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BARRY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

THE JOURNEY TO SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF

BARRY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN SOCIAL WORK

BY

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MIAMI SHORES, FLORIDA

FEBRUARY 2018

THE JOURNEY TO SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

By

Andrew Frank Schoolnik

2018

A Dissertation submitted to the Ellen Whiteside McDonnell School of Social Work in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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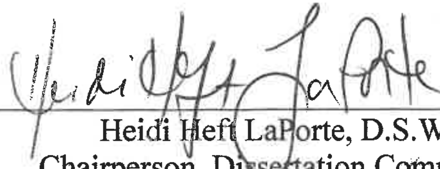

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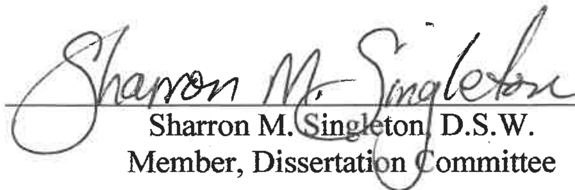

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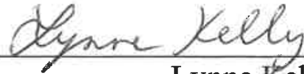

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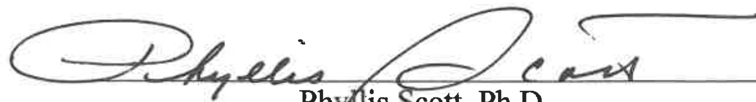

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February 22, 2018

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An Abstract of

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Barry University

February 2018

The principle of social justice is a pillar of social work that can be traced to the beginning of the profession – a time that coincides with the Progressive Era. Through advocacy practice, social workers have a long history of advancing social justice. Social workers who advocated for social justice have faced oppression from both inside and outside of the profession. Through the course of many decades, both schools and students of social work have become clinically-centric, placing less emphasis on macro practice areas.

The purpose of this study is to learn of the seminal experiences in the development of social justice advocacy practitioners. Through learning of the characteristics and features of social justice advocates, and specifically the influential experiences that led them to their social justice interests and beliefs, schools of social work will become better informed to target, recruit, and engage the next generation of social justice advocacy practitioners.

Keywords: social justice, progressive, oppression, advocacy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thank you for my Dissertation Committee, and the Director of the PhD Program at Barry University. In addition, I express gratitude to my colleagues in the Barry University PhD Program.

DEDICATION

To my parents.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Statement of Problem and Its Significance

Social justice is a core, founding principle of social work (NASW, Advocacy, 2016; NASW, Social Justice, 2016). Social work has always maintained a focus on aiding marginalized and oppressed populations (Murdach, 2010). This makes social workers unique among helping professionals (NASW, Advocacy & Organizing, 2016). Social work's inception coaligned with the height of the early twentieth century Progressive Era (Gil, 1998; Murdach, 2010; Talbot & McMillin, 2014). Indeed, one of social work's founding mothers, Jane Addams, practiced progressive politics (Keyssar, 2000; McGerr, 2005). The principles identified in the 1912 Progressive Party Platform are vibrant and alive today in the National Association of Social Workers' contemporary policy and advocating efforts ("NASW, Affordable Care Act," 2011; "NASW, DC," 2013; "NASW, Ethics," 2016; "PBS," n.d). Social justice reform efforts shared by social workers have taken place on a macro stage and have been designed to aid oppressed populations. The marriage of these two entities – social work and progressivism – has led to over a century of shared social justice endeavors and successes. These endeavors included government sponsored reforms in arenas of housing, economics, suffrage, and children's labor laws (Gil, 1998; Murdach, 2010).

Social work's belief in the strong influence of the social environment is rooted in the framework of association, which occurs when all people interact regardless of social differences (McGerr, 2003). Through the decades, social work has drifted from its roots of progressive social justice and association. During this time, the profession has moved towards direct clinical practice (Kam, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013; Specht & Courtney, 1994). This shift emphasizes

aristocratic individualism with its social isolation, which is the antithesis of the social solidarity of association (McGerr, 2003).

This dominant trend toward direct clinical practice has been identified in a host of research exploring social work student interests (D'Aprix, Dunlap, Abel, & Edwards, 2004; Fogel & Ersing, 2016; Weiss, 2006). Additional research has noted a corresponding trend toward direct practice among schools of social work (Funge, 2011; Lane, 2011; Regehr, Bogo, Donovan, Lim, & Regehr, 2012). The study of this trend has led to questioning the congruence of school of social work applicants and the profession itself (D'Aprix et al., 2004; GlenMaye & Oakes, 2002). If social work detaches from its longstanding history of advocating for the social justice of the oppressed, then social work will no longer be unique; the distinction between social work and professions purely of psychotherapy blurs. Social work's abdication of social justice practice to non-social workers, therefore, leaves the work of advocating for the oppressed to those lacking a social work education and its valuable, corresponding skills.

If incoming social work students are not philosophically well suited to the values of social justice then new strategies to identify and recruit more appropriate applicants must be implemented. There is a gap in the literature with regards to learning of the pivotal development experiences of social justice advocates. This research void specifically includes learning of the life path that one takes which leads him/her to having an interest in social justice advocacy. This dissertation aims to address this gap in the literature. By filling this gap, innovative new strategies can be employed to successfully identify and recruit social justice advocates to the profession of social work.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to learn of the seminal experiences in the development of social justice advocacy practitioners. This study endeavors to learn of the possible experiences, relationships, and life encounters that create a desire in people to feel compelled to engage in social justice activities. Through learning of the characteristics and features of social justice advocates, and specifically the influential experiences that led them to their social justice interests and beliefs, schools of social work will become better informed to target, recruit, and engage the next generation of social justice advocacy practitioners.

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological methodology and the findings of this study will ensure that oppression can be fought by people eminently qualified to take on the challenge – those with a social work education. This will also assist the profession of social work to stay connected to its social justice roots rather than continue on a potential path toward a psychotherapeutic vacuum that often abandons the principles of social justice. Schools of social work being able to better ensure student congruence with social work values secures the future of the profession. In the phenomenological tradition that dates to its founding, this dissertation is written in the first-person (Findlay, 2012).

My Own Journey to Social Justice Advocacy

When I was eight years old I first noticed political campaign lawn signs appearing in front yards as I navigated my neighborhood by bicycle. Undoubtedly this had happened in previous summers, but this year, the summer of 1984, they captured my imagination. It turned out there was an upcoming Democratic Primary election for the local state representative district. I knew none of those details at that time, but I was suddenly preoccupied with those intriguing signs planted along my bike route. Recognizing this, my family took this as an opportunity to

expand my childhood horizons. The incumbent candidate was a distant acquaintance of my grandmother, and with the support of my parents I found myself holding one of those colorful signs, blue and white as I remember, in front of a nearby Election Day polling station. I was only a few blocks from my house, but I was entering a new world.

On that Election Day I was joined by someone from the opposing campaign. He was wearing a tie and gray tweed sport jacket, and engaged me in a conversation. He asked many friendly, kid-oriented questions: What is my favorite subject in school? What sports do I play? What is my favorite baseball team? I liked him. After about an hour together he shook my hand, told me it was nice to meet me, and said he had to go to a different voting location. I was sad to see my new friend leave and he never had even said his name – so I asked him. He told me, and then I watched him drive off to the more distant horizon of another polling place. I recognized his name because I had seen it on those colorful lawn signs all summer. He was the opponent of the candidate for whose sign I held. As I stood there I remember asking myself "why am I holding this lady's sign? I like that guy." My new friend was to win that election and go on to serve in the state legislature for five terms, then advance to holding state-wide office. Later he became a national leader in advancing progressive policy – such as increased voting accessibility for all people. He was an organizer at heart and a ferocious campaigner. The hour we spent together on that summer afternoon influenced the trajectory of my life.

Through my years I became a leading progressive organizer, and subsequently an elected leader, in that same hometown. Along this path, I was introduced to many activist contemporaries, and together we worked tirelessly on countless progressive endeavors. I was in the organizing trenches – stuffing envelopes in living rooms, phone banking from campaign offices, neighborhood canvassing coordinated out of garages – with people from all aspects of

life. We worked with, and learned from, each other. There were veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and also conscientious objectors. There were civil servants, college professors, and health care professionals. There were union members and unions leaders. While some of these compatriots were social workers, most were not. Each had their own style and perspective, and each had arrived to the same place, as advocates for social justice, taking entirely different routes.

Eventually I was to become a social worker. It was at this time that I first began to see the clinical versus advocacy divide within the field. In my MSW cohort, many of my classmates were wholly uninterested in advocacy practice. They questioned the appropriateness of macro style advocacy work within the social work profession. My collegiate colleagues were interested in being clinicians and they viewed social work as a clinical field. When presented with advocacy education they were not necessarily opposed – they were simply uninterested. For a number of years I pondered this. Perhaps my colleagues had never been an eight-year-old child holding a colorful sign on an election day; perhaps they had never encountered progressive advocacy efforts; perhaps they had never been captivated by the intrinsic beauty of this work and its results. Instead, their world views were formed in a direct practice universe that was born from their own, unique, life experiences.

This is the genesis of my dissertation study. If others who advocate for social justice have had influential experiences like mine, then what are the commonalities among these experiences? This dissertation endeavors to learn of the personal and meaningful experiences that contribute to the development of social justice advocates. In gaining knowledge of these individual experiences, common themes were gleaned. My hope is that schools of social work will be able to utilize these themes in identifying prospective students whose world views are in

harmony with the profession of social work. As a result, schools of social work will be better able to engage social justice advocates of the future, and arm these individuals with important social work skills that will enhance their social justice practices. Ultimately, underprivileged and underserved populations will gain from an increase in social justice practitioners who are equipped with social work competencies.

Research Question

This study aims to uncover the answer to the following question: what are the key developmental experiences that lead people to engage specifically or exclusively in social justice advocacy? To discover this answer, this research ventures to learn of the seminal lived experiences which compelled social justice advocates to their practice. The answer to this question is particularly critical to the profession of social work due to its increasing trend away from its social justice tenets and history. By the identification of common themes, schools of social work can become further adept at identifying and recruiting burgeoning social justice advocates into the social work profession.

Precursors to social work education play a vital role in the development of student values (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013; Seipel, Walton, & Johnson, 2011). Research has shown that many social work students have psychotherapeutic leanings (D'Aprix et al., 2004; Fogel & Ersing, 2016; Weiss, 2006). Commensurately, this is a view that is predominately shared by schools of social work (Funge, 2011; Lane, 2011; Regehr et al., 2012). This perspective is different than those predisposed towards social justice advocacy. An abundance of research points to this as a gulf within the field of social work.

Research has examined the growing divide between social workers with primarily clinical proclivities and those with a greater focus on social activism (Andrews & Reisch, 1997;

D'Aprix et al., 2004; Gil, 1998; Weiss, 2006). This separation was famously depicted in Specht and Courtney's (1994) review of social work as an increasingly Faustian profession, they termed as *Unfaithful Angels*. Social workers who are chiefly clinicians, and social workers who are principally advocates for social justice, both do the work of angels in that they are providing skilled assistance to people in need.

As the field is overwhelmed by students with homologous direct practice desires, however, the profession becomes increasingly detached from its progressive, social justice DNA. Research has shown that school of social work applicants' personal attributes can determine their compatibility with the social work profession (D'Aprix, et al., 2004; GlenMaye & Oakes, 2002). Swank (2012) identified such an attribute as individuals who maintain an identity, and corresponding world view, that compels them to question authority. This dissertation aims to learn more about people who have social justice advocacy within their internal makeup. Through this research of social justice advocates' development, common themes emerged and schools of social work will be able to utilize the findings of this research to better identify, and recruit, the next generation of social justice advocates to social work education.

Definitions of Important Terms

Social justice: Equity in society

Social justice remains a foundational value of all social work (NASW, Social Justice, 2016). In fact, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) identifies social justice as a core value of social work education that is to be part of all accredited programs (CSWE, 2015). Their 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards maintain nine competencies. These competencies charge students of social work to participate in social justice advocacy practice (CSWE, 2015). Competency five compels social work students to advocate for public policies

that advance social justice causes (CSWE, 2015). Social justice is the substratum which lies beneath the many fertile fields of social work practice. Though Humphries (2008) states that social justice is an imprecise concept, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) offers a definitive definition. They state that “social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Social workers aim to open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone, particularly those in greatest need” (“NASW, Social Justice,” 2016).

The social work profession was established on the premise of social change (“NASW, Advocacy,” 2016). Social change is in a constantly dynamic state. Progress within the arena of social justice occurs as people advocate for increasing access to equality, rights, and opportunities. This is not something that is achieved in absolute terms. Munger, MacLeod and Loomis (2016) report that social justice, itself, “remains largely undertheorized” (p. 172). Torres-Harding, Siers and Olson (2012) report that various definitions of social justice frequently include individual values, access to resources, and power. Reisch and Gavin (2016) state that the environmental forces which produce fairness or inequality are dynamic; therefore, it is important to view social justice as an ongoing process.

Fietzer and Ponterotto (2015) report that a commonality among the various definitions of social justice includes disadvantaged societal groups gaining increased equity. Respect, recognition and empathy influence the social justice process (Theoharis, 2007). Social justice definitions emphasize relationships among people, and the societal responsibilities they are assigned (Gasker & Fisher, 2014). Torres-Harding et al. (2012) identify that social justice can be advanced through the empowering of customarily disenfranchised groups of people. Progressive Era President Warren G. Harding’s 1921 appeal for social justice to the people of Birmingham,

Alabama, is an example of this when he promoted "economic equality between the races…let the black man vote when he is fit to vote; prohibit the white man from voting when he is unfit to vote" (Dean, 2004, p.126). David Miller (1976) describes social justice as concerning the dissemination of social advantages and encumbrances within a society.

O'Brien (2011) points to a definition that includes equality of treatment, access, rights, and opportunities. Crethar, Torres Rivera, and Nash (2011) diagram social justice in four segments: equity, access, participation, and harmony. Equity regards the even-handed dispersal of resources, social accountability, and personal hegemony (Crethar et al., 2011). Access regards a belief in universal fairness in accessibility of resources that lead to self-actualization (Crethar et al., 2011). Participation regards all people having the right to influence societal decisions (Crethar et al., 2011). Harmony regards the rights of individuals within the environment of society as a whole (Crethar et al., 2011). For the purpose of this research, social justice will be defined as the equal sharing of society's responsibilities – both boons and burdens – in individual and community contexts.

Advocacy: People-in-environment

While acknowledging that advocacy has many facets, Spicuzza (2003) defines advocacy as stakeholder involved actions designed to address inequitable policies, and the unresponsive organizations which make them. Spicuzza (2003) stresses that advocacy occurs as a counterbalance to undue systems and/or close-ended organizations. He illuminates that advocating for change requires the advocate to question his/her social surroundings, and to focus on teamwork through alliance building (Spicuzza, 2003). Injustice is a chameleon; Reisch and Gavin (2016) state that it changes in appearance within the context it is found. Therefore, advocating for social justice is akin to aiming for a moving target. Also, Fietzer and Ponterotto

(2015) include that advocacy is tied to taking proactive action. Spicuzza (2003) describes an advocate as someone who has leadership skills, rather than a follower or a zealot. This draws a distinct difference between advocacy and fanaticism.

Fietzer and Ponterotto (2015) defined advocacy as an undertaking that promotes changes in the manner in which disadvantaged groups are treated. As part of her dissertation in which she developed a social justice advocacy scale, Dean (2009) summarized advocacy as actions that target empowering individuals and promote social change. Hope is the engine that drives advocacy. Advocates are people who travail to alleviate suffering that is rooted in inequality. For the purpose of this research, advocacy will be defined as systematic truth-to-power actions designed to open access to unjust systems.

There is a much-identified divide within the social work profession, where clinicians and macro practitioners are perceived to be fighting different battles. In chapter two of this dissertation the historical aspects of an increasingly fragmented social work profession are examined. Within this fissuring, the lexicon can be used as a tool of division. The person-in-environment view has long been a hallmark of all aspects of social work practice. This view, with its emphasis on the individual person, can connote a direct practice perspective. For the social justice advocate, a more apt description of practice may be people-in-environment. Viewing social work practice in this manner invites a vision of plurality. A Freirian practitioner, for example, would move “beyond individual consciousness raising and empowerment to broader group transformation and action” (Carroll & Minkler, 2000, p. 27). Kam (2014) adopts a similar sentiment by stating that in addition to aiding people to live better within the confines of society, social workers must be committed to changing society to make it better for the people who live within it.

Lane (2011) studied social workers who have been elected to public office, and explains that these are practitioners in a position to make policies that advance social justice for entire populations. These are people-in-environment approaches, where the emphasis is on how the environment affects all people, rather than focusing only on the environment's effect on individuals. Advocacy is needed to increase awareness of different forms of injustice and its extended social ramifications (Kam, 2014). Social justice is advanced through this advocacy lens.

Oppression: Scarcity of contemporary interest and knowledge

The United States of America was founded on the bedrock of social justice, dating to the fight against taxation without representation. The profession of social work was also founded on principles of social justice, dating to Jane Addams' Settlement House Movement. The advocacy for social justice exists within the framework of oppression. If societies did not house oppressed populations there would not be the need to advocate for their social justice. When viewing oppression on this grand of a scale, it naturally does not occur in a one-size-fits-all form.

Reisch and Gavin's (2016) description of oppression's changing visage concurs with Dermer, Smith, and Barto's (2010) description that oppression has many faces, which can make it difficult to recognize. Oppression is about power and challenges related to accessing resources. Often, those estranged from societal benefits are blamed for their own acquiescence. Dating at least to the 1920s, there has been concern for this sentiment pervading social work practice (Abramovitz, 1998). Allen (2008) cautions those who take such a condescending view. "The implication is that the oppressed are to blame for their own oppression and, what is worse, they are too stupid to realize what they are doing" (Allen, 2008, p. 51). In strong terms, Allen (2008) shares her perspective that many oppression theorists can actually fall in line with an

establishment perspective; thereby, implicitly, and likely unintentionally, they are preserving a tenet of oppression. This exemplifies the many faces oppression has: the cycle of oppression can be perpetuated by the study of oppression.

Dermer et al. (2010) share a definition of oppression that is non-accusatory of either the oppressors or the oppressed. Oppression is the use of power to significantly restrict individual and group access to liberty (Dermer et al., 2010). Oppression can occur methodically through the systematic inclusion of discrimination and prejudice within major societal institutions (Dermer et al., 2010). It can then continue when these conventions go unquestioned (Windsor, Shorkey & Battle, 2015). Oppression also can include threats of the removal of liberty from the less enfranchised population (Dermer et al., 2010). For the purpose of this research, oppression will be defined as the exercising of power to limit individual or group access to social resources.

Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) identify, however, that there is a dearth of modern interest with regards to social workers practicing social justice today. They identify that there is scant research on social work student participation in social activism (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Through their work they cite multiple examples of social work students more often seeking paths to direct practice than to macro practice. Their study aspired to learn of the characteristics of social work students through surveying a cohort at their entrance to social work study (n=255) and again at their conclusion (n=160) (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) found that the sub-section of students with the strongest leaning towards social and political activism were those who identified as radical. Their study concluded that schools of social work must balance applicant economic interest – often seen as a desire to quickly gain a psychotherapeutic credential – with the social work profession’s value of social justice in order to ensure that an applicant is a good fit with the profession (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013; D’Aprix et al., 2004).

Other research has identified a scarcity of knowledge regarding social work's increasing leanings towards direct practice and the weakening of social work practice that targets progressing social justice (Kam, 2014). Kam (2014) describes this trend of clinical dominance as the "therapeutization of social work" (p. 727). This trend is supported by the high popularity of clinically focused courses at schools of social work (Kam, 2014). Kam (2014) identifies that social work students are attracted to the field based on their ambitions to be therapists, rather than desires to advance social justice. Kam (2014) posits that the social, or community, aspects of social work have been shelved for direct practice methods.

Government is needed to endorse many of the roles social workers play. A trickle-down effect of this marriage is that social workers can be co-opted by the economic and social establishment views (Kam, 2014). In the book *Radical Social Work*, contributing author Crescy Cannan explains that it is the responsibility of social workers to challenge existing power structures. Cannan (1975) states this is accomplished by diverting power from an existing establishment towards populations served by social workers. It is ironic that Cannan's views were published under the title of radical in the 1970s, when considering that similar sentiment was expressed by an American President two decades earlier. Dwight D. Eisenhower gave a précis summary for the importance of advocating on behalf of the oppressed – in this case for the poor and hungry over what he would later coin as the military industrial complex. "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed" (Smith, 2012, p.550). When the notion of diverting resources to the underprivileged is promoted by a social worker the message is viewed as radical social work practice; however, when it is endorsed by a five-star

war general and president, it is viewed very differently. This identifies how the fight against oppression has been radicalized – or marginalized – within society.

