2012). In recent history, as many colleges and universities have utilized affirmative action, Mrs. Kennedy explained that this practice has influenced the perceptions and experiences of her students. She said:

There’s a lot of frustration over issues of college scholarship, because a lot of the White students feel that its unfair that other groups are at a greater advantage and there’s nothing for them because they can’t qualify because their incomes aren’t low enough...so they think that’s unfair…Everyone wants to give their examples of reverse discrimination (11, May, 2012)

**Chapter Summary**

The researched context and population were undeniably complex. I have not attempted to make generalizations, but to explore that which was experienced and understood within a small given population. Student and teacher perceptions of St. Eileen’s student body were largely shaped by the institution’s vision and mission (See Chapter 3: Vision and Mission), past and current enrollment, and caliber of curriculum. In particular, the nature of students at St. Eileen’s strongly influenced the students I interviewed to pursue academic challenges and success, and the changing demographic nature of St. Eileen’s presented participants with multiple opportunities to engage in discussions of social literacy at a more critical level. Critical engagement was demonstrated at various levels through the course of classroom observations and participant narratives.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I was motivated to research social privilege and critical pedagogical practices within a private, college-preparatory Catholic high school, as all of my prior teaching and learning experience took place in public schools in a different region of the United States. My experiences as a teacher and student in public schools took place at every level, from Kindergarten through college, and in urban, suburban, and rural locations. St. Eileen’s provided a diverse environment for me to study the relationship between culture, curriculum, and pedagogy, and to also reflect upon my personal practices and philosophies. Students and teachers alike at St. Eileen’s provided me with tremendous insights into the complexities and ever-evolving nature of education—its structures, practices, and people—and the ways in which curriculum and pedagogy may be utilized to further develop social literacy. The following questions guided my research:

1. How do students and teachers within a context of social privilege exemplify social literacy? How may curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social context influence one’s understanding of self and society?

2. How may students and teachers within a context of social privilege experience authentic transformation through curricular content, pedagogical practice, and social norms?

This chapter attempts to identify ways that the data may provide insights into the above research questions, and has been organized according to research question. While the data revealed a relationship between St. Eileen’s admission and enrollment and participants’ social literacy, the data also revealed how social context, curricular content, and pedagogical practice may be utilized to develop and transform students’ understandings of self and society.
How did admission, enrollment, and educational opportunity at St. Eileen’s influence students’ social literacy?

Declarations issued by the Catholic Church between the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries have long influenced participation within Catholic schools, as has increased access to elite institutions of American higher education. As such, the data signified that St. Eileen’s vision, mission, and enrollment have been shaped, historically and presently, by national and international laws, values, and demands; and, specifically, endorsed social privilege by admitting select populations who were able to meet narrow enrollment criteria.

While the data revealed marked opportunities of social privilege and educational advantage at St. Eileen’s, the data also revealed changes that have taken place in the institution’s cultural composition. While St. Eileen’s has historically enrolled a privileged, elite population, the data revealed an evolving inclusion of privileged (wealthy) and underrepresented (poor) populations. The data credited state legislation (i.e. the use of vouchers) for the representation of historically marginalized populations within this privileged context. While the demographic population is still divided between a majority and minority, these developments have illuminated and challenged the institution’s status quo.

Participants demonstrated an (astute) awareness of cultural composition and academic caliber at St. Eileen’s, and the ways in which experience at St. Eileen’s may contribute to future opportunities and success. In addition to participants’ positive perceptions of the St. Eileen learning community and experience, participants demonstrated a limited knowledge of public schools and public school students. As such, these findings may illuminate areas for (diverse) opportunity within St. Eileen’s admission process and enrollment criteria.
How may admission, enrollment, and educational opportunity at St. Eileen’s influence students’ social literacy?