Advocating for social justice historically has been practiced by social workers who are perforce obligated through their commitment to the social work profession to work towards this goal ("NASW, Advocacy," 2016; "NASW, Social Justice," 2016). The trend, however, has been to move away from this social justice advocacy work as both students of social work, and schools of social work, have fixed their sight on direct clinical practice. Historically, social workers have been at the forefront of social justice progress. As more social workers choose the path of psychotherapy, advocating for social justice is increasingly practiced by people who do not have social work training.

Social justice activism: Challenging the status quo

Hays, Arredondo, Gladding, and Toporek (2010) link the short distance between social justice and activism. They state that when viewing social issues from the perspective of social justice, individual change is most effective when taking place as part of changes within society at large (Hays et al., 2010). Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) performed research designed to learn more of MSW student feelings towards activism. In doing so, they devised a measurement for social activism. They divided social activism into four distinct parts. First, political activism was defined as forms of lobbying before government officials (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Second, electoral activism was elucidated as candidate and/or issue driven campaign involvement (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Third, community focused activism was explained as organizing to influence civic affairs and/or playing an active role in such an organization (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Fourth, social action was defined as participating in protest activities (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013).

Fiorito, Gall and Martinez (2010) propose that an activist makeup is essential for one who challenges the status quo. They reference a major barrier to the intractable activist as the fact that activist efforts do not usually produce immediate financial gain (Fiorito et al., 2010). In the absence of financial gain, it can be difficult for activists of any kind – including social justice advocates – to dedicate the time necessary to see an endeavor through. They do state, however, that the fruits of their efforts can result in political rewards, and self-actualization, which can serve to counterbalance this work's financial impediments (Fiorito et al., 2010). They identify that someone of this ilk – an activist who desires to challenge the status quo and is able to overcome society's obstructions to do so – possesses a willingness to participate in organizing activities (Fiorito et al., 2010). For the purpose of this research, activism will be defined as an individual participating with others as an instrument of social change. An activist is internally compelled to endeavor in these pursuits throughout the course of their life. This activist motivation can counterpoise social impediments, which can include limited time, inconvenient hours, peer perceptions, and financial challenges.

Limitations and Delimitations

A distinguishing characteristic of qualitative research is that the researchers are simultaneously "judges and stakeholders" (De la Cuesta Benjumea, 2015, p. 886). This reality opens the door for countless opportunities of researcher bias. Allowing researcher bias to influence my research would limit the value of the findings, in addition to being a disservice to the research participants. The application of a qualitative memo system, also known as bracketing, will help identify, and limit, researcher bias (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2008; Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy & Sixsmith, 2013). I consistently used a memo system throughout the data collection and data analysis process. By doing so, it is my hope that I was

able to successfully extricate my biases from the research and its analysis. As a way of adding rigor to the research there is an audit trail of all research work. This included a memo system to organize my thoughts, ideas, and reactions to research data, and provided me with an opportunity to have an ongoing dialogue with the transcribed data throughout the analysis process. In addition, memoing served as a means to identify and separate my own biases from the research findings.

De la Cuesta Benjumea (2015), Gentles, Charles, Ploeg and McKibbon (2015) and Nichols (2009) report that sampling should be based upon what the researcher desires to learn. I recruited the purposive sample from a pool of potential participants that I am familiar with in order to gain an understanding in which depth, rather than breadth, is achieved. This can play a pivotal role in assuring that participants have a high level of comfort while engaging in the question and answer process that makes up the research interview. As in all forms of social work practice – micro, mezzo, macro, research – there is a strong correlation between the participant's level of comfort and level of honesty. Informal, unstructured interviews were be used, and I became a student of the experiences of the research participants. McIntosh and Morse (2009) report that this is the most frequently utilized form of qualitative data collection. The hope was that these purposeful conversations would yield rich and meaningful data around the events and relationships that led participants to social justice advocacy efforts.

One potential limitation of interviewing participants who I am familiar with is the potential for social desirability due to the researcher-participant social familiarity. This was addressed through the use of a multi-layered memoing system. In addition, I conveyed to the participants that their identities would remain confidential and that they are not being personally identified or judged based upon their responses. There is a true desire to understand the impact

of life events on decisions to become interested in social justice to the extent that it becomes a focus of one's life. This study followed Barry University's Institutional Review Board's procedures to protect participant confidentiality; thereby, all participants can have confidence that their participation in this study, and the corresponding information they share, will remain confidential, and that names and identifying information will be changed to protect their identities.

Summary

Social work has a longstanding progressive tradition. This dates to the inception of the profession which occurred in the midst of the American Progressive Era. In more recent decades the focal point of social work has shifted away from progressive efforts aimed at assisting the oppressed to a person-in-environment clinical creed. While there is much research regarding this professional predicament, a gap in the literature exists on how to effectively address it. I hope to fill this gap by examining the development of contemporary practitioners of social justice advocacy. By identifying the common themes which drew these respondents to social justice advocacy practice, schools of social work will be informed of how to best draw the next generation of likeminded change agents into the profession of social work. This study begins with a review of the extant literature.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

History and Background of Social Work's Unapologetic Progressive History

Social work's history has been characterized by social activism that has favored liberal reform where efforts left-leaning reform activists work to advance social justice (Abramovitz, 1998). McCloskey (2016) describes the term liberal as regarding legal and social equality. Brazilian educator Paolo Freire, in a speech given at the 1998 Social Workers World Conference, stated that progressive beliefs were paramount in social work practice (Freire, 1990). He said that progressive social workers must have a "progressive obsession" that guides their daily work (Freire, 1990, p. 7). This progressive lineage can be traced to the roots of the social work profession. From its beginning, social work has endeavored to aid those in economic need (Schachter, 2014).

The Settlement House Movement and Charity Organization Societies began in the nineteenth century (Gil, 1998). Charity Organization Societies were less political – employed social workers who stayed out of the fray of advocacy – while providing direct services to their clientele (Gil, 1998). Settlement House workers, on the other hand, simultaneously provided social services and advocated for social reforms (Gil, 1998); they were identified as social justice advocates. While both groups had their distinct differences, together they were the provenance of the social work profession. Participants in the Settlement House Movement were aware that people's traits and features were largely influenced by their social environments; specifically, social norms, economics, and cultural values (Gil, 1998).

Bertha Capen Reynolds (1991) stated that the acceptance of America's class system is part of social work practice. Jane Addams identified that there were two Americas: one

consisting of the upper class, the other consisting of the working class (McGerr, 2003). Each had its own social environment. The upper class was branded by entertainment, divorces, and indulgence, while the working class toiled in slums and saloons (McGerr, 2003). During America's Gilded Age, these distinct classes, and their associated cultures, existed with increasing economic conflict (McGerr, 2003). While individualism was an upper class trait, Addams and her peers subscribed to a form of association that required people to cross class boundaries (McGerr, 2003). The class system imbedded in the Gilded Age's social structure was supported by individualism, and served to keep people apart. The notion of association treated the existing class system as little more than a social veneer – challenging citizens to instead interact with each other across class lines.

Cross class interactions can be a tacit method to break social boundaries, and advance social justice. An overt example of this took place in Birmingham, Alabama. Henry Edmonds, clergyman and doctor, established Independent Presbyterian in 1915; "service to humanity" was listed as one of its top priorities (Flynt, 1977, p. 269). Services were held from 1915 – 1925 in the city's Lyric Theater, and included representation from different segments of that day's culture: blacks (who sat in a segregated balcony), prostitutes, gamblers, and the poor (Flynt, 1977). Edmonds' work was advancing social justice in a socially divided city.

A covert example of association, identified by Jane Addams, was baseball. She observed that baseball transcended the urban social structures designed to keep people apart by bringing fans together in a class-blind communal fashion (McGerr, 2003). Oppression has many different appearances – both obvious and subtle. As the Gilded Age gave way to the Progressive Era, advocates for social justice were recognizing an intervention to combat oppression as association.

The principle of association has been a pillar of social work since the profession's beginnings. At the heart of association is "social solidarity with others" (McGerr, 2003, p. 67). This form of solidarity was exemplified by New York City's Henry Street Settlement, whose mission was "to expand residents' sense of connection to a larger history and social inheritance" (Chen, 2013, p. 768). One means utilized by the Henry Street Settlement was the creation of a community playhouse that catered to the wide variety of cultures living in New York City's Lower East Side in the early twentieth century (Chen, 2013). They used their playhouse as a way of bringing people from all segments of society together. In doing so, this represented an example of association in action.

The antithesis to the idea of association is individualism, which the direct practice emphasis that has overtaken the profession of social work may be a remnant of. It is presumed that people with the financial resources to pay for private practice, individual sessions are not those most in need of aid (D'Aprix et al., 2004). Individualism has become aligned with a problem-diagnosis mentality, where people are viewed as items rather than constituents (Pozzuto & Arnd-Caddigan, 2008). Items do not have solidarity with one another – constituents do. This represents the obverse to social work assisting the poor and the oppressed to obtain greater social justice; therefore, a singular focus on individualism is in opposition to social work's progressive, social justice, tradition. Supporting Specht and Courtney (1994), this represents an example of social work losing its way. In fact, in D'Aprix et al.'s (2004) qualitative study of MSW student career aspirations, only one participant even identified a desire to work with oppressed people.

Another way to remedy the social ills of a community, a region, a state, or even the nation, was through participation in progressive minded government sponsored reforms designed to increase social justice. Karger and Stoesz (2002) describe the Progressive Era as a time when

educated people created social apparatuses designed to advance social justice. Many social workers were progressives, including Jane Addams (Keyssar, 2000; McGerr, 2005; Rogers, 1982). By the Civil War, white male suffrage was effectively ubiquitous, but women were still facing wide-spread voter oppression until many decades later (Wilentz, 1992). At the 1906 National American Woman Suffrage Association Addams spoke in support of social justice causes including women's suffrage, obligatory education and child labor laws (Keyssar, 2000).

Members of the Settlement Movement had a keen awareness of injustice and believed its genesis could be found in established institutions (Gil, 1998). They believed that the effective response to social injustice resided within an active government (Gil, 1998). An example of this can be found in the efforts of social worker Alice Paul, who was a leader in advocating for a constitutional amendment to secure women's suffrage (Allen, 1958; Keyssar, 2000). This is where the dawn of social work intersects with the Progressive Era – and together they promoted Progressive Movement reforms (Hrostowski, 2013; Gil, 1998).

Social work has been intertwined with the Progressive Movement since its beginnings (Gil, 1998; Murdach, 2010; Talbot & McMillin, 2014). One example of their common interests was their shared support of labor unions (Chen, 2013; Rosenberg & Rosenberg 2006). Murdach (2010) explains how social work has maintained a focus on "poverty, the welfare of children and families, unemployment, discrimination, and social justice" (p. 82). Gil (1998) states that the Progressive Movement, very similarly, included a focus on "public health, public housing, urban parks, women's suffrage, consumer protections, labor and child labor legislation" (p. 80). Their shared goal was to ameliorate multiple forms of oppression through the advocacy of social justice reforms for a natural partnership.

Social workers, and progressive movement activists, were often times one and the same. Both groups believed in government's valued role in aiding marginalized communities to obtain increased social justice. Perhaps the most famous pinnacle of this historical intersection was during the 1912 Progressive Party's National Convention when Jane Addams gave a seconding speech supporting the nomination of Progressive Party Presidential Candidate Theodore Roosevelt (Murdach, 2010). Addam's speaking at this national convention identifies the strong association shared between social work and the progressive movement.

The dust bowl and urban poverty of the Great Depression garnered the attention of social workers. This was a time when social divides between classes were acutely evident. Class divisions – the separation between what Alinsky (1971) termed the haves and the have-nots – can be a cultivator of oppression. Alinsky is building upon the Marxist perspective that identifies a dominant social class that is fixed on perpetuating its command (Berberoglu, 2015). He defines these classes within the arena of power, by describing one class of people, the haves, as being obsessed with maintaining authority, while the other class, the have-nots, as wanting to gain it (Alinsky, 1971). It was during this combustible time that many social workers focused their objectives towards social reforms (Gil, 1998).

Working together, social workers and progressives advanced worker's compensation laws on the state level, and eventually The Social Security Act of 1935 on the federal level (Gil, 1998). Championing the New Deal, and many of its associated progressive reforms, were FDR's close advisors, social workers Harry Hopkins and Frances Perkins, who was the first woman to serve in a Presidential Cabinet as the Secretary of Labor (Burnier, 2008; Cupaiuolo, 2001; Goldberg, 2012). These were two examples of measures which served as a defense against economic oppression faced by many working families. It was during the Great Depression that

economic stability achieved through government sponsored interventions became commonplace (Gil, 1998). As stated by Dermer et al. (2010) and Reisch and Gavin (2016) oppression is multifaceted. Those pushed to society's margins face oppression, and so too, do the people who advocate for them.

The Oppression of Social Justice Advocates

Hegar (2012) argued that "social work has been generally unreceptive to radical voices" (p. 169). This propensity has a century-old history. Many social justice advocates were oppressed during the Red Scare of the early twentieth century (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). Those pursuing radical minded citizens during this time included a former progressive, the Wilson Administration United States Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer (Fraser, 2015). During World War I, many years before being awarded the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize, Jane Addams was labeled a "Bolshevik" because she advocated for peace (McGerr, 2005; Misztal, 2009). In 1919, the United States War Department placed her name first on a list of sixty-two people they identified as anarchists (McGerr, 2005). The Spider Web Conspiracy and the New York Legislature's Lusk Committee were utilized, in part, as attacks on the efforts of social work leaders and left a public legacy of perceiving social workers as insurrectionaries (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). In these examples, social justice advocates were facing oppression from the highest levels of American government.

The Rank and File Movement consisted of social justice activists who did not believe that New Deal reforms went far enough – they viewed these reforms as serving to protect capitalist institutions rather than to change them (Gil, 1998). Bertha Capen Reynolds was an Associate Director at the Smith College School of Social Work. She was also a supporter of the Rank and File Movement and she was forced to resign her post due to her activism (Gil, 1998; Reisch &

Andrews, 2001). Through the mid-twentieth century many social workers were fired from employment due to their support of issues that were publicly framed as radical ideology (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). Also during this time, the FBI investigated many social workers based upon their ties to leftist organizations (Andrews & Reisch, 1997). This included University of Connecticut social work faculty who were eventually pressured to resign following an FBI investigation into possible communist sympathies (Andrews & Reisch, 1997).

The oppression of social workers who worked to advance social justice did not always come from outside of the profession. Social work, itself, has a long history of oppressing its own social justice workers. Social worker Jacob Fisher supported many radical organizations, including the 1930's Rank and File Movement (Andrews & Reisch, 1997). In the 1950s he was ostracized by the social work community and eventually driven from the profession (Andrews & Reisch, 1997). Due to her political positions, the National Conference of Social Work did not permit Bertha Capen Reynolds at its 1953 convention (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). For many years Sophinisba Breckenridge was an activist leader within the radical social work community. She was treasurer of the Women's Peace Party in 1915, and later was a promoter of women in industry, and advocated for expanded national welfare (Andrews & Reisch, 1997). However, a former student of hers recalls that in the 1930s Breckenridge dissuaded her from pursuing a social work education in group work, as it was considered too politically involved (Reisch & Andrews, 2001).

Resulting from the attacks on the profession which put their employment at risk – attacks from both outside and from within – many social workers became reticent to advocating for social justice reforms (Andrews & Reisch, 1997). Without being era specific, Hrostowski (2013) writes that social workers are often labeled radicals due to their endeavors in support of those

disenfranchised by society. These characterizations can be used to stigmatize social workers, the populations they work with, and the efforts made by both. The suppression of social workers reflected the oppression of society as a whole (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). In this way both social workers who practice social justice advocacy, and the populations they advocate for, share a critical consciousness.

Trends in Current Literature

Psychotherapeutic leanings: Students of social work

Seiz and Schwab (1992) identify a longstanding schism within the field of social work regarding the branches of advocacy practice and direct clinical practice. Studies, including Weiss (2006), found that considerably more social work students were interested in direct practice than macro practice. D'Aprix et al. (2004) found that in a study of three different MSW programs a vast majority of students had a clinical interest. D'Aprix et al.'s (2004) study included a qualitative examination of the actual values of social work students (n=23). They identified that many students selected the social work profession because they viewed an MSW as an easier path to psychotherapy than a clinical psychology PhD (D'Aprix et al., 2004). Social work professor Ernest Greenwood (1957), however, stated that professions must dictate their policies of practice to their clients; therefore, the action potential of social work practice should travel from schools of social work to their prospective applicants; this should not happen in reverse.

D'Aprix et al. (2004) also found that students viewed clinically-based course work and clinical field study to be most practical for their futures. Most study subjects justified direct practice as being congruent with social work values by adopting a view that to some degree all people are disadvantaged (D'Aprix et al., 2004). In this manner, everyone can be qualified as

facing oppression. Based upon this work, D'Aprix et al. (2004) conclude that the goals of many United States MSW students could be incongruent with the social work value of social justice.

The trend towards clinical practice has ripple effects beyond the bachelor's and master's level of study. Fogel and Ersing (2016) researched macro focused social work doctoral dissertations (see Figure One). They were able to ascertain that between 2000 – 2009, an average of 466 social work dissertations were awarded per year and the average number of awarded macro dissertations per year was only thirty-seven (Fogel & Ersing, 2016).

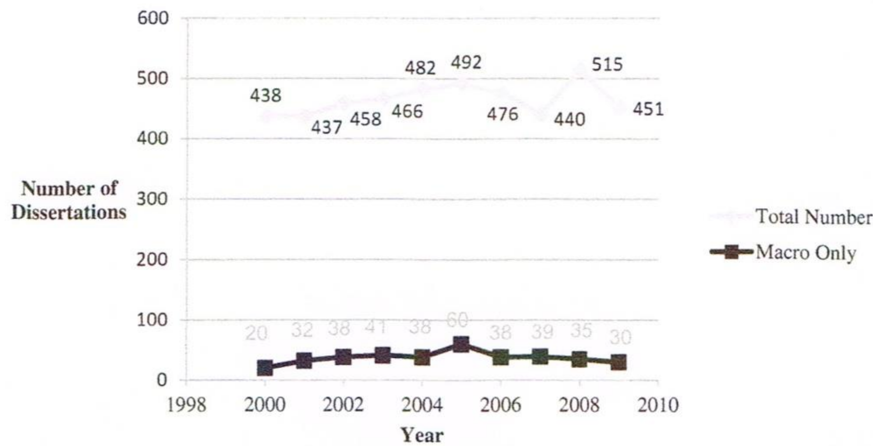

Figure 1

(Fogel & Ersing, 2016)

Doctoral students choose a topic of study about which they are passionate; therefore, a cause and effect relationship can be logically drawn between the overwhelming direct practice interests of school of social work applicants at the BSW and MSW level, and the lack of doctoral trained macro social work practitioners (Fogel & Ersing, 2016). "This should raise an alarm for us all, for a significant proportion of social work knowledge and practice skills has the potential to be severely underdeveloped and, at worst, missing in the future" (Fogel & Ersing, 2016, p. 176). As the social work paradigm has leaned towards direct practice, it is more and more

essential to learn what ignites the flame of passion among advocates of social justice in an effort to better attract them to the profession.

Psychotherapeutic leanings: Schools of social work

Paulo Freire believed that schools were institutional sources of oppression in that they served to perpetuate existing systems of inequality (Freire, 1970; Turner & Maschi, 2015). He saw that school curriculums excluded topics related to the obstructions marginalized populations faced within society (Turner & Maschi, 2015). As a result, students were not gaining awareness of their cultural and political surroundings (Turner & Maschi, 2015). Schools of social work have become increasingly focused on engineering psychotherapeutic clinicians. Faculty with knowledge of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders often profess how students can be best skilled at assigning patient's accurate categorical diagnoses. This direct practice approach, which favors emphasizing client pathology, connotes an innate power differential which is sustained as students become clinicians. Contrary to this paradigm, Gates (2011) reports that social work education is most effective as a shared, two-way output between teacher and student.

Supporting the sentiment of Fogel and Ersing (2016), Bowen (2015) states the need for social work education to reinvest in macro practice areas. In stating this, she bridges the often-perceived gap between macro practice and clinical practice. She emphasizes how the work done in a direct practice setting is tied to community organization and policy practice (Bowen, 2015). Research, however, has shown that many direct practitioners, and school of social work professors, see this differently.

Funge (2011) researched social work faculty orientation towards social justice. He found that the study's participants questioned the relevance of social justice within their role as social

work professors (Funge, 2011). Funge (2011) summarizes these findings as an indicator that the educational pendulum within the field of social work has swung towards direct practice at the expense of social justice principles. O'Brien (2010) acknowledges that while contemporary direct practitioners often work to advance social justice for their clients, there is scant effort among them to advance far reaching social change. Regehr et al. (2012) identify another example of the disparities between clinical practice and macro work within social work. In this modern time of empirically-based research and measurable findings, they identify that while there are numerous tools to measure student competency at clinically-based field placements, there is not a widely accepted tool for measuring student competency at macro field placements (Regehr et al., 2012).

Lane (2011) cites numerous studies that show a scarcity of schools of social work with macro concentrations. Her research focused on social workers who held elected office (n=270) (Lane, 2011). She identified that the average time gap between earning a social work degree (BSW or MSW) and first running for public office was 12.5 years (Lane, 2011). This decade plus time frame suggests that social work education did not compel the studies' participants to engage in this form of civic action, and that any of an infinite amount of cogent life factors were instead the catalyst for candidacy.

Lane's (2011) research also identified the trend away from macro social work practice, as she found that 32% of elected social workers earned their social work degree in the seventies, while only 7% earned their degree since the millennium (Lane, 2011). She found that of all participants – regardless of the social era in which they earned their social work degree – more than a third of participants did not believe that their social work education satisfactorily prepared them for their venture into the campaigning and representing arena (Lane, 2011). Tacitly

identifying social work's bias towards direct practice, Lane (2011) is compelled to state that this form of macro practice is legitimate social work practice. She wrote that "practice in the political arena is a legitimate and important career pathway already accomplished by many distinguished members of the profession" (p. 67).

Consequences Associated with Social Work Drifting Away from Social Justice

Without its multiple sails lifted high, the profession of social work will be at the mercy of the prevailing tides. During mid-twentieth century McCarthysim, social work moved away from social activism (Andrews & Reisch, 1997). It was during this time that a consumer-driven economy shifted its focus from assisting the impoverished, to catering to those with means (Andrews & Reisch, 1997). Precursors to twenty-first century financial austerity can be found here. Decades later the years of the Reagan Administration represented a governing shift to the political right that led to new policies and a changing public lexicon. During this time, social workers began to view the profession being associated with a 'progressive' moniker as an indignity (Murdach, 2010). It was during this time that the profession became hyper focused on self-preservation (Murdach, 2010). This has corresponded with the field's increasing ties to the dogma of direct practice (D'Aprix et al., 2004; Gil, 1998; Weiss, 2006). The now decades-long lowering of social work's macro sail comes at a cost – with fewer social workers engaged in social justice advocacy practice oppression that invades entire social systems can go unchecked by social workers.

Social work's predilection towards direct clinical practice at the expense of macro/advocacy work is a significant departure from social justice practice (Specht & Courtney, 1994). In fact, Specht and Courtney (1994) argue "that social work has abandoned its mission to help the poor and oppressed and to build communality" (p. 4). While Specht and Courtney's

(1994) make a sweeping statement, it is true that a large portion of the profession has moved away from advocacy and social justice efforts. McLaughlin (2002) argues that this abandonment has been fueled by the wide-spread acceptance of psychotherapy as a favored form of practice.

Jani and Reisch (2011) identify that the dominant theoretical approaches which most influence social work are focused upon individual behaviors. These professional inclinations have displaced social worker activism, which influences societal change (Specht & Courtney, 1994). As a result, social activism has been moved to the periphery of social work's priority continuum. Social justice oriented social work puts the spotlight on the needs of society's disadvantaged and oppressed, and is practiced through the creation of supportive social environments (Specht & Courtney, 1994). This is different than psychotherapy, which has a much different value system.

The psychotherapeutic view maintains that individual's ills begin within that individual, and so, too, do individual's solutions (Specht & Courtney, 1994). Pointing to this stark contrast, Specht and Courtney (1994) argue that social workers who solely practice psychotherapy are not fulfilling the profession's mission. Because a commitment to social justice, rather than to psychotherapy, affects social work's future, it is essential that students who enter schools of social work have personal objectives that match social work's core values.

Research has identified that antecedents to social work education may be key in the development of student values (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013; Seipel et al., 2011). Schools of social work, however, can provide learning experiences that will reinforce social work values (DeRigne, Rosenwald, & Naranjo, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Gilligan (2007) states that "social work cannot be value free and those engaged within it need to be clear what values and ethics underpin their practices" (p. 756). School of social work applicants' personal attributes

can determine their compatibility with the social work profession. This is in contrast to emphasizing applicant evaluation based on antiseptic psychometric testing and grade point averages (Gibbons, Bore, Munro, & Powis, 2007; Seipel, et al., 2011).

D'Aprix et al. (2004) cite NASW and CSWE in defining core values of social work as including empowering oppressed populations. They endeavored to examine the "goodness of fit" between the values of new MSW students and the values of the social work profession (D'Aprix et al., 2004, p. 267). Similar research by GlenMaye and Oakes (2002) reviewed the importance of social work applicants and their "suitability" with the profession (p. 68). Taken together, scholars concur that it is necessary, and potentially critical to the mission of the profession, to seek out prospective students who share social work's core values prior to school enrollment (D'Aprix et al., 2004; GlenMaye & Oakes, 2002).

Keeping Social Justice in Social Work is a "Grand Challenge"

Based within the University of Maryland's School of Social Work, the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare has established the Grand Challenges for Social Work ("AASWSW, Grand Challenges," 2016). These challenges are designed to assist social work in tackling significant social issues ("AASWSW, Grand Challenges," 2016). The Grand Challenges include micro, mezzo, and macro related issues. One of the twelve Grand Challenges is the social justice issue of economic inequality ("AASWSW, Reduce Extreme Economic Inequality," 2016).

A working paper that is posted on the Grand Challenges web site delineates many ways that social workers can positively influence this topic ("AASWSW, Reduce Extreme Economic Inequality," 2016; Lein, Romich, & Sherraden, 2015). Extreme economic inequality is identified as having structural causes, and an area that requires social justice advocacy (Lein et al., 2015).

They point to social work's long history of identifying injustice, recommending innovations, and laboring to support social progress (Lein et al., 2015). Lein et al. (2015) support the role of social justice practice within the field of social work. Their current work also supports research findings that social work itself has become detached from social justice practice (D'Aprix et al., 2004; Fogel & Ersing, 2016; Funge, 2011; Lane, 2011; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Weiss, 2006): among the three authors of this social justice oriented Grand Challenge for Social Work working paper, only one, Sherradan, is actually a social worker ("Washington University in St. Louis," n.d.; "University of Michigan School of Social Work," 2016; "University of Washington," n.d.).

The Value of a Rebellious Framework: The Drive to Question Established Authority

Talo and Mannarini (2015) acknowledge that participation is a fluid concept. They describe that it is influenced by its environment (Talo & Mannarini, 2015). Since people often feel compelled to conform, it may take more than simply being aware of social justice for one to actually promote social change efforts (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996; Torres-Harding et al., 2012). Swank (2012) reviewed participation within the environment of social work students. He looked at how political participation among students of social work influences the emerging social worker's world view. He identified the value of a rebellious framework. Swank (2012) stated that most people build their self-identity, and their world view, through networks that support the prevailing social superstructure. He wrote, however, that there are some people whose self-identity, and world view, is gleaned from nexuses that view it necessary to question authority (Swank, 2012). Practitioners of social justice derive from networks that question the status quo. Achieving increased social justice can be a generations-long process, where uncomfortable questions that challenge social assumptions must be asked, so that sometimes tenuous social progress can be made (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). Many social justice advocates

are social workers, many are not. All social justice advocates challenge the status quo in an effort to further the cause of social justice.

Reisch and Andrews (2001) identify that an activist world view is essential to carrying out social work's mission, while lamenting that few social workers participate in political action. They identify a branch of social work, known as radical social work, as holding true to the profession's core values. Radical social workers view their work as being synonymous with ethical practice (Gilligan, 2007). Research by Reisch and Andrews (2001) explores catalyst events that led radical social workers to their form of practice. One visible theme was that the radical social workers who participated in this research were able to cite examples from their social surroundings which were key to their philosophical development (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). Many of their study's participants referenced the personal meaning they found while living in America's changing times of the 1960s, specifically involvement in the civil rights and anti-war movements; older generations of participants pointed to their experiences during the years of McCarthyism and the New Deal (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). In every case, the respondent's social environment, and their awareness of its inequalities, influenced their world view. In defining radical social work, Reisch and Andrews (2001) clearly state that there is not one definition that encompasses all aspects of practice. This is partly because radicalism, social work, and contemporary standards are in a constant state of change. One theme that appears to thread through all definitions is the percipient notion of a sentiment for justice.

The Development of a Social Justice Advocate

Among youth

In recognition of the value of organizing, this dissertation includes a review of possible precursors that could lead young people to a path of social justice advocacy. Quintelier (2008)

found that a child's voluntary involvement in organizations that have a goal of helping society lead to their increased engagement in politics. She explained that involvement in these organizations give youth opportunities to develop their views, participate in community organization, and practice leadership skills (Quintelier, 2008). She cautions that the scope of her study only included Belgians, and that her findings may not be generalizable to other nations (Quintelier, 2008). Taking this study's limitations into account, the findings still appear cogent to support crossing international borders.

Gordon and Taft's (2011) study of progressive teenage activists in the Americas has concurring findings. They determined that peer networks are a major contributing factor to these progressive teens' political involvement (Gordon & Taft, 2011). Their qualitative study takes a close examination of teen activists' rebellious framework, and an evident theme of their findings was that their study's participants held a keen awareness of oppression (Gordon & Taft, 2011). They found that there was an aversion to adult sponsored-youth civic organizations, and determined this was due to the participant's perception that these groups were designed to socialize youth to adult's societal norms (Gordon & Taft, 2011). Bañales (2013) deduced that "anti-adultist" views can enhance youth relationships that challenge power alliances and positively affect society (p. 6).

While student governments might seem like a bastion for young activists, Gordon and Taft (2011) found that this was not the case. They explain that many participants were in opposition to student government programs (Gordon & Taft, 2011). They found that participants saw student government as another form of adult sanctioned youth-activist-obedience-training that served to add distance between the activist (youth) and power (adults) (Gordon & Taft, 2011). In other words, student government was seen as a proprietor of oppression. Other youth

activist qualities identified by Gordon and Taft (2011) are humility and equality. Youth activists dismissed that their efforts made them special under the credence that all youth are capable of becoming activists.

Hays et al. (2010) identified that when viewing social issues through the lens of social justice, individual change is most effective when taking place as part of changes within society at large. This is supported by the youth activist research by Quintelier (2008) and van Wormer and Snyder (2007). On an individual level, Quintelier (2008) found that young peoples' voluntary participation in civic minded organizations increased their self-efficacy and political involvement. On a societal level, the value of youth activists' peer networks is supported by van Wormer and Synder's (2007) assertion that oppression cannot be mollified exclusively on a micro level. Instead, oppression can be effectively counteracted through collective actions on a macro level (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

During formative years, peer networks can betoken a willingness to participate in organizing activities that has been identified by Fiorito et al. (2010) as key to successful activism. These findings regarding the characteristics of youth activists – both their self determination to join civic minded groups and their willingness to organize – coalesces with social work's historical bifurcated mission. With a focus on the individual and the community, without abandoning either, the traits and features of youth activists may be an indicator that foreshadows their participation in social work's progressive sextant for the future.

Among adults

Events that influence the trajectory of one's life are not the sole domain of adolescence. These key moments can occur at all stages of life. Good (2010) researched educators who maintain a focus on social justice through their teaching. In doing so, he reviewed secondary

school teachers' experiences through a broader range of their life spans to learn of events that led to their commitment to social justice education. While Good's (2010) qualitative findings support a notion that youth experiences were critical in one's social justice development, he also found that numerous adult experiences were, in their own ways, equally salient.

The vast majority of people interviewed by Good (2010) shared stories of how oppression, whether experienced or witnessed, impacted their personal development. Among many themes, Good (2010) found that being exposed to social justice oriented contemporaries through friend networks – not necessarily through shared activism – was an influential introduction to the development of future social justice advocates. Another theme Good (2010) identified was how the development of social justice advocates was also influenced by work experiences. He shared examples where his study's participants recalled employment experiences which took place prior to becoming educators that were empowering, and also examples of when participants were able to recognize oppressive practices within their fields (Good, 2010). These opposite experiences both led to an increased awareness in social justice matters. The common thread of these experiences is that these are people who have been exposed to oppression and/or social justice. This identifies the paramount influence of one's personal window to the world. But, as Torres-Harding et al. (2012) remind, more may be required than merely gaining awareness of these realities for the development of a social justice advocate to initiate.

Among historically notable social justice leaders

There are countless examples of events that may have influenced the development of notable social justice advocates. Saul Alinsky biographer Sanford D. Horwitt (1992) reported that Alinsky, while in his mid-twenties and working in a prison, was "swept up by the

excitement" of the blue collar revolution represented by the Congress of Industrial Organization's (CIO) successes (p. 45). The CIO's successes were linked to their tactics. Perhaps CIO leader John L. Lewis's capturing of a young Alinksy's imagination was a seminal moment in Alinky's development as a working class organizer.

Feminist Reformer Elizabeth Cady Stanton's father was an attorney and judge who reportedly lamented Elizabeth not being a boy (Hymowitz & Weissman, 1978; McMillen, 2008). She recognized sexism as a child when she frequently witnessed her father explaining to female clients that there were no legal protections of female rights (Hymowitz & Weissman, 1978). Cady Stanton and her husband, abolitionist orator Henry Stanton, spent their honeymoon at the World Anti-Slavery Convention but while there Cady Stanton saw her husband give only partial protest to the exclusion of women from being delegates at the proceedings (Hymowitz & Weissman, 1978). Perhaps Cady Stanton's keen awareness of sexism was enhanced by these series of events, and propelled her to taking action to challenge the predominant, male dominated, social structure.

Social worker Bertha Capen Reynolds' field work brought her to South Boston tenement house neighborhoods, which she identified as "my introduction to the places where poor people had to live" (Reynolds, 1991, p. 41). Perhaps this experience, accompanied by social work educator Zilda Smith's Socratic guidance, helped raise Reynolds' awareness of the realities of American class structure (Reynolds, 1991). She later wrote that "the favored classes, learning to know their poor neighbors personally, could never thereafter be indifferent" (Reynolds, 1991, p. 44). For Capen Reynolds, this was an example of how action can be precipitated by increased awareness.

Albert Raboteau's (2016) *American Prophets* is a review of seven American social justice leaders' life histories. He identified a seminal experience for nine-year-old Dorothy Day that occurred long before she became a leader in the Catholic Worker Movement. Living in San Francisco, Day was affected by the 1906 earthquake's devastation, and also the community-wide kindness that was bestowed by her neighbors to the earthquake's victims (Raboteau, 2016). The headlines from the April 19, 1906, Los Angeles Times read that the "heart is torn from great city," but what Day reported she experienced was much different: "she never forgot the feeling of community and shared sacrifice with those in need" (Los Angeles Times, 1906; Raboteau, 2016, p. 65).

Civil Rights leader Howard Therman was born three years after *Plessy v. Ferguson*. But it was a six month trip through India and Burma at age thirty-six that was a stimulus for his social justice growth. During this time in the then-British colony of Ceylon, he was challenged to reconcile his own Christian faith with the Christians that brought slaves, traded slaves, and owned slaves in America. Therman explained how the words of Jesus, who was "a member of an oppressed and rejected minority," and the institution of the formal church have diverged (Raboteach, 2016, p. 105). "I make a careful distinction between Christianity and the religion of Jesus…I belong to a small minority of Christians who believe that society has to be completely reorganized in a very definite egalitarian sense" (Raboteach, 2016, p. 104). Raboteau (2016) points out that the question, however, haunted Therman for many years. This trip was influential in the coalescing of Therman's world view of the intrinsic interconnectedness of people (Raboteach, 2016).

Theoretical Framework: Oppression

Oppression's macro nature

A supposition of this research is that social justice advocates have an amplified awareness of what abolitionist John Brown referred to as the "odious yoke of oppression" (Reynolds, 2006, p. 302). Though oppression occurs in multidimensional forms, it is frequently structural. It is the recognition of this that drives people to practice social justice advocacy. Due to the macro nature of oppression, to be accurately examined it must be considered from multiple points of view. Therefore, research focused on a singular track, such as social psychology, is handicapped by its frequent distance from social realities (Zarate & Quezada, 2012). Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996) point out assiduous assessments of oppression occurring through interdisciplinary reviews.

In the Social Work Knowledge book series, Gil (1998) reviews the social realities of oppression in a Marxist framework. Marxist theory is the theoretical commencement of analyzing social phenomenon from the perspective of power and resistance (Renault, 2014). From a Marxist perspective, government is the supreme social authority – one that controls everything from money and taxation, to waging wars, to laws and imprisonment (Berberoglu, 2005). It is the dominating class that rules these social institutions through the use of government (Berberoglu, 2015). "Dominant classes of society establish and control political institutions to hold down the masses and assure their continued domination" (Berberoglu, 2015, p. 538).

Their social dominance is challenged by advocates for social justice who recognize these differences and question the righteousness of the dominant class's authority. Gonçalves (2016) describes this process: "depriving one from power makes one aware that such power exists, and

that it is worth fighting for – the ones who stab us are also giving us the knife in the process" (p. 242). Those who take the "knife" (sometimes represented by a pen, other times a demonstration) and use it as a tool to challenge dominant classes are advocates for social justice.

Gil (1998) notes that oppression occurs on different social levels and writes that oppression is a human relation that involves both domination and exploitation in social, psychological, and financial manners. He continues to describe oppressive societies as those where people fall into unequal groupings and where there is an uneven distribution of societal rights and responsibilities (Gil, 1998). To Gil, oppression is closely tied to the means by which people's access to crucial social conventions is limited.

Iris Marion Young (1990) explains that oppression is a dynamic word, which has been used in different ways over many centuries. She explains that there is a traditional use of the word which commonly references conquest and slavery (Young, 1990). She differentiates the traditional usage from a modern social usage, whereby oppression does not result from domination and coercion, but from often well-intentioned, accepted daily practices of a society. Young (1990) emphasizes that when reviewing oppression, learning of its roots does not tell the whole story. She separates realities of oppression from conjecture of an oppressor's possible motives. Oppression's causes are fixed in social power, social institutions, and social praxes being unchallenged (Young, 1990). In this way, oppression occurs when oppressed populations accept, rather than question, society's parameters.

Research by van Wormer and Snyder (2007) emphasize the macro nature of oppression by identifying that it cannot be mitigated one person at a time. Their research follows the Council on Social Work Education's 2003 revision of its *Handbook of Accreditation Standards and Procedures*. Van Wormer and Snyder (2007) note this revision as a significant change in

course for social work education. Formerly, schools of social work were required to offer schooling regarding distinct vulnerable populations; however, following the *Handbook's* 2003 revision, emphasis was shifted to general systems of oppression (van Wormer & Snyder, 2007). Viewing oppression in light of this new educational paradigm, and from the perspective of social work educators, oppression can be seen through the lens of institutions with exploitative cultural norms that deprive some in order to favor others (van Wormer & Snyder, 2007).

Oppression's structural inequalities

Dermer et al. (2010) emphasize social aspects in their definition of oppression. They state that oppression is the utilization of power to restrict individual or group rights and to unfairly alienate specific populations (Dermer et al., 2010). They further diagram oppression as being perpetuated by three distinct groups: primary oppression is executed by those with privilege; secondary oppression occurs when those who bear witness to the oppression of others remain silent; tertiary oppression ensues when a member of an oppressed group actively solicits the dominant group's acceptance at the expense of oppressed peers (Dermer et al., 2010). Whether from a primary, secondary, or tertiary perspective, Dermer et al. (2010) emphasize the aspects of social suppression in defining oppression.

The work of Dermer et al. (2010) is supported by the earlier research of Speer and Hughey (1995). They state that power differentials can result from three different methods, each of which supports the overall maintenance of a social system (Speer & Hughey, 1995). One cause of power differentials results from a barter system, where desired outcomes are traded to achieve often mutually exclusive goals (Speer & Hughey, 1995). Frequently, those with greater resources maintain their position in the social hierarchy through this method. A second cause of power differentials results from the construction of societal blockades to resources (Speer &

Hughey, 1995). In this case, those with greater control of resources can control the public dialogue; thereby, maintaining a sometimes subtle but always significant advantage. A third cause of power differentials is when the concept of power is viewed within existing paradigms because these paradigms will always favor the dominating class (Speer & Hughey, 1995).