St. Eileen’s may consider how the admission process and enrollment criteria influence the comprehensive social understandings afforded students, and the ways in which students’ social understandings may lend to patterns of (in)equality and (dis)advantage within greater society (Bowles & Gintis, 1994; Gaztambide-Fernández & Howard, 2010; Thompson, 2010). In light of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education’s (1977) assertion that “All who are responsible for [Catholic] education—parents, teachers, young people and school authorities” must “pool all their resources and the means at their disposal to enable Catholic schools to provide a service which is truly civic and apostolic,” St. Eileen’s may consider (re)shaping the admission criteria to afford a greater spectrum of participants within its institution (Javierre). In doing so, St. Eileen’s may affirm the Catholic Church’s ultimate mission and goal, which is to “serve humanity” and “proclaim the good news of salvation to all” (Javierre). While it is well understood that complexities exist regarding admission and enrollment, as St. Eileen’s is situated within a context of national and international politics; a society of power, privilege, and difference; and competitive, capitalistic culture at large, consistent considerations must be afforded students of diverse backgrounds for purposes of access, inclusion, and educational opportunity. The inclusion of diverse individuals and groups will not only benefit the St. Eileen community, by providing opportunities for increased knowledge and understanding of diverse communities, but represent that which is possible in American society at large.

As the student participants I interviewed had not come to know or have a friendship with a single public school student, I concluded that students may benefit from experience with individuals beyond their personal educational environment. Knowledge and understanding of
diverse communities has the potential to deeply develop one’s sense of self, society, and social literacy. Furthermore, as Sikkink (2004) noted, the orientations students embody toward [public and private] institutions have the potential to affect attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors through one’s entire life course. Furthermore, as social justice seeks to build an awareness of the social relations that bind individuals to one another, and democracy promotes associated living—“a conjoint communicated experience” (Dewey, 1916; as cited in Boyles et al., 2009, p. 89), it would benefit participants to have a deeper understanding of diverse individuals—including those within a public school.

**How did curricular content and pedagogical practice influence students’ social literacy?**

Participants disclosed that the benefits of attending a college-preparatory school included the opportunities to discuss cause-effect relationships, understand people and history on a deeper level, explore history from different perspectives, and apply newfound knowledge and understanding. While the data revealed participants’ burgeoning awareness of educational context (changing socio-economic demographics), critical social issues (such as the recent opening of a Jim Crow Museum), and transformative learning experiences (the inclusion of multiple perspectives within the curriculum), participants had yet to engage in extensive, personal discussions of race, socio-economic status, social privilege an/or oppression. Furthermore, participants had yet to discuss how their personal lives may connect to societal structures of power, privilege, and difference. This finding was significant, as it illuminated opportunities available to participants to explore institutionalized worldviews, deficit ideologies, and/or the implications of social privilege (Black & Stone, 2005; Gorski, 2010; Johnson, 1997).
How may curricular content and pedagogical practice influence students’ social literacy?

As participant perceptions of self and students within/beyond the St. Eileen community evidenced a need for diverse, subjective learning experiences within and beyond the St. Eileen community, I concluded that critical dialogue may be utilized to develop participants’ sense of self and others, challenge the status quo, and critically evaluate stereotypes and assumptions held within the St. Eileen community. Furthermore, illuminating the relationship between individual beliefs, collective attitudes, and national laws may prove instrumental in developing participants’ sense of social literacy.

As perceptions of targeted social groups (i.e. women, communities of color, non-English speakers, gays, lesbians, lower- or working- class people) may be constructed and/or deconstructed through critical dialogue and curricular content (Adams, 2000, p. 6), it is essential for educators to address racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and other forms of oppression in the curriculum. Honest discussions about the history of privilege and oppression in respective subject areas, schools, and societies may also nourish participants’ awareness of identity, connection with others, and understanding of the “economic condition, historical flow, cultural surround within which our lives are negotiated” (Ayers et al., 2009, p. xiv). Lastly, utilizing students’ lived experiences and intergroup dialogue (Griffin et al., 2012) may prove engaging, transformative, and powerful for students and teachers alike.

Given the challenges, complexities, and discomfort of addressing such themes, and the pivotal role teachers play in this process, St. Eileen’s administration may consider internal and external resources that would assist teachers in facilitating and including such discussion (Griffin et al., 2012). While social justice education may create discomfort for students and teachers alike, as we connect our personal influence and impact to the lives of others, I concluded that
participants would welcome the opportunity to discuss sensitive topics within their peer community and with a teacher-facilitator. Furthermore, as social literacy strives to make explicit the connections individuals share with one another, and to cultivate a deeper understanding of the conditions that have historically divided people (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009), I propose that a study of the American Civil War and Civil rights movements in the Americas would prove instrumental for St. Eileen’s participants. Given students’ interest in, ability to discuss, and sensitivity toward cause-effect relationships, an exploration of these historical events may create optimal opportunities for participants to critically examine, discuss, and connect the implications of these events to their own lives.