Speer and Hughey (1995) view oppression as occurring on a trivariate social level. Their descriptions focus on various forms of transactions among social classes. Their work centers on the transmission of goods, information, and beliefs. They identify systematic safeguards that operate to keep the inequitable structural order intact. While similar in focus, Dermer et al. (2010) delineate oppression by recounting ways in which different social groups interact with other groups, and themselves. Both of these studies identify means in which the occurrence of oppression in built upon social inequalities. Building upon the framework described above, the following chapter identifies the research design and describes how the selected methodology is best suited to learn of the influential experiences of social justice advocates.

Chapter III

Methodology

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to learn of the seminal experiences in the development of social justice advocacy practitioners. This study endeavors to learn of the possible experiences, relationships, and life encounters that create a desire in people to feel compelled to engage in social justice activities. Through learning of the characteristics and features of social justice advocates, and specifically the influential experiences that led them to their social justice interests and beliefs, schools of social work will become better informed to target, recruit, and engage the next generation of social justice advocacy practitioners.

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological methodology and the findings of this study will ensure that oppression can be fought by people eminently qualified to take on the challenge – those with a social work education. This will also assist the profession of social work to stay connected to its social justice roots rather than continue on a potential path toward a psychotherapeutic vacuum that often abandons the principles of social justice. Schools of social work being able to better ensure student congruence with social work values secures the future of the profession.

Qualitative Research

Social work emphasizes the notion of person(s) in their environment. This study seeks to understand how individuals become influenced by events, people, experiences within their environments in a manner that led them to practice social justice advocacy through political means. Although altruism can be connected to self-interest, even if only to sleep well at night, the question ultimately is – why are some people invested in working for a more just society?

What is the personal draw to make a positive difference in the world? Qualitative methods provide a unique opportunity to conduct an in-depth inquiry about the turning points and pivotal events in the lives of individuals who have chosen to be advocates for social justice. The question is not just "why do you do this work?" but rather "what influenced your life's path to include this work?"

People are people in context; therefore, individuals respond differently to different data collection inquiries. This truth sheds light on one of the many benefits to a qualitative research approach: it represents greater inclusiveness to the distinct attributes of all research participants. Research is more just when it incorporates the special uniqueness of all people. Effective qualitative research necessitates the use of rigor, art, creativity and science (Watts, 2014). The combination of these skills provides the researcher a prism with which to view participants and the data they provide.

Kozleski (2017) identifies the importance of matching questions with methodologies. Advocates for social justice endeavor to change the world, and qualitative research presents "new ways of seeing the world" (De la Cuesta Benjumea, 2015, p. 889). In this manner, investigating the development of social justice advocates with a qualitative methodology provides a unique opportunity to capture the nuances of social justice advocacy through the use an anti-oppressive, phenomenological approach.

The current study invited participants to elaborate about events that, in some cases, have occurred many years in the past. The meaning which people assign to their lived experiences is dynamic and can fluctuate over time. A premise of qualitative research is its flexibility (De la Cuesta Benjumea, 2015; Padgett, 2004). This flexibility is supported by its intentionally nontechnical approach (Watts, 2014). In qualitative research the participant is positioned as a

storyteller able to make "new discoveries in the moment" (Kozleski, 2017, p. 24). This is a form of research, which maintains participants' descriptions of their experiences at its heart (Glesne, 2016). Versatility is needed for this interpretive synthesis to occur. The flexibility and non-oppressive nature of this research style is well suited for the information that this study endeavors to attain.

Effective research is not limited to conventional views that restrict it to traditional methods, but is, in reality, much more expansive (Lorenzetti, 2013; Potts & Brown, 2005). Zarate and Quezada (2012) caution that even research focused upon social psychology can be limiting because it is often detached from social realities. Traditional research methods – including those used in social work – that are based in Anglo-European, male-centric thought is rooted in dominance (Danso, 2015; Lorenzetti, 2013). A social justice practitioner who maintains a fixed definition of social justice is also inherently practicing oppression. In doing so, this practitioner is exerting his/her will upon others' values (Gasker & Fisher, 2014).

Anti-Oppressive Research

Modern research methods can be utilized to preserve oppressive social work practice by combining both power and knowledge (Reisch & Jani, 2012). Historically, social work has maintained a focus on aiding marginalized and oppressed populations (Mullaly, 2001; Murdach, 2010). But those who subscribe to conventional research methods are implicitly following Speer and Hughey's (1995) aforementioned third axiom of power differentials by maintaining existing paradigms. Therefore, social work researchers who limit their scholarship to the confines of dominant protocol are working in opposition to notions of social justice.

Jane Addams (1912) wrote that "the responsibility of tolerance lies with those of the widest vision" (p. 163). Persevering to gain this vision includes utilizing an anti-oppressive

research approach. The definition of anti-oppressive research includes "the art of asking questions, building relationships, seeking answers, and coming up with more questions" (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 257 – 258). A goal of anti-oppressive research is to endeavor towards social change, social justice and emancipation of those who are oppressed (Potts & Brown, 2005). Strier (2006) recognizes that social work research must not be infected by oppressive practices. Research can be performed as an apparatus to protect the maintenance of structural inequalities within social systems (Danso, 2015). Even social justice research can have a result of fortifying societal inequalities (Fietzer & Ponterotto, 2015). This includes research practices that reproduce and solidify forms of institutional oppression (Strier, 2006). Danso (2009) concurs, explaining that anti-oppressive practice takes care not to replicate oppressive social associations. One way this can be prevented is by the researcher recognizing the inherent power differential between his/herself and research participants. Utilizing anti-oppressive research means eschewing any single, favored, socially accepted research as a dominant methodology (Lorenzetti, 2013). Strier (2006) warns that social work researchers can promulgate oppression if they do not recognize the inherent and nuanced forms of oppression that are found in dominant research conventions.

Supporting Addams (1912) assertion that a vast social vision is an ingredient of tolerance, or as I prefer acceptance, Lorenzetti (2013) summarizes that a "social justice researcher is an activist who has discovered a new set of lenses (p. 456)." While embarking upon this research project, I have gained a new view of social justice and those who advocate for it. Social justice researchers, such as myself, have innovative opportunities as a result of wearing a new set of anti-oppressive research lenses that widens society's viewable landscape.

Phenomenological Approach

Within the world of qualitative research is an avenue known as phenomenology. Grossoehme (2014) summarizes phenomenology as a research methodology that centers upon the search for meaning. It was founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) (Patton, 2002; Titchen & Hobson, 2005). Husserl believed that human understanding is derived from sensory understanding of experienced phenomena (Patton, 2002). Husserl's caveat was that all experience required description, analysis, and interpretation (Patton, 2002). This proviso is phenomenology's foundation: it is the study of how people recount their experience through their own senses (Patton, 2002). Butina, Campbell and Miller (2015) emphasize that phenomenological research focuses on how participants experience events – in other words, the multiple meanings that individuals assign to their own experiences. Phenomenological research, therefore, transpires through the distinct lens of each research participant.

Titchen and Hobbs (2005) describe phenomenology as "the study of lived, human phenomena within the everyday social context in which the phenomena occur from the perspective of those who experienced them" (p. 121). The path in which a phenomenon enters an individual's consciousness is filtered through his/her unique interpretation (Patton, 2002). Individuals can have multiple interpretations of their own lived experiences; therefore, the study of such is best suited for a qualitative phenomenological approach (Dowling & Cooney, 2012).

Earlier, Swank (2012) identified that there are people who maintain a world view that it is necessary to question authority. Reisch and Andrews (2001) stated that an activist world view is vital to execute social work's mission. Patton (2002) identifies that a phenomenological researcher's work centers on the development of participants' world views. "Phenomenologists focus on how we put together the phenomena we experience in such a way as to make sense of

the world and, in doing so, develop a worldview" (Patton, 2002, p. 106). This research aims to discover defining moments in the lives of the participants' and how they derived meaning out of their experiences which led them to the practice of social justice advocacy. They are reported based upon that individual's own description of the actual events and interpretation of its meaning. The stories from each participant were examined and gleaned for themes. This gave needed light to the development of participants' world views which compels them to advocate for social justice – a light that can shine from this study into the halls of social work education.

Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants in this study as the investigator was interested in learning from those who had a particular experience. De la Cuesta Benjumea (2015), Gentles et al. (2015), and Nichols (2009) identify that participant selection should be based upon what the researcher desires to learn. As this study endeavors to learn of the development of social justice advocates, participants in this study were selected based upon their experience as advocators for social justice. The fact is "qualitative research is about what and not about whom. Therefore, the choice of the participants was based on their experience instead of some demographic or social variables" (De la Cuesta Benjumea, 2015, p. 887). Those sought for this study were individuals who have incorporated social justice activism into their life.

Potential participants were first reached by phone or email. Inclusion criteria: In order to qualify for this study potential participants were screened to determine that they have been involved in at least one of the four arenas of social activism identified by Mizrahi and Dodd (2013): political activism; electoral activism; community focused activism; social action. Exclusion criteria: Individuals who do not meet the aforementioned benchmarks, minors, or people currently incarcerated, were not eligible to participate in the study. If a potential

participant qualified for this study, I asked him/her to participate in this study. Following potential participant approval, informed consent forms were emailed or mailed. The data collection process did not transpire until I received signed consent forms either through email or mail.

I have a decades-long history of participating in all four of these activist components. I have realized in my own life the self-actualization that Fiorito et al. (2010) identify as a byproduct of this work. Through the many years that I have ventured in this practice I have, not surprisingly, come into contact with many champions of social justice. From these interactions I have gained an exhaustive list of personal contacts; the initial recruitment was based upon a convenience sample which occurred among these individuals. Through the years of school and study I have not actively maintained relationships with many of these contacts; therefore, when approached for this study its purpose was unfamiliar to them. Through convenience sampling mentioned above, these contacts, snowball sampling also ensued. Snowball sampling is a purposive sampling in which individuals within the target audience are identified and then they assist the inquirer in finding others who share distinct characteristics (Royse, Thyer & Padgett, 2016). Snowball sampling may be employed in cases when there is no formal list of those who might qualify for a particular study (Royse et al, 2016).

Research Procedures

Interviews are a common means of qualitative data collection and this study used interviews as its predominant research instrument (Butina, et al., 2015; Grossoehme, 2014). Interview questions should ask participants to share about the special meaning of their histories (De la Cuesta Benjumea, 2015). Rapley (2004) states that “interviews are, by their nature, social encounters” (p. 16). McIntosh and Morse (2009) report that unstructured interviewing is the

most frequently utilized form of qualitative data collection. The value of unstructured interviewing is that this “allows participants the freedom to tell their stories without the researcher’s control of a framework of questions to guide the interviews” (McIntosh & Morse, 2009, ch. 3, para 2). Utilizing this form of investigation, the researcher is a collaborator in the construction of knowledge – in this way the researcher his/herself becomes a research instrument (Xu & Storr, 2012). As an instrument of the research, the researcher’s decisions affect both data collection and data deliberations, thus playing a pivotal and purposeful role (Barrett, 2007; Xu & Storr, 2012).

Participant stories are shared through the lexicon of emotion (McIntosh & Morse, 2009). Through the use of a flexible, unstructured interview, I assisted participants as they weave through their minds and memories to find the key experience(s) that led them to social justice advocacy. This allowed for participants to engage in different directions of storytelling, without researcher-directed confinement. Through this process, participants were able to gain comfort with me, which allowed for deep, robust, and informative responses.

Per the Barry University Institutional Review Board requirements, all participants were asked to sign informed consent forms prior to interviews taking place. This informed consent detailed the procedures the participant would undergo along with the measures that would be taken to protect their confidentiality. The interview question was designed to ascertain the self-identified seminal experience(s) in each participant’s life that that led them to their social justice advocacy practices. A primary question was used to initiate the interview and additional probing questions were generated as the interviews progressed. I stated: please describe a key event, or events, that you experienced which influenced your life’s path to include advocating for social

justice. It was accurately anticipated that the response to this question led to the sharing of additional valuable data by research participants.

Interviews were audio recorded; though if a participant was not comfortable with this it was not required and I would take extensive notes during the interview. I transcribed each recorded interview. Transcripts of each interview were offered to the participant for member checking where they would have the opportunity to review and clarify their data that was shared during the interview. Following this audio recordings of each interview were erased. The initial interviews were approximately one hour in length. There is no known risk for participants in this study as it is designed.

Plan for Data Analysis

I utilized NVivo, as made available by Barry University, to create a systematic multilayered coding process in order to examine the data and discover the nuanced underlying themes and meanings (Watts, 2014). The coding process also helped me to uncover commonalities among data that may not be evident on its surface (Rabinovich & Kacen, 2010). A three-step coding process was utilized to ensure systematic treatment of the data collected. First, open coding identified the meaning assigned to key experiences by the participants. Second, axial coding built upon the open coding to identify themes. Lastly, selective coding was utilized to search for the true essence of the identified themes. This system of coding and analysis commenced with the first interview.

Researcher Bias and Limitations of the Research

In his 2016 Nobel Prize Lecture in Literature, Bob Dylan describes the comprehension and interpretation process. While sharing a first-hand account of his exegesis process with literature, he also identifies why qualitative research is fraught with risks: "we see only the

surface of things. We can interpret what lies below any way we see fit" (Dylan, 2017, Moby Dick section, para. 7). Part of how we "interpret what lies below" can be assigned to human nature – just as participants are influenced by their lived experiences, so, too, are researchers. Gringeri, Barusch and Cambron (2013) describe that "all findings and interpretations are molded by biographies and perspectives that researchers and participants bring to the project" (p. 763). This is something that I must be mindful of during the data collection and analysis process. In addition, when applying this to qualitative research, another element is the power differential that is an inherent part of this method of research (Grossoehme, 2014).

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative analysis, researchers "affect and are affected by their data" (Grossoehme, 2014, p. 110; Kozleski, 2017). Tuohy et al. (2013) question whether it is possible for one to set aside biases. Watts (2014) identifies that it is simply not possible for the researcher to possess a completely neutral approach to data. Gringeri et al. (2013) emphasize the value of the researcher being aware of this natural power differential. "In the same way that practitioners must consider and account for their roles vis-à-vis clients, being aware of the ways power and privilege shape the interactions, social work researchers need to sharpen our awareness of relationship dynamics woven throughout our projects" (Gringeri et al., 2013, p. 770).

Based on factors identified by Gringeri et al (2013), Grossoehme (2014), Kozleski (2017), Tuhoy et al. (2013) and Watts (2014) the data interpretation process can be easily influenced by the researcher's side of this power differential – the side where the data interpreter holds the authority to explicate the data itself. Bracketing can be used to counteract this as it is an essential tool in limiting researcher bias because it restricts opportunities for the researcher's own knowledge of a phenomenon to influence the participant's report of his/her own

experiences with that same phenomenon (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). Within the phenomenological research process bracketing aids the researcher to curtail his/her own personal views when examining data. To curb researcher bias that can invade the data interpretation process, I included bracketing as part of data analysis.

Qualitative research is based upon the researcher's intellectual interpretation of data (Watts, 2014). Due to these considerations, quality of research is partly dependent upon the researcher dedicating time for ethical reflection (De la Cuesta Benjumea, 2015). Another means to imbed reflection into the qualitative research process is through memoing. I used a memo system to reflect on my own thoughts, feelings and ideas throughout the research process. Both bracketing and memoing aided in lessening bias in data interpretation. In addition, memoing was utilized to further explore and refine emerging ideas.

A distinctive attribute of qualitative research is that the researchers are simultaneously "judges and stakeholders" (De la Cuesta Benjumea, 2015, p. 886). Because the qualitative researcher wields his/her own data collecting gavel, and is personally invested in the research itself, there are near-infinite opportunities for researcher bias. Similar to other qualitative researchers, I am influenced by my own life experiences which make me predisposed to certain beliefs and related biases. Allowing these beliefs to influence my research would be a disservice to the research participants. It would also limit the value of this research's findings. One challenge is that at the outset of this study I did not know how my beliefs would interfere with the research process. Furthermore, I did not know at that time how my beliefs may be influenced and changed through this endeavor. The application of a qualitative memo system both lent rigor to this study and helped identify, and limit, researcher bias. By consistently memoing throughout the data collection and data analysis process, it is my hope that I was able

to successfully disentangle my own beliefs – and their associated biases – from the research and its analysis.

Another potential limitation is that I have known many of the participants in this study prior to the commencement of research. While this can increase the level of comfort for each participant, and correspondingly add depth to the data they share, this could also open the interview process to the effects of social desirability. This possibility is counteracted by strictly following the Barry University Institutional Review Board's guidelines for confidentiality and anonymity; thereby, all participants can have confidence that their participation in this study, and the corresponding information they shared, would remain anonymous.

Ethical Considerations

Humphries (2008) states that ethics in research and social justice are interwoven. Supporting Humphries (2008), I hold ethics as the utmost priority. This is a confidential study. As designed, this study does not pose any known risks to human subjects. Any information has been held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Each participant's responses, and all data analysis notes, were kept in a password-protected computer and/or in a locked cabinet. Participants were assigned a pseudonym. Published results will emphasize central themes found among the data collected from the participants. Specific information that is published, such as participant experiences and quotations, has been reported in such a way as to protect the identity of its source.

Implications

This study has positive implications for social work research, education and practice. I believe that it will fill a gap in social work literature by identifying the key developmental factors that lead people to social justice advocacy practice. In doing so, schools of social work will then

be better able to identify and recruit future generations of likeminded people. As a result of adding social justice advocates into the rooms for social work education, schools of social work will be preserving the profession's long history of social justice advocates.

Chapter IV

Findings

Introduction

The findings below describe themes culled from 17 transcribed interviews with respondents ranging in age from their forties to their eighties. There were more than 809 coded statements, grouped together with eight overarching themes. Within these themes, five sub-themes also emerged, which will be discussed in the following pages. This chapter will be presented in a cogent order that tells the story of the development of a social justice advocate. I begin each of these sections with a participant quotation which effectively summarizes that section's theme. Table 1 (see page 67) identifies characteristics of study participants. Most participants were Caucasian males and the majority of participants hold/held elected offices. All participants were raised in a time before the advent of social media.

The title of this dissertation is The Journey to Social Justice Advocacy and its Implications for Social Work Education, and the following pages in this chapter describe the journey that study participants took. It frequently included unsuspected twists and turns, and participants found profound meaning in unpredictable experiences. One of my participants, Coleman, reflected upon how his journey to social justice advocacy was influenced by an assortment of other people. "*There's some serendipity to all of this, without a doubt… this journey reminds me of just how important it is for people to take an interest in other people*." That is the common thread woven throughout all of these stories – that they are as much about the participant as they are about the others who enter and influence their lives. These experiences begin with gaining awareness of injustice in the world.

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Have Held Elected Office
Abe	Male	Caucasian	Yes
Amy	Female	Caribbean-American	No
Anthony	Male	Caucasian	No
Arthur	Male	Caucasian	Yes
Coleman	Male	African-American	No
Don	Male	Caucasian	Yes
Harry	Male	Caucasian	Yes
James	Male	Caucasian	Yes
Jeff	Male	Caucasian	Yes
John	Male	Caucasian	Yes
Jill	Female	Caucasian	No
Maria	Female	Caucasian	Yes
Mitch	Male	Caucasian	Yes
Natalie	Female	Caucasian	No
Sophia	Female	Caucasian	No
Stanley	Male	Caucasian	No
William	Male	Latin/Hispanic	Yes

Theme 1: Gaining Awareness of Injustice

"It makes it tangible. It takes it from something that may have an effect on you intellectually, and turns it into something that really affects you viscerally, in your gut." Arthur.

A social justice advocate endeavors to mitigate injustice. Prior to developing into an advocate for social justice, however, one must first identify the existence of injustice in the world. One of the themes identified in this research refers to gaining awareness of injustice. This was frequently identified as a process – one that I found has three main sub-themes. The first sub-theme is recognizing that injustice exists and being conscious of its unfairness. In this manner the injustice can occur at a social distance – perhaps through a television or a textbook. It can feel impersonal but the unjust effect on the 'other' is something internally noted – even if unconsciously. The second and third sub-themes involve when injustice comes alive. It occurs when one encounters injustice, whether directly or indirectly, and the veneer of social distance is eliminated. This is when the veracities of injustice become real and the knowledge gained from its previous recognition emanates into the heart. It is at this point, as Bertha Capen Reynolds (1991) pointed out, that one is forever affected.

Sub-theme 1a: Recognizing Social Injustice

"I have a child's view of fairness." Sophia.

Research about radical social workers by Reisch and Andrews (2001) identified that the general social environment was a precipitating influence in their participant's development. They cited how their participants' experiences while living in changing times – ranging from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Era – impacted their personal growth (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). Their awareness of social disparities influenced their world views. The current study's findings corroborated this, in that participant's references to gaining awareness often began subtly, even

subconsciously, and frequently during childhood years. This initial exposure to the idea of injustice is the first step in the process of gaining awareness of its existence.