**Personal Implications**

In conclusion, this research illuminated my understanding of critical curricular content, critical pedagogical practice, philosophies of education within a democratic society, and qualities of social privilege within my thinking and practice. My review of literature, field experiences, and research reflections, in particular, have pushed me to consider the significance of educational purpose, social context, social privilege, and pedagogical practice. I project that my future teaching practices (irrespective of environment) will more deeply and consistently consider the implications of curricular content, how it may be interrogated with students, and how it may contribute to the deconstruction of social injustices. A particular question has remained with me throughout this journey, which may serve to challenge and/or (re)shape each educator’s choices with regard for curriculum, pedagogy, and societal justice: “To whose benefit and at whose expense?” (Gorski, 2009, p. 89).
Recommendations for Future Research

Given the limited depth and breadth of this study, many opportunities are possible for future research. Research within the confines of one, all-male college-preparatory Catholic high school, and/or co-ed Catholic high school may illuminate the findings of this study, as would studies conducted within privileged public institutions. Such studies may further develop the limited research available to educators regarding the relationship between educational advantage and/or social literacy.

A longer period of time in the field would also prove valuable to better understand the social context and understandings of the St. Eileen community. Observing additional classes and co-curricular activities, and interviewing a greater number of participants would enhance the quality of this study. Furthermore, comparing and contrasting the experiences of students who had attended private, Catholic schools for the duration of their academic experience to students whom (recently) transitioned to the private, Catholic school from a public or non-religious private school would provide a greater depth and breadth to the study as well.

Furthermore, additional research that compares and contrasts participant experiences from a variety of educational institutions—both public and private—may add to existing research. Understanding the similarities and differences between participant perceptions in diverse educational contexts regarding academic context, quality, and influence may provide additional opportunities for research, discussion, and relationship.
REFERENCES


Sperry Top-Sider website www.sperrytopsider.com


APPENDIX A

YOUTH ASSENT FORM

Dear Student,

I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University, working on my Master’s thesis in Curriculum and Instruction. I am specifically studying the ways students at a private school learn about and speak about social justice. By doing this study, I hope to better understand the ways educators may work with students to teach social justice.

I have received approval from [School Name] to work with [Teacher Name] to collect data. With your permission, I would like to observe your class discussions weekly, for three hours maximum, between April 2012 and May 2012. The observations will consist of me listening to and writing down the questions and comments students and teachers make concerning social justice. These observations will not be video or audio taped. In addition to recording observations, I would like to offer each student an opportunity to be interviewed. A sign-up sheet will be provided in [Class Name] class, and interviews will be held in the classroom and/or media center during lunch and last approximately 20-30 minutes total. Interview questions will be open-ended and recorded on an audiotape. If you choose to participate, you may sign-up to be interviewed individually or with a classmate in a small group of 2-3 students.

If you choose to participate, your name and school will be protected—kept secret—in all aspects of this study. My observations and interviews will be kept in a safe location that only my advisor and I have access to, and upon the completion of my thesis, all of the data will be destroyed. Fake names will be used in my thesis to ensure the confidentiality of students, teacher, and school.

There are no known risks to this study; the risks are no greater than those experienced in daily life. Participation in this study is completely voluntary; deciding to participate or not will not impact your relationship (including grades) with [Teacher Name] and/or Bowling Green State University in any way. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time, and any interview responses and/or observation notes connected to you will be destroyed and left out of my thesis. If you have questions at any time regarding the study and/or process, you may contact me, Michelle Rygg, at mrygg@bgsu.edu / (360) 635-1831, or my advisor, Dr. Sharon Subreenduth, Associate Professor, at ssubreec@bgsu.edu / (419) 372-7510. If you have questions regarding this study or about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at hrsb@bgsu.edu or (419) 372-7716.

I ____________________________ give my assent to fully participate in research about how students and teachers learn about and speak about social justice.
APPENDIX B

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT

Parent/Guardian Informed Consent Statement

Social Understandings within a Parochial School

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Your student is invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to learn how students and teachers within a parochial school reference and come to understand elements of social justice—equity, activism, and social awareness—through the comprehensive curricular experience. Outcomes of this study are intended to provide educators with a clear understanding of how students form understandings of social justice, and the ways in which curriculum may be implemented to develop these understandings.