Arthur is a Caucasian male in his fifties. He is a husband and a father who has been an elected official for many years. During our interview, he described how his family would watch the evening news together and discuss current events around the dinner table. He said that his parents were very aware of topics surrounding social justice. His awareness of social inequality can be traced back to these boyhood days.

> *I think it's fair to say that both of my parents have always been sensitive to these issues. Growing up I think I was made aware that I was fortunate to grow up in the home I was living in and fortunate to go to the schools I was attending, and that there were others less well off. So I think my parents first and foremost, helped me to have what I consider to be a realistic view, and the right values, faced with what the real situation is in our country.*

His recognition of injustice started at the dinner table with lessons from his parents about his good fortune relative to the less privileged.

William is in his late forties and proud of his Latin roots. In addition to being an elected representative, he is an educational administrator. He explained that he is currently in a position – through his interchanging political and work worlds – to make policies that will affect the educational experiences of thousands of students; perhaps tens of thousands. During our interview he spent little time discussing his Ivy League doctorate, instead emphasizing the valuable way he has been able to influence others, and how others have been able to influence him. Similar to others in this study, he grew up in a politically aware family. He recalled growing up with "*dinner time conversations about social justice.*" He learned that his parents

were Civil Rights activists during the turbulent 1960s. Just as the case was for Arthur, these childhood dinner time conversations were meaningful. In a child's mind these lessons were enduring.

Maria grew up in the Midwest in what she described as a supportive family. Her first occupation was teaching. Her life's travels brought her to New England, where she became an advocate for numerous social causes, perhaps most notably working to end homelessness. While in New England, she served as a member of her local school board. A career opportunity that represented the convergence of her spiritual and social justice beliefs led her to the mid-Atlantic region, where she currently lives.

Maria remembers seeing news of the Vietnam War on television. She stated that she was at such a young age she did not fully understand its ramifications on the world, the nation, or her hometown. But she remembered seeing broadcasts on her parent's television set, and the feeling that this footage transmitted within her.

> *I remember as even a teenager feeling like, watching the Vietnam War, as it was talked about on the news and thinking 'this is wrong, we should not be doing this.' Even though I didn't know anything politically, and didn't get politically involved for a long time.*

This is an example of a young child beginning to recognize that injustice exists in the world.

But that was not Maria's only early recognition of injustice. She, along with many others I interviewed, learned of injustice through her early religious teachings. Maria referenced her Lutheran upbringing. Anthony, too, cited his Lutheran faith. Anthony grew up in a religious household, as the son of a Lutheran Minister; now in his seventies he is semi-retired. He explained how Lutheranism and social action go hand-in-hand. He remembered that during his elementary school years his family's church congregation maintained charitable fundraising

goals. He specifically remembered that fifty percent of this would stay locally, and fifty percent of it would be donated nationally to the church apparatus and other assistance organizations. Don said that part of growing up in the Catholic faith included learning of injustice. Similarly, Mitch credited growing up Jewish, and its religious teachings, as his earliest recognition of injustice.

Participants also shared how they recognized injustice through their family experiences. Don is in his fifties, and is the son of a dedicated union man. Don shared many stories of how he was impacted by his father's labor loyalties – and some of its related struggles. He maintains strong beliefs on the importance of organizing and the real meaning of solidarity. Don attended a prominent Midwestern university. For many years, he served in his state's legislature and takes pride in his pragmatic work to successfully advance numerous causes related to progressive beliefs. For Don, his work truly began as he witnessed his father's actions. He remembered his father being on the picket line for a multi-year strike, one of the longest in our nation's history. *"Some of my memories growing up were that my Dad was on strike…My dad suffered pretty silently during his five year strike at…a large industrial manufacturing plant."* The sentimentality in Don's description of his father's struggles identified its personal meaning. When the strike concluded, and the workers won, even in victory his father lost one full year of paid vacation time. *"I wouldn't say it was a Pyrrhic victory but it was certainly a victory with a lot of sacrifices and not just the five years on strike."* The strike's associated stresses and struggles impacted Don and, looking though his dad's eyes, gave him a window to injustices in the world.

Others, too, were positively influenced by their families. Among study participants it was not uncommon for them to point out that their immediate families had progressive leanings.

James is baby boomer who has dedicated his life's work to advancing social justice causes. Through James's adult life he has been able to turn his social justice advocacy practice into a full-time, paid career. He shared that while neither of his parents were the enthusiastic activist that he grew to become, they were socially conscious. *"Now my parents were not political activists. So I was not your red diaper baby, as they used to call it. My parents were good liberals."* This familial environment – one that allows an activist spirit to flourish – is emblematic of many study participants.

James recalls when his older brother, who was also a product of their family's household environment, invited him to go to an anti-apartheid demonstration. James said that demonstration was *"exciting."* He explained that this took place when he was in eighth grade and his high school aged brother *"took me to a demonstration at the Chase Manhattan Bank against apartheid in South Africa. So that was my very first activist thing that I did. And it was protesting apartheid and Chase Manhattan Bank's investments in South Africa."* I asked if at that young age he understood what he was protesting.

> *Yeah, my brother explained it to me. I wouldn't have known or gone without him…then, shortly thereafter, basically from that point on I got more and more actively involved. And then by the time I was in high school the Vietnam War had started. So that was 1967. I graduated from high school in 1967. And then I was the President of Great Neck Students for Peace in Vietnam. So that was my first organizational activism.*

Between having socially conscious parents, and tutelage from his older brother, James began to gain awareness of injustice in the world. These combined experiences proved to be the catalyst for James life of social justice advocacy work.

Harry, too, was raised by socially conscious parents. One result of this is that his first memories of social inequality come from boyhood. As an adult, Harry has had a distinguished career as a lawyer. He was a judge for nearly fifteen years and felt this was the culmination of his legal career. When Harry was a child his mother was a regional coordinator for the March of Dimes. He stated that at only about ten years old he did not fully comprehend their mission; however, he did understand that they were raising money for children fighting illness, disease, and other maladies. He remembered many adults telling him *"you're lucky you don't have any of these things,"* and he recognized it was not fair that other children did. This was Harry's first recognition of injustice in the world – that some children were sick while others were healthy.

Sophia is the single mother of an adult daughter. She was raised in a rural town that she identified had lacked a sense of community. She has been affected by the sexism she faced in her family, and this is something that she is very aware of. She finds that as a middle class white woman she has a degree of social clout and feels that it is her responsibility to employ this in means that advance social justice for all people. She shared a laconic summary of recognizing injustice by simply saying, *"I have a child's view of fairness."* Her view is rooted in the pureness of how children see the world and this is something that she has kept through her adult years.

In each of the aforementioned examples the participant gained recognition of unfairness in the world. Their outlooks were based on lessons gleaned from their religious teachings, parents, and childhood observations of the world. Sophia detailed how, even as an adult, her view of injustice has not changed. She described how her life experiences have not blunted her perspective. She identified that for the social justice advocate there is a permanency to maintaining an outlook rooted in a child's view of fairness.

William gained recognition of injustice by looking in his mirror. Following college, he found himself with indigenous people. During this experience he recognized that his work included teaching a colonized population the colonial languages.

> *I worked for two years with indigenous communities in Mexico and in Canada, in British Columbia, where I lived. And one of my tasks in that project was to teach, ironically, the colonial languages of English to the Mexicans, and Spanish to the Canadians. So part of my transformation was realizing how messed up that was…Ultimately, in a moment of poetic justice, the two indigenous communities of Mexico and Canada basically fired us from the project because we were, like, outsiders.*

He saw the ironic injustice in teaching these languages – the conquering tongues – to native populations. He also saw the righteousness of being fired from that task.

Maria described how the developmental process of the social justice advocate shifts from the stage of gaining recognition of injustice to encountering injustice. She told how this evolution occurred for her during her work to end capital punishment.

> *When I did the work with the death penalty…I didn't know that much about it. But I really learned a lot about poverty, and I learned a lot about race. And I learned a lot about disparities in the criminal justice system. And the more I learned about…how people who are really poor or…the incidents of death penalty in counties that didn't have any, or good public defenders, and weak defense and…how they represented African Americans compared to how they represented the whites. And that fact that if it was a black on white crime there's more likely to be a death sentence. There's more likely to be all these disparities – that I began to understand…And that was the point where I started*

> *seeing…the issue of justice in a different way…I began seeing that there was…some pretty significant injustice in the criminal justice system in the United States.*

Maria had a front row seat to witness the practical manner in which the death penalty was administered. This view allowed her to gain recognition of its injustices by witnessing how it was applied differently to oppressed and marginalized populations. As she gained this recognition on an intellectual level, she began to feel it on a more emotional one.

Sub-theme 1b: Encountering Social Injustice Indirectly

"And then she ultimately…ended up spending twenty-two years in jail when she probably should have spent more like three." Harry.

This second sub-theme in gaining awareness of injustice identified here occurred when one encountered it indirectly. Bertha Capen Reynolds (1991) described how gaining an increased awareness of poverty affected her. Her experiences as a social work intern in South Boston tenement housing was her "introduction to the places where poor people had to live" (Reynolds, 1991, p. 41). For Capen Reynolds, being in this environment made the challenges and struggles of the poorer classes tangible. Through her field work experiences in the hardscrabble purlieus of South Boston its townspeople came alive in ways that a textbook could not detail. The emotional impact was permanent. "The favored classes, learning to know their poor neighbors personally, could never thereafter be indifferent" (Reynolds, 1991, p. 44). It was in this way that encountering poverty changed Bertha Capen Reynolds forever. Research by Good (2010) shows this experience was not unique to Capen Reynolds. The majority of his participants identified that the witnessing and/or experiencing of oppression impacted their individual development.

It was a summer job that assisted Arthur in gaining awareness of injustice. While on summer break from a prestigious university, Arthur worked for the local cable company. He acknowledged that he did *"not have the most exciting sounding job in the world."* He was assigned to replace old cable boxes in people's homes. That summer, Arthur saw that one thing people living in all aspects of the socio-economic spectrum had in common was cable television, and to complete his task he was entrusted with access to homes ranging from impoverished inner city apartments to palatial suburban palaces.

> *I went into apartments in [poor neighborhoods] where there was little furniture, there were little kids running around who seemed poorly dressed, maybe there was not air conditioning, and yet there was a big TV and a cable box that needed replacement. You know they didn't have enough money for a lot of necessities but they made sure that they had a cable box.*

Visiting these places gave Arthur a view of poverty that he had not seen previously. He was not looking from a distance. He was now inside these domiciles where he could see, smell and touch the economic conditions that these families were living in. But these were not the only properties he visited. In addition to witnessing poverty, he also witnessed a great disparity with regard to how people lived in poverty contrasted to how people live with wealth.

> *I went into homes in [working class neighborhoods], that just were so different from some of the homes that I went into that were in certain neighborhoods…[wealthy neighborhoods]. And the huge socio-economic disparities that exist in our country and in my community were right there in front of me.*

Injustice came alive for Arthur during that summer. He gained an awareness of this because his employment led him into places he had not previously been. He saw things – ranging from

destitution to decadence – that influenced his view of injustice. Something that had previously been a topic for intellectual study suddenly became tangible and real.

Referring to the extreme economic inequality he witnessed that summer, Arthur said, *"I found it pretty stunning, pretty upsetting, and it just didn't seem in the least bit fair to me."* For Arthur, like with Bertha Capen Reynolds, this was a time of experiential learning that he described as pivotal to his gaining awareness of injustice. The summer spent exchanging cable boxes provided Arthur with an unobstructed view of his region's economic landscape. In doing so he began to know his neighbors – both rich and poor – and this left an enduring impression on him.

Harry encountered injustice through his work. He told me that he entered the legal profession because of his desire to help people. He shared with me how he viewed the proper use of the law as a perfect vehicle for assisting others. But then, as a young lawyer he saw the legal system from a different perspective. When I asked him what it was that modified his views he shared a story that took place several decades in the past.

> *There's one I recall that was a criminal matter where I felt the lady was getting railroaded by the system. And ultimately did get railroaded by the system. Although I wasn't the attorney at the time…Well, I was her initial attorney but…it ended up where they put me in a position where I had a conflict of interest and I had to withdraw from the case. And, you know, I felt bad, but I had to. She understood why. And then she ultimately ended up with a public defender, and ended up spending twenty-two years in jail when she probably should have spent more like three.*

At this early point in Harry's legal career he encountered injustice by seeing how the legal system could be manipulated to someone's extreme detriment.

William remembers being in Southern Mexico during the Zapatista uprising. This short-lived rebellion was a result of the just passed North American Free Trade Agreement, which removed legal protections for indigenous property rights. "*I was on a bus. And soldiers got on the bus. And that kind of moment, scary moment, made me think more about…the role of the state and government, and kind of indigenous minority rights*." He described the young rebel soldiers searching the bus. I asked what they were looking for. He responded ominously, "*They were…looking for something they hoped they wouldn't find.*" His face-to-face encounter with armed rebels caused William to recognize the meaning of their fight and its associated injustices.

Sub-theme 1c: Encountering Social Injustice Directly

"*Just experiencing it first-hand certainly teaches you empathy. I mean you can empathize with others that are experiencing the same sort of ridicule and torment. So, yeah, you're sensitive to it and you know how it feels*." Natalie.

The third sub-theme in gaining awareness of injustice occurs when someone encounters injustice directly. This is not bearing witness, but instead experiencing injustice personally. Several participants shared being the target of social injustice. They shared how these very personal experiences have had lasting effects.

Natalie's mother *"was born in the thirties, in a small town in Mississippi known as Laurel, Mississippi."* Her father *"was born and raised in Shanghai, China."* Natalie, and her siblings, grew up in the nineteen sixties and nineteen seventies in Tennessee, and knew that their interracial heritage meant they looked different than their peers. The result of this was that Natalie encountered social injustice as a young child.

> *When we grew up in the sixties interracial marriage was an anomaly, and it was, like, we would get stared at, a lot. My mom had blonde hair and blue eyes and here she was*

> *walking these six kids and some of us looked like we were fresh off the boat. But beyond the staring and the questions people used to ask my mother where she got us. Meaning, where did she adopt us.*

Natalie was acutely aware that people in her community looked askance at her. This became the standard in her daily life. She encountered much worse than staring. She remembered being called derogatory names and her brothers being beaten up at school.

> *We would get bullied in school and in the neighborhood, pretty severely. You know our neighbors, several of them, wanted us out of the neighborhood and they would write graffiti on our driveway. They would egg our house all the time. One time left a dead bird in our mailbox. And you know it was like three of our neighbors that just really wanted us out of there. And then in school we would get tormented all the time.*

The social injustice she encountered as a youth occurred simply because she looked different. Now in her fifties, Natalie still has vivid memories of these experiences and identifies how she has been impacted by them. "*Just experiencing it firsthand certainly teaches you empathy. I mean you can empathize with others that are experiencing the same sort of ridicule and torment. So, yeah, you're sensitive to it and you know how it feels*."

James recalled experiencing injustice during a high school summer program. He participated in a program that invited students from all around the country to attend. It was at a time when the nation's youth were becoming more revolutionary in their thoughts and actions regarding social injustice. Simultaneously, there were groups who fought this, whose reactionary beliefs were becoming more entrenched.

> *I did actually go between my junior and senior year in high school to a thing called The Encampment for Citizenship. And this was a summer, kind of high school leadership,*

> *civil rights program that had been founded by Eleanor Roosevelt…And this was fifty high school students: half black; half white. And we all spent eight weeks at a college in…Eastern Kentucky, Appalachian Kentucky. So this was 1966…So there was just a lot of racial tension and upheaval and argument and discussion among all these high school students there. And at one point the Klu Klux Klan came by and fired shots into the college. Nobody was hurt. But it was sort of, it was a radicalizing experience, being with young African Americans who were awakening, getting more militant.*

James, a Jewish, middle class, white kid from the northeast, was not in his world; he was a stranger in a strange land. He was on a rural campus in Appalachia just two years following the Freedom Summer. He was fully immersed in the tensions and teachings of his youthful interracial peers, while simultaneously experiencing the Klan's evil. In the summer of 1966 he encountered social injustice directly, and experienced it with a diverse group of peers. He described how this summer-long intellectual adventure was very meaningful for him. *"It was a big deal. It was a big deal at the time."*

Abe was raised by a left leaning politically active family in an isolated manufacturing pocket of northeast America during World War II. This was a social environment that described as producing a degree of social naiveté. He spent his career as an educator. Following his retirement he served on his local Board of Education for eight years. He first encountered the inequality of class difference during his freshman year in college. Growing up in a family that was long established in a small, rural, working class community, Abe had a somewhat insular upbringing. But when he left home to attend an elite New England college he saw a different coterie of people – one where he did not fit in. He cites this as when he first encountered class difference, and its associated social injustices.

> *I figured out right away that a lot of the people who were there were sons, cause there were no women at that time, from wealthy people. And they didn't care about anything but having a good time and seeing how much they could get to drink…kind of a lot of them, really, had nothing to do with me…So I said, wait a minute, let's take a look at all this and we did, I did, and I decided that…my mother was a social worker, so, and my father was very very liberal, so I said "wait a minute, this is not the direction to go in."*

While many of the other undergraduates were trying to fit in, Abe leaned on his upbringing (which included being raised by a social worker) to think critically and draw conclusions about the world, its wealth, and its disparities. This was Abe's introduction to the collegiate experiences that would lead him to encountering social injustice.

Abe went on to describe how the process of his gaining awareness of injustice peaked while he spent his junior year abroad, living and studying in a major European city. Coming from his rural roots, Abe experienced culture shock. He was no longer surrounded by the security of his parents and his extended family. He described this as being a very influential experience. *"I had never been away from home, really. And then when I got there I just couldn't believe it."* This year-long experience gave Abe more than a front row view of injustice – he encountered it directly. He found himself in several collective demonstrations and he was detained on multiple occasions *"because they just grab you for anything. But I was in a couple of manifestations, you know protests, and got clobbered, knocked around, and thrown in jail."* He was far removed from the safety of his hometown and suddenly found himself living in a land governed by an authoritarian regime; all this while making friends with revolutionaries.

Sophia spoke about the experience of growing up in a home where her brothers received deferential treatment. In her family, there was a tendency for the adults to *"always take the boys*

side." In her youth, she was exposed to a culture of sexism within her own family that would continue to follow her through her teen years, and later as an adult. She recalled that

> *There was money for the boys to go to college but that there was no money for me to go to college and that I would have to take care of that myself…And those kinds of things continued throughout my life where boys, because, they're men, have been entitled to certain things within my family that I have never been entitled to.*

The vivid memories of her experiences were not shaded by decades of distance, and she recalled being deeply impacted by the very real sexist values and behavior that she encountered in her youth. From her perspective, the example of a college fund for her brothers, but not for her, was an example of an injustice that she may not have had the language to articulate at the time, but the lack of fairness was clearly her reality.

This misogynistic temperament reached to her extended family, also. She shared a heart wrenching story about a female cousin who was sexually abused by a male relative, and her family's response.

> *One of my cousins who is very close in age to me was being sexually abused by her step-father, and she had confided this to me, and also had sworn me to secrecy. And then he did something that made me feel that I didn't have to keep that secret anymore…And, interestingly, our grandparents took the side of the molesting step-father over the side of the girl.*

She was appalled then, as with now, at her grandparent's response. It was upsetting to her that her own grandparents would side with the male, non-blood relative, over the side of their own granddaughter. This was the world she was confined to as a child and her view of justice was being shaped by deeply and personally painful encounters with injustice. These experiences had

a lasting impression. Sophia shared about these experiences with a strong emotion that revealed its long-term visceral effects.

> *I think it boils down to I'm mad. I feel as though, I feel as though I was not given the opportunities, and this starts in my birth family, I was not given the opportunities that the men in my family were given and it was all because of my gender...I've been carrying that hot ball of resentment for decades.*

The result of the cumulative effects of injustice based on gender in her own family resulted in a sense of righteous indignation, which she carried with her even now, as a social justice advocate.

Coleman is a middle aged African-American male who was raised in an inner city neighborhood of one of the United States' major metropolises during the tumultuous nineteen-seventies. His life's path led him to earning a PhD and becoming college professor at a major northeastern university, in addition to being a regional activist for racial justice. He encountered social injustice as a way of life. "*The tension between the City of Detroit and its white suburbs was always there.*" This was a part of life that surrounded his formative years, and it was something that he did not turn a blind eye too. Quite the opposite, Coleman was an inquisitive child, one who followed the news – local and national – diligently. He remembered how his fervor for knowledge was encouraged by both his family and his apartment building neighbors.