I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University, working on my thesis in Curriculum and Instruction. I have received approval from [REDACTED] to work with [REDACTED] to collect data. With your permission, I will observe your student weekly, for three hours maximum, between April 2012 and May 2012. Observations will be limited to the comments, instruction, discussion, and questions of students and teacher as they pertain to equity, activism, and social awareness. These observations will not be video or audio taped. In addition to observation, I would like to offer each student an opportunity to be interviewed. A sign-up sheet will be provided in [REDACTED] class, and interviews will be held in the classroom and/or media center during lunch and last approximately 20-30 minutes total. Interview questions will be open-ended and recorded on an audiotape.

The confidentiality of your student will be protected in all aspects of this study. Data will be kept in a secure location that only my advisor and I have access to, and upon the completion of my thesis, all of the data will be destroyed. Fake names will be used in my thesis to ensure the confidentiality of students, teacher, and school.

There are no known risks to this study; the risks are no greater than those experienced in daily life. Participation in this study is completely voluntary; deciding to participate or not will not impact your student’s relationship in any way (including grades) with [REDACTED] and/or Bowling Green State University. Your student is free to withdraw from this study at any time, and any interview responses and/or observation notes connected to your student will be destroyed and omitted from the thesis. If you have questions at any time regarding the study and/or procedures, you may contact me, Michelle Rygg, at mrygg@bgsu.edu / (360) 635-1831, or my advisor, Dr. Sharon Subbreedt, Associate Professor, at ssubbreedt@bgsu.edu / (419) 372-7510. If you have questions regarding this study or about your student’s rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at hrbr@bgsu.edu or (419) 372-7716.

I ________________ give my consent to allow my daughter ________________ to fully participate in research about how students and teachers within a parochial school reference and come to understand elements of social justice—equity, activism, and social awareness—through the comprehensive curricular experience.
APPENDIX C

EDUCATOR INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Educator,

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to learn how students and teachers within a parochial school reference and come to understand elements of social justice—equity, activism, and social awareness—through the comprehensive curricular experience. Outcomes of this study are intended to provide educators with a clear understanding of how students form understandings of social justice, and the ways in which curriculum may be implemented to develop these understandings.

I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University, working on my thesis in Curriculum and Instruction. I have received approval from to conduct this study. With your permission, I would like to observe your class instruction and discussions weekly, for three hours maximum, between April 2012 and May 2012. Observations will be limited to the comments, instruction, discussion, and questions of students and teacher as they pertain to equity, activism, and social awareness. These observations will not be video or audio taped. In addition to observation, I would like to interview you about social justice, as it pertains to the comprehensive curricular experience. The interview will consist of open-ended questions, and may be conducted at a time and location of your choice. The interview will be recorded on audio tape, and last approximately one hour.

The confidentiality of your person and employer will be protected in all aspects of this study. Data will be kept in a secure location that only my advisor and I have access to, and upon the completion of my thesis, all of the data will be destroyed. Pseudonyms will be used in my thesis to ensure the confidentiality of students, teacher, and school.

There are no known risks to this study; the risks are no greater than those experienced in daily life. Participation in this study is completely voluntary; deciding to participate or not will not impact your relationship with Bowling Green State University and/or in any way. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time, and any interview responses and/or observation notes connected to your participation will be destroyed and omitted from the thesis. If you have questions at any time regarding the study and/or procedures, you may contact me, Michelle Rygg, at mkrygg@bgsu.edu / (360) 655-1831, or my advisor, Dr. Sharon Subreeduth, Associate Professor, at ssubreec@bgsu.edu / (419) 372-7510. If you have questions regarding this study or about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board at hrsb@bgsu.edu or (419) 372-7716.

I give my consent to fully participate in research about how students and teachers within a parochial school reference and come to understand elements of social justice—equity, activism, and social awareness—through the comprehensive curricular experience.