> *I've always been a reader and so people would push things in my direction and I would read those things. I was reading about the State of Black America from the Urban League Reports. Reading about stuff from the Michigan Chronicle, which was a black newspaper in the state of Michigan, and very popular in the city of Detroit at that time. And just paying attention to what was going on and really absorbing it and taking it in.*

Eventually, his worldly zeal was rewarded in a manner that was meaningful, and memorable, for a teenage boy. This was an example for Coleman of how the injustice that he encountered as a part of his daily routines actually led to his empowerment.

> *And so this kind of stuff was in the news and you read about it. I actually, as a high school student, had been involved in current events contests cause I read the paper actually, and had some success; came in second place city-wide two years in a row.*

Torres-Harding et al. (2012) point out that simply gaining the awareness of injustice may not be sufficient to birth a social justice advocate. In addition to awareness, and its sometimes associated feelings of empowerment, there also is a need for action. The next section, detailing one's willingness to participate in social justice endeavors, examines a social justice advocate's willingness to take action.

Theme 2: Willingness to Participate

"Acompañamiento…in its most basic form, is being with people. Being with people in their own spaces and experiences." William.

The definition of activism, as found in chapter two, includes the requirement that individuals participate in social change efforts. All of the participants in this research have been a part of such efforts. While they have done this within many arenas where social justice advocacy exists, a number of common themes have emerged. One of the strongest of these themes is participants' willingness to participate in social justice endeavors. Fiorito et al. (2010) identified that an activist maintains a willingness to participate in organizing activities. Sherkat and Blocker (1994) add that a sense of hope also matters. They state that people involved in change efforts have hope that they can influence change (Sherkat & Blocker, 1994). The willingness to participate was reflected by all of the participants' experiences. Each came to

social justice advocacy in different ways, but when they arrived, each chose to participate. In different ways, participants described feeling compelled to participate.

Sub-theme 2a: A Call to Action

"I think there's a point when you can't just say 'sorry, nobody needs to do this' because somebody does need to do this." Jeff.

Jeff's outlook on participation is embodied by his decision to twice run for public office. This was a commitment that he twice did not expect to make. His willingness to participate is what guided him. His first campaign was for the local City Council. Though he had not intended to run for public office at that time, when it became evident that nobody else would, he volunteered to do it. He said that the local party *"needed somebody to do it."* Jeff's experience is reflected by Maria's view on view on participation. She said, *"My feeling is like if you feel like nothing will ever happen, and you're not willing to talk to anybody about it, well, it won't happen."*

Two years later the same local party needed someone to run for the Board of Education. He was on the candidate search committee and again they were having trouble finding people willing to participate as candidates. He recalls a candidate search committee meeting that took place in a friend's living room. When committee members looked at him and suggested that since he had run for office before he should run again. His response: *"oh crap, alright."* I pressed him on the fact that he could have said no both times; that certainly many other people had in each of those election years. But declining did not seem to be an option for Jeff. *"I think there's a point when you can't just say 'sorry, nobody needs to do this' because somebody does need to do this."* Jeff answered the call to action, and this was the motivating force that led to both of his unintended candidacies.

Natalie first answered the call to act when she was in high school. "*I was a student body president of my high school and just from there wanting to make a difference in some of the rules and regulations in school that maybe some of the kids felt weren't necessarily fair*." First, I pointed out to her that many high school students – perhaps all high school students – perceive their school to be unjust but most do not become involved in change efforts. Then I asked her why she was different.

> *I guess I was influenced by my peers at school. Just voicing some of my gripes about the school and them saying "why don't you run for student body. If you want to do something about it run for student body." And it was just like, they're right. Instead of griping about things trying to get out here and change it.*

Natalie answered the call to action by deciding to run for Student Government President. She described this as the catalyst to her participation in social justice efforts. "*I guess that really wet my appetite for politics."*

Coleman also felt the call to action during his high school years. He said that "*pushing for…conversations about Black History Month, and just being sort of socially involved with the life of the school was something that was really important to me*." Though he was involved in some activist efforts while a high school student, his involvement blossomed when he was an undergraduate.

> *College was the moment for me. I entered [college] in 1984 which was around the time that the struggles were going on in South Africa, and also across the country on a number of different college campuses. Black students were agitating on those campuses as well. So when I got there I was able to basically fall into those activities. And got involved on my campus with work on the anti-apartheid movement…we organizing the*

> *march on campus when we marched through the streets…That's something that I remember…that I helped to organize…and also the work to get the university to disinvest. I remember when you do things like present a list of demands to the President at the University, sit out in front of his office.*

This is how Coleman first felt the call to action, to agitate and to organize against an oppressive system half-the-world away. In describing these events it was clear that he felt empowered by his work.

James identifies that there were a combination of factors that led to his call to action: some were embedded deep within him by his family; others surrounded him in the national environment. It was the synthesis of these elements that led to his answering the call to social justice action.

> *What it was – a very simple summary – was a basic core set of liberal values from my Jewish parents, collided with white racism in the Jim Crow south and what we then considered, I still consider it, a genocidal war in Vietnam being waged by the United States. So if you have liberal values and you saw this going on, you got fired up, and you said you were going to do something about it.*

For James, the experience of his environment colliding with his person, was a type of internal atomic collision; one that put his life in motion with newfound kinetic energy. Beginning at this time he was committed to the advancement of social justice. He summarized the impact of all of these factors on him by saying *"in my case that further led to deciding that this was going to be my life story."*

Sub-theme 2b: Collaboration and Solidarity

"What solidarity means is if somebody you know is in a struggle you gotta help him because when you're in a struggle you need his help." Don.

Don views the willingness to take action from a cooperative perspective. He described participation in terms of solidarity and explained how he sees it in collaborative contexts. He shared that he has been willing to participate in numerous efforts, even when he has had a degree of hesitation about the cause. *"I've gotten arrested at picket lines, or supported causes, that I've had real reservations about. But, I said, you know what? They've been there for me and I better sure as hell be there for them."* To Don, this mutual participatory support is what solidarity truly is. *"What solidarity means is if somebody you know is in a struggle you gotta help him because when you're in a struggle you need his help."* While taking a practical approach he acknowledges that his perspective is not universal. *"I don't think that people fully understand, I think they feel that they can only support people who are 100% on their issues, and it's like, well, that's not how the world works. You know? Not everyone's the same."* In this manner, Don's willingness to answer the call to act supersedes the value he places on perfection.

Coleman again points to his undergraduate participation in an effort "*to get our university to disinvest in companies that were connected to South Africa."* In this context, his efforts show his willingness to collaborate with others to advance social justice. This was an example of African-American college students showing solidarity with oppressed South Africans living under a political regime of institutionalized segregation. He emphasized to me how this was an on-campus cause that he did not start, but was proud to enter. He said that this was an "*effort that I was a part of, and certainly not anything I started but something that I joined…And when we were able to successfully do that I really felt good about that."*

William, also, spoke of solidarity and how it is rooted in participation. He gave a multi-faceted definition. He began by defining solidarity with the Spanish word for accompaniment, "*acompañamiento*." He described that this meant "*Being with people in their own spaces and experiences.*" By accompanying them along the natural course of their life one shows solidarity through being present. He explained how he practices "*acompañamiento"* in his hometown region through what he calls "*ontological cosmopolitanism.*" He defined this as "*being in multiple spaces as a way of creating solidarity and connection with people in communities*." This provides natural settings with which he can participate with his fellows to build both comradery and community.

William's definition of solidarity also includes jazz music, and the ensemble participation that it can necessitate. He calls this orientation towards solidarity "*Radical Jazz Pedagogy*." He explained how jazz's emergence came from injustice and how its sound is collaborative.

> *That is, thinking about jazz music improvisation as a cultural idiom that emerged from moments of oppression and marginalization to create a system of beauty based on kind of fundamental collaboration and team building. So I play jazz piano, and I play in a band. And what I always tell my staff and my students is that the skill there is being able to listen, to know your instruments, but to listen and play with others. And this, for me, translates into politics and solidarity which is again like accompaniment about those kinds of hearing and listening and creating – whether it's a piece of music together or an effort to make change in the world vis a vis lobbying or peaceful protest.*

Participation includes listening to others; hearing them and responding to their needs. The sounds of jazz, or in the case of social justice participation, the sounds of solidarity are based on the influence and inspiration of others.

Theme 3: Inspired by Others

"They got me connected with folks who were working for social change and social justice in the grass roots political level." Stanley.

Social workers believe that the social environment shapes human behaviors. Schools of social work teach theories devoted to this notion. The principle of person-in-environment is a trademark of social work practice. The theme of being inspired by others can be seen through this lens. Research has identified the important role that peer and social networks can play (Good, 2010; Taha, Hastings & Minei, 2015). Gordon and Taft (2011) found that for teen activists peer networks were a contributing component to their development. These networks can play a critical role in bringing people to social justice advocacy practice. This is supported by my research, as many participants shared examples of how their interpersonal networks brought them to their social justice advocacy work. In addition, Barretti (2007) stated that modeling behaviors is an effective manner in which to convey professional values. Participants explained how they were inspired by the behaviors modeled by others in their social networks.

Anthony takes a psychological perspective on this subject. He explained that he believes there are people who have an inclination to be open to the influence of others, but believes that there are also those who are not as susceptible to the influence of others – if even at all. He presented this by referencing his own internal makeup in relation to his brother's.

> *Some people, including one of my brothers, you know, as a child they figure out who they are and they pursue their own course regardless of outside influence. Then there's other people who are in contact with other influences and are basically affected by those outside influences. I have a brother who's the former, and I am certainly the latter.*

Anthony shared that being open to the inspiration of others has frequently led him to his sustained social justice efforts. To illustrate this he shared that his wife's inspiration had been a sustaining force in his many decades of advocating for social justice. He said that at the time of their marriage she was more interested in social activism than he was, and that her influence brought him back to it.

Stanley grew up economically disadvantaged in an otherwise wealthy community. In addition, he was raised by a parent who suffered from severe mental illness. The combination of these life factors led Stanley to feeling different than his peers, and as a result, a certain kinship to marginalized populations. Now forty years old, he takes an introspective approach during our interview. He begins by sharing that his first introduction to the world of social justice efforts came through his teenage employment at a local coffee shop. He described how this happened due to the influence of a few of his regular customers. He said that when they frequented the coffee shop they would talk about politics with him. One day they arrived wearing badges indicating they were lobbyists at the State Capitol. He *"found out that they worked for nonprofit organizations, and labor unions, and for organizations that try to make a difference in people's lives."* This was something that Stanley had long wanted to be involved in himself, but he did not know how to go about it. He said that eventually

> *They got me connected with folks who were working for social change and social justice in the grass roots political level; working in towns and cities to help bring about the types of policies that were aligned with my thinking about insuring a level of fairness and opportunity [for those] who were less advantaged.*

Stanley's involvement with social justice advocacy was initiated by the influence of his coffee-drinking, lobbyist acquaintances.

Coleman shared how Jesse Jackson, and his 1984 Presidential Campaign, was an inspiration for him. "*I was able to cast my first vote ever, in the Democratic Primary, and it was for Jesse Jackson. I was so inspired by his campaign, and what he was talking about.*" But prior to this electoral experience, there were many others who inspired Coleman to engage in social justice advocacy practices. He shared examples of this phenomenon occurring at different points throughout his life, beginning when he was a child as he had educational, and informative, interactions with adult activists in his neighborhood. They were presenting ideas and modeling behaviors.

> *I just had the ability to have those conversations with older people…I think that a part of it was that these people who were involved in these things really took an interest in me…I mean I was having those conversations with them. And I had an interest in it. And they would sort of feed that interest by providing me with material and encouragement to learn more and to figure out how to become engaged.*

These "*older people*" were examples of power for Coleman, who inspired him to learn more and seek ways to be part of their efforts. Along his journey he developed meaningful relationships with these adults.

> *I think about Mr. Grace, for example, who provided me with the opportunity to just work on behalf of Congressman Crocket at the time, who was a long-serving black Congressman in the City of Detroit. And that experience was just a great experience. Learning about his campaign; learning more about the Congressman and the work that he was doing inside of the city. When I applied for college I got a letter of recommendation from his office. Again, that sort of helped me connect about the*

importance of being politically and civically engaged. And getting that letter of recommendation also is about one can be rewarded for that kind of effort.

The opportunity to work with African-American leaders inspired Coleman. He learned about civic organizing and the ripple of good it could have across his city. Similar to his experience with the city-wide current events contest that he was runner up in back to back years, he was personally rewarded by this experience, also.

Coleman also remembered a neighborhood man named Mr. Bowles whom he would speak with frequently. Mr. Bowles was active in the Urban League. Coleman remembered "*having conversations with him and being encouraged to learn more.*" He remembers Mr. Bowles sharing copies of the State of Black America with him. These are examples of how Coleman was inspired by people he met – frequently neighbors who took an interest in him. He summarized these experiences by saying that for him "*it's really the totality of things instead of one specific, life changing, event. It's just the culmination of many conversations from many different people."*

Arthur, Don, and Abe were all influenced by college compatriots, but in different ways. Don described having a *"Reaganite"* roommate who was his *"antithesis."* His roommate's influence on him was magnified due to the amount of time they shared in their small dormitory quarters. *"He kind of drove me to become more liberal. Maybe I would say he forced me to see who I was and where I was coming from."* Arthur shared a similar belief in social justice with his peers, but they viewed it on an international stage. He remembers joining them at demonstrations. Their influence aided Arthur in seeing social justice from a more global perspective. *"I started to realize that as bad as the skewed income distribution is in the United States of America, the problem is in some ways even worse globally."* While spending a college

year abroad in a nation governed by a totalitarian regime, Abe's roommate brought revolutionaries into their home. Abe explained that this peer was influential in his development. *"I had a roommate who was a left wing anarchist. And he was very influential, and brought these people over to the house and I got talking to them…and I found out how bad things were."* In different ways Don, Abe, and Arthur's social justice involvement was inspired by collegiate comrades.

Research by Back, Back and Knapton (2015) found that someone with a strong desire to belong has a greater likelihood of participation. This is how Jill first got involved. The combination of her recent divorce and the amount of time she was spending raising her two young children left her socially isolated and feeling *"very lonely."* When a mother of one of her daughter's classmates invited her to participate on an Election Day, Jill jumped at the opportunity. The inviting mother had been involved in social justice efforts for many years. Jill estimated that this took place in 1973 and she, herself, has been involved in social justice advocacy efforts since. Jill described to me how her many decades of involvement have been characterized by the friendships she has made. She said that these friendships, in large part, are what drive her.

Maria states that her participation began while she was in high school. She said that she had friends who were involved with a church-based youth organization and that she joined this group for primarily social reasons. She said her participation in this group made her *"feel like I was part of a community and part of a group of people who cared about one another and who cared about the world."* Looking back on her life, Maria summarized the importance of her social community in the social justice work she has done. *"The idea of relationships and having kind of a community of people that I feel connected to, I think that's really important to me."*

Anthony and James, both, shared a similar sentiment with Maria. Anthony, too, identified that it is not an accident that the influence of his peers influences his advocacy work. *"My personal relationships are with people who are trying to help the same way I'm trying to help."* James shared that while there were many people who inspired him, including public figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and his family, *"I think what really influenced me were the people that I was closest to because we were doing it together."* He elaborated that he was strongly influenced by activist minded high school contemporaries. These were

> *Peers who were on the same path that I was, that were sort of mentors. There were a couple of people at my high school that were activists. We had each other, we read books together, we talked together, that was really important.*

James found a high school home within a web of teenage social activists. When he went away for college this experience repeated itself.

> *There were a few people who were part of the anti-war movement who took me under their wing, and pushed me forward, and encouraged me to run for various things, or volunteer to speak up at a meeting, or speak at a rally, or write things.*

In college, James found new mentors who helped his social justice activism progress. In high school they *"talked together,"* while in college they would *"speak up at a meeting, or speak at a rally."* In high school they studied other peoples' works as they *"read books together,"* while in college they would create their own works, as they would *"run for various things"* and *"write things."* James' development as a social justice advocate was sowed by the influence, and inspiration, of his peers.

Theme 4: Duty

"And I just felt that…it was my responsibility to stand for people who wouldn't be listened to as well as I will be listened to." Sophia.

Willingness, standing by itself, does not portend action. For the social justice advocate, however, the willingness to participate is married to the obligation to do so. The spirit of obligation is a common theme found in this and other similar research. Ellis-Williams (2007) summarized that there are people whose participation in "social activism was more a deeper understanding of their life's purpose" (p. 123). Among her study's participants she found some who described social activism as a "calling" (Ellis-Williams, 2007, p. 123). This is exemplified by a participant in her study who said "I think this is what I am supposed to do" (Ellis-Williams, 2007, p. 123). A compulsion, or a calling, is more than an impulse. It is an impossible-to-ignore internal compass which, in the case of many of my study's participants, drove them to participate in social justice efforts. Activism, as defined in chapter two, includes feeling compelled to act. When one's willingness to participate is tied to one's perceived purpose in life, it leads to action.

Cannan (1975) describes that it is a social worker's responsibility to challenge prevailing power structures. Though none were social workers, the participants in my study maintained a similar viewpoint: they felt that it was their responsibility to challenge established social and political mores and praxis. Jane Addams (1912) penned that "the responsibility of tolerance lies with those of the widest vision" (p. 163). Social justice advocates have this "widest vision" and those in my study view their advocacy efforts as their "responsibility." For many of this study's participants engaging in social justice efforts was less of a choice, but instead more of a duty for which they felt responsible to perform.

Many of my study participants described having an internal motivation to strive for the advancement of social justice. They shared examples of how they felt compelled to do this work. They viewed that engaging in these efforts was not a choice, but instead, a type of duty that they felt it was their responsibility to partake in. There is something inside of social justice advocates that directs them to this calling. But what is it that stirs this desire within them?

It appears to begin with a basic desire for fairness. Many of the participants described this feeling – the guttural desire to take social justice oriented actions – as coming from their core. Amy is recently retired from a long career in the helping professions. She was raised in the Caribbean and emigrated to America as a young adult. When I asked her what it was that kept her involved in her social justice work through the course of many decades, she replied by saying *"I want to see people treated fairly and not denied of their rights. That's one thing that really drives me."* Numerous other participants described a similar ardor. Anthony said *"I always want to help. I always want to improve situations."* Being driven by the desire to advance social justice is at the heart of many social justice advocates. While many people have a strong desire to accomplish something, not everyone follows through with action. What, then, is it about the social justice advocates in this study that drove them to make the choice to take action? For the answer to this question, I look to the additional experiences of the study participants.

Sophia described that as a middle-aged white woman, she resides in a place of relative advantage within the social environment. As such, she feels compelled to advocate for her less privileged peers. She said that it was her *"responsibility to stand for people who wouldn't be listened to as well as I will be listened to."* During our interview I asked her to elaborate on this.

She responded by saying *"I feel a responsibility for other people."* Sophia had no hesitation in her response, and it seemed so simple as she presented it.

Though experienced from an economically and racially different perspective, Coleman sees his social standing and its associated responsibility, in a similar way.

> *As an African American male who earned a PhD, who grew up in a welfare dependent household, in a neighborhood with an incredibly high level of concentrated poverty, I'm actually quite unique that I'm standing where I stand in life…it's just a reminder for me about how important it is to have people in your life who take an interest in you and are willing to do things to aid you on this journey.*

Both Sophia and Coleman feel a responsibility to give voice to the disadvantaged. In Sophia's experience, her role is to make sure their voices are heard. For Coleman, his role is to stand with them in such a manner that it will foster empowerment within them to further their life's journey.

According to Harry, advancing social justice occurs in a large group context. He described how he sees high value in doing this work. He said that the reason he chose to become an attorney is because he sees the legal profession as a vehicle to help others. *"I felt, as an attorney, you have an obligation to give back to the community…I got into law to help people."* As his career progressed and he found himself presiding at the judge's bench, he was able to *"give back to the community"* in even greater magnitude.

Phenomenological research is based upon participant descriptions of their lived experiences. When reviewing the language Sophia and Harry used to describe why they have worked to advance social justice there is a clear similarity. Sophia said it was a *"responsibility,"* while Harry said it was an *"obligation."* Concurring with this, John said that for him this was a "*duty*."

Stanley approaches this topic from a different perspective. He spoke of his maturation process. He said that his desire to work for the justice of others was something that initially grew from "*the difficulties I faced growing up in a difficult circumstance in my household…As I matured…I wanted to help other people who I thought I might have the power to help."* Stanley makes a valuable assertion. He describes the obligation to aid marginalized groups as something he has the *"power"* to do. In viewing social justice advocacy in this manner, he is taking a strengths perspective in describing how the manifestation of his personal maturation has led to having the *"power"* to help others. Stanley recognized that having the ability to assist others is a form of empowerment.

Theme 5: Challenging Social Conventions/Rebellious Framework

"I had always had an orientation for standing up for the little guy." Arthur.

Doctrine is established by those with authority and frequently is designed to protect their power. Whether intentional or not, a byproduct of this can be the manifestation of oppression. In other words, doctrine can serve to maintain power structures. Regarding this notion, Saul Alinsky (1971) wrote that "dogma is the enemy of human freedom" (p. 4). There are people who obey the trappings tradition, and others who challenge it. "The power of systems of oppression and privilege are propelled by individual actions and behaviors. Each person has a responsibility to examine their own positionality within the system, understand where one colludes with the system, and where one can evoke change" (ASHE, 2013, p. 72). Those who endeavor to "evoke change" on unjust systems are those who possess a rebellious framework. A key component of advocacy, as defined in chapter 2, is taking action to open such systems. This section explores ways that the rebellious framework found within social justice advocates drives them to challenge inequitable systems.

Swank (2012) identified that while some people build their identity within the confines of established conventions, the identity of others is constructed through the questioning of authority. These are people who challenge social canons. Attempts to challenge authority and its associated cultural norms, can be a very difficult task because dominant classes guarding the status quo will persevere for its permanence (Alinksy, 1971; Berberoglu, 2015). Social justice advocates are those who challenge the status quo; those who do not accept the authority of the establishment; those who are not opposed to a political fight. These are people with a rebellious framework.

Study participants shared numerous examples of them challenging long-standing social standards. Arthur shared a story about being a participant in the legislative fight for transgendered equality. This took place prior to bathroom bills prompting the national media to give attention to this topic. He shared that *"giving protections against discrimination to transgendered individuals was a controversial issue and I was one hundred percent for equal rights for the transgendered community."* While many elected officials may have shied away from a controversial issue, Arthur did not allow the public contentiousness which surrounded this to hinder his support. He shared poignantly that *"some of those debates were pretty ugly."* In his support of this cause, Arthur challenged traditional practices.

Amy sees herself within history; this is where her rebellious framework comes from. Her grandfather was a member of the Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association, and worked directly with Garvey himself. In addition to being known as a leader for challenging the status quo, Amy described Garvey as an entrepreneur, a poet, and a preacher. *"He was the first person who came out and said 'black is beautiful' and about…black pride."* She credited Garvey as *"the person that instilled awareness into Malcom X, Martin Luther King, and also*

Obama." It appeared that he also instilled awareness in Amy. But due to her grandfather's relationship with Garvey, himself, the awareness instilled within her was more personal than historical.

This rebellious passion did not skip her mother's generation. *"My mother remembers when Garvey came to Jamaica her father brought her to the parade to see Garvey. So, it's embedded."* Garvey's influence on Amy's family started with her grandfather, included her mother (who she said emulated Garvey), and was eventually inculcated within Amy. Amy said someone *"I really embrace and look up to a lot was my mother cause she passed it on to us. You know, she passed on about her father, about her political…not being afraid to be involved politically."* Amy embraces her rebellious nature, which was gifted to her by her family. The rebelliousness that beats within her heart is manifested in her beliefs. She said *"if they could have an opinion about black people going for greatness, why is it now we cannot have an opinion and strive for greatness?"*

Natalie, too, had an intergenerational introduction to social justice. She cited her mother being a powerful influence in her development.

> *My mother was a remarkable teacher for all six of her kids. There's six in my family. She was a remarkable teacher as far as trying to right social injustices. She was born and raised in Mississippi. And during that time, she was born in the thirties, in a small town in Mississippi known as Laurel, Mississippi. And during that time that area had some of the worst hate crimes imaginable. I mean lynchings were not anything out of the norm. And she grew up in this environment, yet she grew up not having a racist bone in her body. She was really a person ahead of her years. She didn't really fit into that time.*

She continued by describing how her mother lived against the cultural grain – not just within society but within her own family. As a young child, her mother recognized injustice and inequality, and it did not sit well with her even in the context of her privileged life.

> *She would tell us about some of the arguments she would have with her mother, in particular, cause her mother would insist that the help come into the house through the back door and my mother would always let them in through the front door. And that was just an ongoing battle with them. The black help did not come in through the front door.*

As a child, her mother rebelled against the social structure. This is a framework that has been passed down to her from her mother, and is something that Natalie is very proud of.

The rebellious nature described in the above experiences can become the lens through which people see the world. During our interview, Don described being *"under attack"* nine different times. He referenced times when the labor movement generally, and individual unions specifically, were under attack. He also spoke of times when both state employees, and private businesspeople, were under attack. He summarized this by saying *"I think it's a class thing for me."* He continued by elaborating on this perspective.

Don describes different aggressors at different times but the common philosophical thread they shared was to maintain, or even exacerbate, unjust systems to the detriment of common people. These proprietors of power practice oppression as defined in chapter two: the utilization of power to limit individual or group access to social resources. Don's sensitivity to this leads to action. *"I don't like being under attack, and so I usually try to fight back."* Arthur stated that *"I had always had an orientation for standing up for the little guy."* This orientation is shared by Don and is at the core of his rebellious nature.

Jeff may be the definition of a reluctant servant. He shared many stories that described

how his feeling that public service is an obligation led his way. He views politics, advocacy, and government in philosophical terms. His philosophical beliefs and his public service are amalgamated in his activism. Jeff's family lives in a working class section of his town. He remembers people speaking derogatorily of the neighborhood elementary school that his daughter attended – a school that he believed in. *"People said to me 'it's a terrible place.' You know. And I would look at them and say 'what do you mean it's a terrible place? My kid goes to school there? How do you mean it's a terrible place?'"* He found this partly flabbergasting, and partly offensive.

He recalls a similar experience that took place later. There was a woman, who resided in a different part of town, testifying at a municipal hearing who spoke of the dangers of his daughter's school, and by association, his neighborhood.

> *[She] testified at this hearing, and said "well, you know, you can't ask people to go to Charter Oak School, that school is surrounded by a huge wrought iron fence. And you know why that is? That's because there are so many evil people they have to have that fence to keep them out, out of the school grounds." I said "really?" I had no idea that that's why they put the fence there…I thought it was to keep the kids from running into the streets.*

Jeff perceived that the beliefs intimated by the above testimony could sustain unjust perceptions of inequality. He views America as a *"place of opportunity and place where people are treated fairly."* This experience shows how Jeff felt that his belief system, his daughter, and their beloved school, were under attack. His willingness to fight back by representing both his daughter's school and the town show his rebellious framework.

By the time James arrived to college he knew that advocating for social justice was what fueled him and that he was ready to challenge conventions. The sundry experiences of his youth showed him that. As a result of his rebellious framework he soon found himself at the center of a campus wide protest that gained national attention.

> *By the time I got to [college] it was as if I had a sign on my chest that said "come recruit me to some radical organization, I'm ready." And sure enough, probably the third or fourth day that I was [there] I got a leaflet under my door that said "if you want to join the Students for a Democratic Society, call this number." And it was signed by a couple of other…students who were a year ahead. And so I called them up. And a week after I got to [college] I was already a member of SDS. And never stopped.*

One year later James and his peers made national news when they led a student strike that shut down the university for nearly one month. His school was known for its decorum, high mindedness, even snobbery. Its Ivy League status was buttressed by its Greek Revival architecture, gigantic endowment, and tradition that dates to before the American Revolution. But on this college campus, in 1969, the students took over.

> *I was a sophomore…there was a gigantic student strike at [my college]. All of the students went out on strike…mainly against the war, and [our school's] complicity in it. So we took over the…administrative building. We escorted the Deans out. We sat in the building for a couple of days. Police were called and beat the crap out of us, and arrested us. The campus was basically then shut down for almost a month with student strikes, and meetings, and teach-ins, and rallies, and counter-rallies.*

The Students for a Democratic Society led strike had influence beyond just James' college campus. It became national news, and an example of the power of organizing. *"It was on the*

front page of Life Magazine…The…strike really showed that students were on fire and the war was incredibly unpopular." In the middle of all of this was James. Though he was just a college sophomore his organizing skills were being sharpened, and pointed towards challenging social conventions. The effectiveness of his efforts – both for his school and the nation – made this *"quite a kind of extraordinary moment"* for him.

A rebelliousness framework can take many forms. William subscribes to Freirean beliefs. When teaching English and Spanish to indigenous people in Mexico and Canada he explained how he brought a questioning authority stance to his classroom – while making it clear that his was a classroom not bordered by bricks and mortar.

> *So instead of, for example, having a classroom and teaching them how to conjugate the past predicate, or something like this, I would go into their space and they would guide their own learning based on their vocabulary and their language needed to liberate themselves as part of their engagement with their communities. And…using language in this case to understand broader structures as Freire would say of oppression, whether it's racialized or land or labor or other kinds of systems. So using language learning as an opportunity of empowering these different communities.*

William was using his own authority, in this case as a teacher, to empower marginalized classes in their struggle to justice. Challenging power structures by increasing access to resources for oppressed populations is linked to the tenets of political progressivism, which is the next theme that I discovered.

Theme 6: Progressive Vision

"Government stands in the middle, and looks both ways for people, and asks how do we clear the path so that the most people get the most good?" Jeff.

Progress cannot happen in the absence of change. Mimi Abromovitz (1998) identified that social work history has been marked by left leaning reforms. This dates to the Settlement House Movement at the profession's inception (Gil, 1998). With a long, distinguished history of supporting progressive reforms, social work's progressive roots are well established. One of the most interesting findings of this research was the strong connection between the social justice advocates I interviewed and their own progressive beliefs. As I detailed in the previous chapters, progressive thought and social work have been closely connected for over one hundred years (Gil, 1998; Murdach, 2010; Talbot & McMillin, 2014). Supporting this sentiment, Paolo Freire (1990) said that social workers must have a "progressive obsession" (p. 7). The social justice advocates in this study possess exactly that. In fact, there were many examples of participant beliefs representing the historical roots of progressive thought.

The early twentieth century Progressives believed in labor reforms and instituting protections for the workers of America ("PBS," n.d.). They championed new standards of fairness in the workplace with proposed reforms that included establishing a minimum wage and limiting children to eight-hour work days ("PBS," n.d.). These progressive pioneers made their support of organized labor explicit. "We favor the organization of the workers, men and women as a means of protecting their interests and of promoting their progress" ("PBS," n.d.). This sentiment – believing organized labor as the apparatus to protect workers – is mirrored by many of my study's participants.

Don, who at different times called himself a *"practical progressive"* and a *"working class progressive,"* explained his belief in labor unions. He explained that the modern workers are frequently under attack and being organized is their best defense. Buttressing Don's beliefs are Amy's actions. She described how she has been able to use her leadership position within her union to safeguard her peers' rights. *"When I see people being denied of their rights and representing them, and being able to speak to the managers too, and to be able to get different things changed for the betterment of the patient and the staff."*

Don also believes that organized labor is an effective means to address economic injustice. *"I actually believe in labor unions because I think they're an important way to equalize economic power in the United States."* Though the Progressive Era was one hundred years ago many social justice advocates, including Don, continue to fight for its principles. Regarding the need for labor unions he lamented, *"I just think that actually, sadly, they're needed now more than ever."*

Belief in equality of opportunity is the entrant to progressive beliefs. The 1912 Progressive Party Platform stated "the people must use their sovereign powers to establish and maintain equal opportunity" ("PBS," n.d.). Many of the participants in my research maintain an orientation towards equality. Maria stated that both equality, and opportunity, were very important to her. Abe felt similarly, saying that he believed in *"justice for all."* Amy, too, endorsed this notion. She said *"I like to be part of change and to see better for every[body]."*

The early twentieth century Progressives believed in a Federal Income Tax ("PBS," n.d.). This would mean a more equal national taxation program whereby taxes would be based upon one's ability to pay: those with greater income would pay a greater share of the taxes. One hundred years later, during a time of economic turmoil in his home state, Coleman subscribes to

the benefits of graduated taxes based upon income. He said that "*austerity is not the answer to the budget problems here in the state, that revenue…and especially making people with the ability to pay to pay.*" His beliefs are firmly rooted in historically progressive thought.

While an elected leader, James fought hard to advance a progressive income tax in his home state. He humbly emphasized that he was but one of many people who worked to enact this legislation, and underscores that this was a great progressive victory.

> *We actually completely changed the tax…I was the guy who kind of organized the legislators…And that fight led to, after eleven months of struggle, and big demonstrations, this, that and the other thing, led to a major progressive change in the tax structure that has helped…immensely over the last 25 years.*

His work as an organizer shifted his state's tax revenue from a sales tax, where everyone pays equally, to an income tax, whereby peoples' tax contributions are in accordance to their ability to pay. Similar to Coleman, and most of this study's participants, James' beliefs regarding the equitability of taxes is tied to Progressive thought.

Natalie explained that a social justice advocate must have progressive beliefs, and she tied progressivism to justice. She referenced the progressive stance towards increasing access to health care for all people as an example of social justice.

> *Progressives are all about justice. Progressives are really very much about equality and treating people with, you know, in a humane way. That everybody should have universal health care. That's a social justice issue. Why should impoverished people, why should poor people not have health insurance? So the progressives are very, very, very much about just treating people humanely.*

Her world view is perhaps rooted in the discriminatory, unjust manner that her biracial family

was treated when she was in her formative years. Her stories about these years, which are described earlier in this chapter, were neither just nor humane. Natalie views progressivism as being opposed to that kind of treatment for anyone.

Jeff, too, spoke about the important value of equal opportunity. *"This is a place of opportunity and place where people are treated fairly,"* he said. He elaborated on his beliefs in describing his prospects of the American democratic experiment.

> *The notion of grace the notion that people need acceptance, that they deserve acceptance, and that on everybody's terms you could sort of, um, you don't have to be a remarkable person, you just need to be striving to be the good person you can be, and that's gotta be enough…I think that's universal. I think that that's really what you want. I think that's what the Declaration of Independence was about really. When you get back the idealism of America that's really kind of what we think. You know? We're gonna set out to make it possible for everybody to achieve the best things that they can achieve. And we're gonna do that in this sort of balanced way where we have this crazy government and these, you know, nutty ideas about being created equal.*

While the Progressives endeavored to protect the Constitution from those who *"would convert it into an instrument of injustice,"* more than one hundred years later Jeff represents a contemporary link in the progressive chain as his views are closely tied to progressive precepts ("PBS," n.d.). They are rooted in equal opportunity – that there's an avenue to reach the American Dream – whatever that may be – for everyone.

Maria first grew interested in politics while working for the Nuclear Freeze Campaign. She identified how this experience taught her *"how politics could have an impact on making what I would call, systems change."* The Progressives believed that the government systems can

be a force for good. They were not afraid of a larger government. This is a political belief that is shared by many of my participants. Anthony explained this in the context of his of social security check and how this is a government program that assists people nationally. *"I believe, actually, is if you really want to get something done…you tie into the government."* Social security was rooted in progressive policy (Gil, 1998). Don cited how government regulations can protect workers by limiting their hours and protecting workers' compensation benefits – both ideals championed by the Progressives ("PBS," n.d.). Amy said *"I believe, my basic belief…that everybody is entitled to good health and good education."* The Progressives wanted to codify Amy's beliefs. They wanted to end illiteracy and expand public education ("PBS," n.d.). They also proposed creating a Federal health service ("PBS," n.d.).

But what is the purpose of government, both in the eyes of progressive thought and in the eyes of many of my participants? Jeff gave this summary: *"Government stands in the middle, and looks both ways for people, and asks how do we clear the path so that the most people get the most good?"* Jeff closely ties government's ability to be a tool for righteousness with participation. *"I think the willingness of people to participate means that government has to be fair and even-handed. And if that can happen then I think it works."* This position regarding *"even-handed"* governing is represented by Lady Justice, herself. This also aligns with the definition of social justice found in chapter two that focuses on the equal sharing of society's boons and burdens. A progressive view of government, one that is shared by many of this study's participants, is that it can be society's protector of equal opportunity.

Theme 7: Fulfillment

"I've become one of the village lawyers." Amy.

Another theme found among my participants was how they felt fulfilled. Fiorito et al. (2010) state that the results of an activist's work can lead that activist to self-actualization. This was supported by the participants in this study. Participants described gaining deep satisfaction from advancing the causes they believe in. In different ways, these participants found that the work they have done has led them to feeling personally fulfilled.

It became clear that Amy's life as a social justice advocate really began in previous generations – with the work of her mother and grandfather. She takes special pride in being a link in this chain. She told a story that she learned from her mother. Her mother told her that grandfather was a self-educated, well-informed, Jamaican soldier.

> *He used to write letters for people. He used to advise people. He used to play the violin. He was a deacon in the church. He used to have services on Sunday evenings, and singing and all that. And my grandmother…would be in the house and people would come to him for advice, she would say "oh just look at that village lawyer, look at the village lawyer." I've become one of the village lawyers. People come to me a lot for advice.*

Amy finds great meaning in striving to live a life consistent with her grandfather's values, and sees herself as having been molded in his image. Others may not be aware of this, but it matters to Amy. In this manner she finds deep fulfillment.

Amy is not alone in feeling fulfilled by the work that she does. When describing the passage of the transgendered equality bill that he supported, Arthur described it as *"a very proud day."* Don worked to increase union solidarity among different factions of workers. He looks

back on these efforts and notes *"I really kind of changed the union."* Jill shares of the positive feelings she gains from hosting different political events at her home. Abe says that his successful support for the construction of a new elementary school is one of his *"great accomplishments."* He said, *"I fought and fought right to the end and won. And we built the school and it's gorgeous."* I can only imagine the pride he feels each time he drives past it. In these differing ways, all of these social justice advocates found fulfillment in their achievements.

Natalie expressed fulfillment realized based on her many years as an advocate for social justice. When I asked her if there were particular endeavors that she has felt most proud of she gave a global response.

> *I guess just the fact that I'm still involved. I do take pride in that. It's not just something that I got involved for one election and then was done with it. It has been something that I've been involved in for a number of years, and continue to be. I guess that's what I take the greatest pride in.*

When I probed further on this subject, she said that her greatest accomplishment within the social justice arena was "*getting my daughter involved*." She detailed how she feels responsible for her daughter's social justice development.

> *I've taken her out to protest, I've taken her out to rallies…so she's tasted it for sure. And she gets very passionate about issues. And I think that as she matures, I don't think, I know, I know she's going to be involved. You know, in what capacity I don't know. But I know whenever I ask her to go to different rallies and events with me by and large she's interest in going along with me.*

In this case, it is not the advancement of specific causes that brings the most pride to Natalie. Instead, it is seeing her daughter develop into a social justice advocate, herself, which fills Natalie with feelings of fulfillment.

Coleman shared two meaningful stories of how his efforts to advance social justice has brought him fulfillment. First he shared about the feeling he associates with this work. These are feelings of fulfillment that are associated with advancing a cause.

> *You find yourself involved with really good people working on things that really matter that are important. And it helps that from time to time you feel that you've made a meaningful contribution. And so if I've had an opportunity to testify on some legislation, and maybe that legislation gets passed, or it's seriously considered, you feel good about that. When you are having strategy sessions with people about various sorts of campaigns that they're working on and you're a part of those conversations – that feels good.*

Second, he shared a specific story about a former student. He shared how he learned that he had been an important part of her own journey, one that has led her to working for social justice. He remembers taking a supportive interest in her, and advice he would give her during her college career. What was the advice? Simply not to panic. In explicitly conveying that message he was implicitly conveying the message that he believed in her.

> *I had a student we brought back who was a young alumnus. She had started her own sort of non-profit, and some other things. And she really talked about how she tried to take every class I taught and she just remembered that day of coming in and that simple advice, and just being a mentor, and taking an interest and encouraging her to do things and to take on challenges, and so things really matter.*

Harry reflected on his journey to judgeship as the culmination of life's legal work. *"It's the one job I've had in my life where almost every day somebody said 'thank you.' I mean think about that. I got into law to help people and then I'm Probate Judge where I actually did help people every day."* Harry attained fulfillment in using the law to help people daily. In addition, he also felt fulfilled by the kind words of thanks that his court's clients would bestow upon him.

One of Jeff's goals for his service on the Board of Education was to bring it greater harmony. When he ran for this post that nobody else wanted it, but his recognition that there were people clamoring to run for his seat at the conclusion of his term signifies to him that times had changed. This brings him satisfaction. *"I sort of felt like I did the thing I set out to do. I think I got the board, to the degree I was able to do it, I was just one person, to the extent that I was able to bring some sort of balance, and some sort of reason back to the activities of the Board, I think that that was my goal."* At the conclusion of his term, Jeff realized fulfillment by witnessing new, town-wide interest in Board of Education candidacy.