Michelle Rygg
School of Teaching and Learning
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH 43403
mkrygg@bgsu.edu

College of Education and Human Development
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0280
www.bgsu.edu
## APPENDIX D
### INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Student or Teacher</th>
<th>Catholic School Experience</th>
<th>Public School Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Pre-School-11th grade</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macy</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Pre-School-11th grade</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Kennedy</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>38 years total, as a student and teacher</td>
<td>One semester, as a student teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student: K-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher at St. Eileen’s: 25 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>9-11 grade</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Goulding</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>12 years total, as a student and teacher</td>
<td>3 years, at the high school level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student: K-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher at St. Eileen’s: 10 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gretchen</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Pre-School-11th grade</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Pre-School-11th grade</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Pre-School-11th grade</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

GORSKI’S (2012) KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF A MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM

1. Delivery
   Delivery must acknowledge and address a diversity of learning styles while challenging dynamics of power and privilege in the classroom.
   - Vary instructional techniques.
     ■ Cooperative Learning
     ■ Dialogue
     ■ Individual Work
     ■ Student Teaching
   - Understand the dynamics of power in the room so you do not perpetuate privilege and oppression.
     ■ On whom do you call more or less frequently?
     ■ Who do you encourage to work through a problem and to whom do you provide the answer?
   - Challenge the notion of teaching as "mastery."
     ■ Ask students what they already know about a topic.
     ■ Ask students what they want to learn about a topic.
     ■ Ask students to participate in the teaching of a topic.

2. Content
   Content must be complete and accurate, acknowledging the contributions and perspectives of all groups.
   - Ensure that content is as complete and accurate as possible.
     ■ "Christopher Columbus discovered America" is neither complete nor accurate.
   - Avoid tokenism--weave content about under-represented groups (People of Color, Women, Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People, People with Disabilities, etc.) seamlessly with that about traditionally over-represented groups.
     ■ Do you present under-represented groups as "the other"?
     ■ Do you address these groups only through special units and lesson plans ("African American Scientists"; "Poetry by Women") or within the context of the larger curriculum?
     ■ Do you "celebrate" difference or study, acknowledge, and explore its implications as part of the overall curriculum?
Study the history of discrimination in curriculum and ensure that you are not replicating it.

- Are you supporting stereotypes (learning about Native Americans by making headdresses and tomahawks) or challenging them (learning about Native Americans through resources by Native Americans)?
- Are you supporting or challenging the assumption that our society is inherently Eurocentric, male-centric, Christian-centric, heterosexual-centric, and upper-middle-class centric?

3. Teaching and Learning Materials
Teaching and learning materials must be diverse and critically examined for bias.

- Vary instructional materials.
  - Texts
  - Newspapers
  - Videos/Movies
  - Games
  - Workbooks

- Examine all materials for bias and oppressive content.
  - Does your history book show stereotypical or inaccurate images of people from certain groups or eras (ex. railroad workers)?
  - Do your science materials use male-centric language?
  - Do your reading or literature materials have racist language or stereotypical images?
  - Does the language you use and the language your materials use assume heterosexuality, a 2-biological-parent household, U.S. citizenship, and so on?

- Diversify images and content in bulletin boards, posters, and other constantly-visible materials.
  - Do you always diversify, or only during special months or celebrations?

4. Perspective
Content must be presented from a variety of perspectives and angles in order to be accurate and complete.

- Present content from a variety of perspectives, not only that of majority groups.
  - How do we define "classic literature" or "great books" or "the classics," and from whose perspective?
  - From whose perspective do we tell history? When is "westward expansion" the same as "genocide"? When are champions of "liberty" the same as slave owners?

- Present content through a variety of lenses, not just those of a few heroic
characters.

- Slave narratives to teach about slavery (not Frederick Douglas).
- Slave narratives to teach about colonial Virginia.
- American Indian texts to teach about westward expansion.

5. **Critical Inclusivity**

Students must be engaged in the teaching and learning process--transcend the banking method and facilitate experiences in which students learn from each other's experiences and perspectives.

- Bring the perspectives and experiences of the students themselves to the fore in the learning experience.
- Encourage students to ask critical questions about all information they receive from you and curricular materials, and model this type of critical thinking for them.
  - Who wrote or edited that textbook?
  - Who created that Web site?
  - Whose voice am I hearing and whose voice am I not hearing?
- Make content and delivery relevant for the students--facilitate experiences in which they connect what they're learning to their everyday lives.
- Recognize your students as your most important multicultural resources.

6. **Social and Civic Responsibility**

If we hope to prepare students to be active participants in an equitable democracy, we must educate them about social justice issues and model a sense of civic responsibility within the curriculum.

- Starting with the youngest students, incorporate discussions about difference and inequality into your lessons--this can be done across all subject areas.
  - How has misapplied science been used to justify racism, sexism, and religious oppression?
- Look for ways in which recognized names in various disciplines have used their work and stature to fight social injustices. (It can be particularly powerful to find people from majority groups who fought certain types of oppression.)
  - Mark Twain
  - Albert Einstein
  - Eleanor Roosevelt
- When an opportunity arises to address racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, or other forms of oppression, facilitate it.
- Have honest discussion with your students about the history of privilege and oppression in your subject area, school, education, and society at large.
- Connect teaching and learning to local community issues and larger global issues.
- Encourage students to think critically about the United States, capitalism, the two-
party system, and other traditionally untouchable subjects of critique.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum must be assessed constantly for completeness, accuracy, and bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Work with a cohort of teachers to examine and critique each other’s curricular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>units, lesson plans, and entire frameworks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Request and openly accept feedback from your students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Return to this model from time to time to make sure you haven't reverted to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>former practices.</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX F

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Have you attended both public and private schools? At what age did you begin attending private school?
2. What differences do you see between public and private schools?
3. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of attending public schools? of attending private schools?
4. How would you define a really good education?
5. What should the process of teaching and learning be like?
6. Why did you take this particular class?
7. How did you initially feel about taking this class?
8. How do you feel about taking this class now?
9. What percent of time does your teacher lecture? What percent of time are students engaged in discussion and debate?
10. What does the term “social justice” mean?
11. Can you provide an example of “social justice”? 
12. Which individuals and groups have you learned about [in this class] and why have you learned about them?
13. How have you learned about peoples’ backgrounds at St. Eileen’s?
14. How have you been challenged as a student at St. Eileen’s?
15. In which class have you learned the most about people who are different from you?
16. How have your peers influenced your perspectives?
17. How would you like to influence others in the future?
18. How would you like to see curriculum and instruction changed? Why?

19. What topics have you studied in this class this year?

20. Why are these topics relevant to study?

21. How has this class influenced your thinking and/or doing?

22. How and why has the size of your class impacted your experience?

23. What profession would you like to have in the future?

24. How will this class influence your future?

25. Does the curriculum for this class primarily focus on American history in relation to European countries, or does it include African and Asian countries as well?

26. Does it surprise you that you didn’t and won’t study the Civil War, even though you have studied/will study all of the other American wars?

27. Why would it make sense to study the Civil War?

28. Does your teacher provide opportunities to share your opinion about race, gender, or socio-economic status?

29. Do you think race and socio-economic status influence history? Should we talk about these topics in the classroom?

30. Do you talk about race, gender, and/or socio-economic status in this class? How have you engaged with these topics?

31. How does one’s background tie into the difficulty of talking about race?

32. How has your perspective of history changed, in light of taking this class?

33. Would you like to travel to other countries, based on what you have learned at St. Eileen’s or in [this class]?

34. Additional questions, comments, or insights?
APPENDIX G

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When did you first start teaching? Experience: public? private?

2. What do you enjoy most about teaching at a private Catholic school?

3. What advantages/disadvantages do you see for your students who attend St. Eileen’s?

4. With regard to the curriculum, what are examples of specific topics students are able to study at St. Eileen’s that they may not be able to study at a public school?

5. Regarding the curriculum, what topics and/or themes has your class studied this year?

6. What outcomes (i.e. values, skills) would you like to see in your students as a result of studying these topics?

7. Is your teaching guided by certain principles/beliefs? Can you please describe those principles for me?

8. What obstacles have you experienced with regard to curriculum and instruction in your classes?

9. How has the social landscape of your students’ lives translated to the classroom?

10. How has the social landscape of your community translated to the classroom?

11. How has the social landscape of your school or classroom translated to the community?

12. When I interviewed your students, the topics of race and class emerged. How do you engage with topics of race and class (socio-economic status) with your students?

13. The film we watched today depicted the achievements and leadership of male politicians, scientists, and leaders. The film was also narrated by a male and included interviews with highly-educated, White males. At one point, the narrator said, “Science is power.” Do you believe your students will (subconsciously) interpret this message as “Males are
powerful”? How does this telling of history influence your audience? How do you engage with topics of gender in your curriculum and pedagogy?

14. How do you and your students discuss social barriers?

15. I have consistently observed your excellent use of questioning with students. In addition to questioning, how can/do you influence students’ perceptions of existing societal structures?

16. How has social activism shaped your students and school community?

17. What role does dialogue play in your classes?

18. Why is dialogue important?

19. What primary sources are included in your curriculum?