Maria identified that the fulfillment she receives from her work is a motivating factor to continue doing it. She suspected that this is the case for others, too.

> *I think that doing social justice work is obviously important for making change in the world. But there's something that's also, I don't want to suggest that it's…completely altruistic…I feel like people pursue careers that are also very fulfilling for them. And so I think it was also really fulfilling for me to do this work.*

Pride can come with fulfillment and while it can have a negative connotation this association should not be leveled here. John describes how he views these as two very different things. Describing his social justice work, John said *"I suppose I get a little dopamine hit out of fulfillment, but I distinguish that from ego because, after all, the point is really…you're trying to*

help others who are less fortunate." He identifies that his moral motivations differentiate this from a purely ego-based endeavor; therefore, getting *"a little dopamine hit out of fulfillment"* is not diluted by selfish intentions. John's assessment is supported by Erasmus and Morey (2016), who suggest volunteerism motivations related to self-growth can be different than those related to ego. This is reinforced by Stukas, Hoye, Nicholson, Brown and Aisbett (2016), who examined volunteerism as being "other-oriented" or "self-oriented," (p. 128). They identify that volunteerism primarily oriented toward others positively correlates to social connections and self-efficacy (Stukas et al., 2016).

Abe also feels fulfilled from the international youth exchange program that he spearheaded. He told me about his feelings related to starting, and then maintaining, this program.

> *I loved it because I believed in the exchange program…And it was very important to start with young people. Never mind teachers and adults and all that…what I wanted was to get people in Spain, young people in Spain and the United States together so that they could understand each other and the two countries could, you know, foster a good relationship. Which has happened. It really has.*

He said that the program has been very successful. The fulfillment he feels is not focused on having created a program, but in seeing the ways that it has benefited its young participants.

Finally, Stanley describes feelings of fulfillment in personal terms. He looks inward as he considers the work that he has accomplished. *"Through my journey of helping others I have helped myself and now I have the sort of lifestyle that was, I felt, unattainable to me growing up."* He views his social justice advocacy work as central to his personal growth and

development. He finds fulfillment in reaching life achievements that he thought not possible, and recognizes that these achievements were driven by his social justice endeavors.

Theme 8: Tikkun Olam (repairing the world)

"I felt motivated to do something to make the world a better place." Maria.

One of the strongest themes found in this research is that participants have deep, embedded desire to make the world a better place. Many participants spoke these exact words. Both Mitch and William, independent of one another, referenced the Jewish charge of Tikkun Olam as a reason for being involved in social justice work. Specifically, Mitch shared how his Jewish upbringing bestowed this within him. But what is Tikkun Olam? What do those words mean in a scholarly setting? And what do those words mean in practice?

William defined Tikkun Olam as "*repairing the world*," and there are researchers who endorse this definition (Cullinane, 2008; Gutow, 2000). Chanes (1996) defines Tikkun Olam as "the betterment of society" (p. 62). It is a command which requires Jews to take action that will diminish suffering (Gutow, 2000). Specifically, Gutow (2000) references suffering in terms of "poverty, persecution, hunger, the lack of health care and basic educational opportunities," all of which fall within the realm of social justice (p. 46). Advancing Tikkun Olam is tied to action (Chanes, 1996; Fried, Bennett & Keidan, 2009; Gutow, 2000; Liebling, 2003). Specifically, it is action directed by faith (Cullinane, 2008; Gutow, 2000). Consequently, Tikkun Olam can be identified as taking faith-based action to repair the world's social injustices. In a secular view, this action does not need to be tied to the Torah, or any other religious texts; one can simply believe in the necessity to take actions that will lessen suffering within society.

The natural convergence between Tikkun Olam and social justice advocacy connects one's faith in bettering the world with one's actions to accomplish this. Liebling (2003)

describes this as the intersection of spiritual and social actions. "Taking responsibility for ones actions is the heart of any spiritual path, and taking responsibility for one's role in society is the heart of good citizenship" (Liebling, 2003, p. 13). Chanes (1996) states that the route to Tikkun Olam "is the enhancement of those conditions in society that ensure and protect democratic pluralism" (p. 62). This is closely related to Progressive thought. Therefore, the Progressive history of social justice advocacy can be seen in light of Tikkun Olam.

The idea of taking positive action to better the world is not unique to any one religion. Earlier references by Don, Anthony, and Maria all revealed aiding those in need as a teaching emanating from different religious denominations. In this fashion, Tikkun Olam may have some universal meaning. Maria described being a social justice advocate as being related to feeling *"motivated to do something to make the world a better place."* In addition, Maria maintains a *"sense of internal drive to work on this from a basis that I believe that God loves everyone and wants the world to be a place with peace and justice."* She is not dissuaded by the belief that this is a long, slow process; one that will out-live her time on earth. *"I don't believe that it will happen in my lifetime, but I believe that it's important to work toward that. And work with other who want to work toward that."*

Natalie shares a similar sentiment to Maria's. From Natalie's childhood years, when she was the victim of countless injustices, to her adult years, as she has fought for social progress, her efforts have been consistently to heal society.

> *I'm not so naïve as to think that ignorance and hate will ever vanish from this earth. But I do strongly believe that through education and exposure it becomes less. It's gotten better. There's no doubt. When I consider how society has developed since the nineteen*

> *sixties, seventies, it's changed quite a bit but we still have a long way to go. I would like to do my part to change that.*

Natalie is able to look back on how society and culture has changed in her lifetime. Her work has represented, in its own way, her part of to advance fairness and justice in the world.

Coleman approaches his work from a similar point of view. He recognizes that his change efforts are a small part of a much greater whole. He believed that his contributions to advancing causes of social justice are helping to make his state, and the world, a better place.

> *I'm not saving the world, I'm not doing anything that's a game changer necessarily, but I'm a part of the effort that people are making to try to make this a better state, a fairer state, a state in which people who have needs, that those needs are being met; that we're really addressing the challenges being faced as a state and as a world.*

John takes pride in his work to bring cultures together. He was instrumental in expanding a youth exchange program that brought American and Cuban children together. He understands that the two nation's differing political systems can serve to separate their populations. He spoke of how he believes this program has affected the children who have participated. *"They have a view of people from different cultures that is certainly more accepting, more open, and the opposite of the sort of narrow minded kind of blindly following propaganda issued by governments about people."* John believes that his work to bring children of different cultures makes the world a better place. He shared about the impact of the exchange program on participants as well as on his own family, and about the relationships developed, which, according to John, *"I have every reason to believe will be life-long relationships with their counterparts…we have some wonderful life-long friends."*

In chapter 2, I detailed how association is an intervention to fight injustice. Association is a "social solidarity with others" that disregards class (McGerr, 2003, p. 67). This exchange program is an international version of association. John said, *"At the end of the day…a very simple fact is that we've all rediscovered is that people are people."* This exchange is Tikkun Olam for it certainly is repairing the world (Cullinane, 2008; Gutow, 2000).

There is a spiritual element to this work. Amy explained how this realization came to her. Though she has been an advocate for social justice for many years, this awakening was recent. It is the culmination of her life's experiences.

> *I dig deep down and I say "God put us here for different reasons." God. He put us here for different reasons. And why am I here? And why am I here? We may not believe it but we're here to serve each other. You know, and one day it became clear to me. And the things, it says "am I my brother's keeper?" It's not that we're our brother's keeper, we're here to serve each other…All of a sudden it hit me. This is why we're here, really to serve each other. Think about it!*

Bettering the world through participating in service work for each other – that is Amy's conclusion.

Summary

Social justice advocates possess an awareness of injustice and are willing to participate in efforts to alleviate it. The choices they make as they follow this path are frequently influenced by others. They are not easily dissuaded because they view this work as their duty and are oriented to challenge injustice. Their beliefs are closely tied to the Progressive Movement. The combination of all of the above falls under the command of Tikkun Olam. This process is summarized in Figure 2 (below), which diagrams the thematic steps in the developmental

process of the social justice advocates who participated in this study. Frey and Carragee (2016) identify that social justice research has been hampered by "far more abstract critical theorizing than on-the-ground interventions" (p. 4030). In the following chapter, however, I will present how the social justice advocates' data described above offers a fresh approach to social work education.

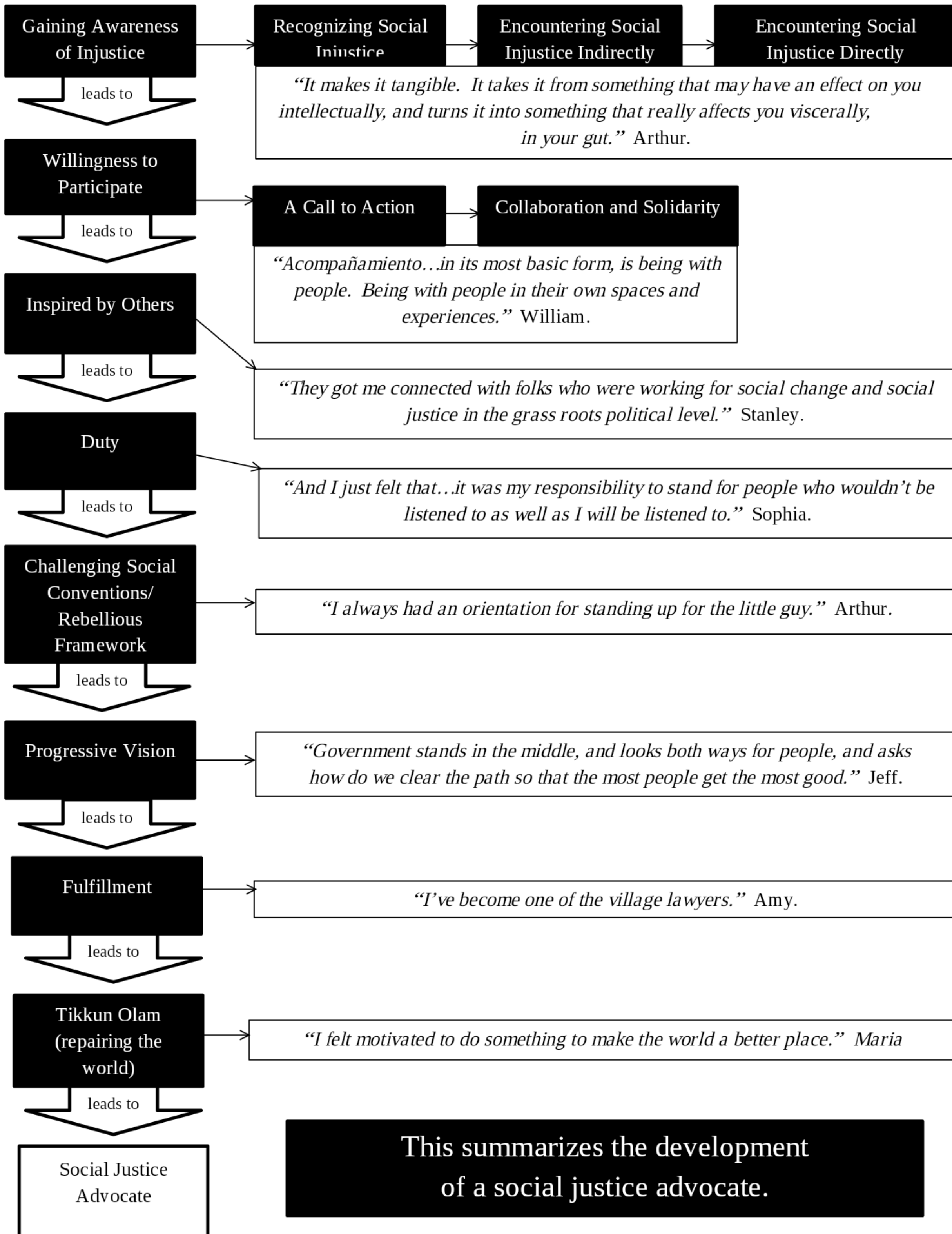

Figure 2

Chapter V

Implications, Limitations, Discussions

Development of a Social Justice Advocate

This phenomenological study sought to learn of the meaningful experiences which contribute to the development of social justice advocates. By learning of their development, schools of social work can effectively appeal to these individuals to enter social work education and practice. Research that is focused upon the search for meaning is an attribute of phenomenology (Grossoehme, 2014). I performed this research through the use of interviews, which is a prevalent data collection method (Butina, et al, 2015; Grossoehme, 2014). Through the interviewing process I endeavored to learn of the important meanings that participants identified from their own histories (De la Cuesta Benjumea, 2015). I recognized that the meaningful, personal stories shared by participants had been processed through the filter of their own interpretation (Dowling & Cooney, 2012; Patton, 2002). I made great efforts to share their stories, and meaning associated with them, in the pure form in which they were told, without their voice being altered through the filter of my own interpretation.

Each interview was transcribed and analyzing this data was performed with the use of NVivo, which assisted me in building an iterative, systematic multilayered coding process. This was an essential tool which helped me in examining the research data and finding underlying themes and meanings that were not always evident (Rabinovich & Kacen, 2010; Watts, 2014). This coding system began at the conclusion of my first interview. The data analysis process shed light on common themes shared by participants and became the themes identified in the previous chapter.

Through the use of this process I was able to cull through the data and identify what appears to be key ingredients in the personal development of the participants in this study that led them to the practice of social justice advocacy. A description of this developmental process is one of the important findings of this research. The process begins with the individual recognizing that injustice exists in the world, and that is closely tied to an eventual encountering of injustice on a personal, emotionally visceral level. While gaining awareness on this level is key it still requires action and the individual must be willing to participate in efforts to allay injustice.

It was interesting to find that many social justice advocates are open to the influence of others. These were not people who tried to live their lives in a vacuum. Instead, they were aware that their developmental journey was affected by many others. In some cases, they were influenced by like-minded peers. In other cases, they were influenced by those who were their philosophical opposites. These influences pushed them to stay true to their social justice beliefs.

Advancing social justice was more than an avocation for these participants. They felt a much stronger drive to advance these causes. They perceived this to be their duty. Frequently, pushing for social justice means pushing against established norms; and challenging established thoughts and customs requires a rebellious framework. The combination of a rebellious orientation, and feeling an obligation to follow its beliefs, propels the social justice advocate's work.

The beliefs held by social justice advocates are rooted in Progressive thought. Many of the issues that this study's participants have advanced can be directly tied to the early twentieth century Progressive Era. These progressive convictions point towards the social justice advocate's fundamental desire to make the world a better place. Social justice advocates realize

a sense of fulfillment from their work. There is often a spiritual element to this aspiration which can be best summarized by the principle of Tikkun Olam.

Implications

For social work education

It is evident that the participants in this study were sensitive to general populations effected by social injustice and specific people touched by injustice. Their work was wide-ranging and its ramifications were felt by many. Participants included local activists, state-wide leaders, and members of the national advocacy stage. In most every case, participants spoke of both systems and the individuals. In social work parlance, they were speaking of both person and environment. Though almost all participants were not social workers, they were practicing our profession's most valued principle of social justice advocacy.

This is in contrast to the trends in current social work literature which showed that the profession of social work is progressing in a manner that leaves its Progressive roots to history. Social work student are increasingly interested in clinical knowledge (D'Aprix, et al., 2004; Fogel & Ersing, 2006; Weiss, 2006). Schools of social work, too, have supported this movement (Funge, 2011; Lane, 2011; Regehr et al., 2012). In other words, attention is being given to the person (diagnosis) at the expense of the environment (policy). While it is possible to gain mastery in both the clinical and macro domains – this has been social work's historical mission – this is frequently not occurring in contemporary social work education.

While schools and students of social work have become increasingly clinically focused, the social justice advocates I interviewed had a broader sense of working with disenfranchised populations. They were able to see both the landscape and the people who dwelled within it. Harry shared about the role the legal system can play in protecting people's rights and he also

shared about a woman who was unfairly sentenced due the ineffective representation of a public defender. Coleman was able to identify the racial injustice in urban Detroit and also the people he saw taking action to change it. Abe spoke about the injustice of a totalitarian system and the people he befriended who fought against it. In a similar light, John spoke of the unjust realities that derive from the politics of clashing nations and how the nonobservance of this has resulted in lasting and meaningful relationships. Anthony shared how social security helps people fight economic injustice on a national policy level, and also how his own social security check aids him. These are all examples of how social justice advocates recognize realities of injustice on both the person and environmental levels.

These participants view their work on a larger, community-based scale, while maintaining a focus on how their work impacts individuals. They seem to understand that both individuals and communities face systemic injustices and their work is performed on this continuum, as it has implications for all. This is what seems to be the essence of social work education, particularly from a generalist perspective as the role of the social work educator is to create a sense of understanding towards the impact of ecosystemic factors that affect people and their environment. Chernus (1995) believed that social work education should address "social and psychological issues" (p. 382). But as social work education has lessened its emphasis on macro courses and programs, this work is increasingly left for non-social workers. Therefore, social work's social justice mission is largely being carried out by those who have not benefited from a social work education.

James, who is not a social worker, summarized this deficit in collegiate training. *"I can't say it was the classes that prepared me but the experience of being in the…anti-war movement, organizing marches, going to Washington, being part of the SDS chapter…That was an*

incredibly good experience." Chapter four is replete with examples of social justice reforms that Miles advanced without a social work education. I cannot help but wonder how much farther he may have advanced these causes had he received formal training in the knowledge, values, and skills of social work.

James reflected on the college courses that he did find helpful – *"American foreign policy, the power elite, there were some student led courses"* – there was a homogeneous, anti-septic environment, which left him yearning for more.

> *What [college] did not prepare me for was to relate to ordinary people. So when I left...I decided I didn't want to just be among upper middle class Ivy League students. That if we were going to really make social change in this country we had to organize – call it the working class, call it communities, working class communities.*

James found a difference between the *"upper middle class Ivy League students"* who filled his college environment and *"working class communities."* This clearly reflects Jane Addams' view that there were separate Americas: one consisting of the upper class, the other consisting of the working class (McGerr, 2003).

> *So I did two things at that point. One is I went to Chicago and went to an organizing training school which was called the Midwest Academy…And so it was sort of like Alinsky, Saul Alinsky training, although it wasn't actually the Alinsky school. And then I did basically five years of community organizing…Basically, I went out and did this kind of organizing work that I thought it was necessary to do. And that gave me a whole 'nother set of experiences that I thought was extremely useful.*

James, in effect, put himself in the position to have a community organizing-based field experience. He organized in urban, working class neighborhoods of Chicago, Boston, and Lynn,

Massachusetts. This was akin to Bertha Capen Reynolds' field work which brought her from her suburban, elite college campus to working class neighborhoods in Greater Boston – perhaps the same Boston neighborhoods that James would work in many years later. James' experience follows the historical path of social work. Again, I cannot help but to wonder the degree to which James could have even further advanced social justice progress if his community organizing training had included social work education. This further underscores the need for social work education to hold true to the macro portion of its continuum.

Clinicians of all fields would agree that people are multi-dimensional; to best train future social workers, social work education should reflect this. It is important for social work education to continue to train social workers with the knowledge, values and unique skill set of the social work profession. It is equally important that social work education not lose sight of macro practices. This research underscores the need to re-infuse the curricula of social work education with its social justice foundation – maintaining an equal focus on both the person and the environment. Doing this could play a pivotal part in attracting students who have macro educational interests. Implications from this research on social work education address the necessity of incorporating equal part person and environment in the classroom which would represent a change in current educational trends.

This current trend in social work education is counter to the increasing trend of people wanting to work for a more just society through the advancement of social justice. In these modern times, and historically, there is a strong national need to advance social work's social justice mission. In the final address of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1944 re-election campaign, he spoke before a packed crowd in Boston's Fenway Park (Smith, 2007). He asserted "religious intolerance, social intolerance, and political intolerance have no place in American

life" (Smith, 2007, p. 627). He was giving equal deference to both the persons who have been victimized by religious, social, and political intolerance and the environments which breed these intolerances. Incorporating this notion – one that puts equal emphasis on person (micro) and environment (macro) – could represent a new trend whereby social work education emphasizes all aspects of social work practice.

With regard to social work curriculum there are additional implications. This research provides an opportunity for new ways that courses can be infused with social justice pursuits. Social Justice skills demonstrated by advocates can and must can be embedded into existing courses across the social work curriculum. In doing this, each course would become more connected to one another. Inculcating social justice into the social work all aspects of the social work curriculum supports this study's finding that social work skills are not specific to any one dimension of practice, but instead, are universally practiced by social workers. In addition, social work faculty now have an opportunity to provide their students with experiences that match the developmental process of the social justice advocates in this study. This developmental process is summarized in the diagram below (Figure 3).

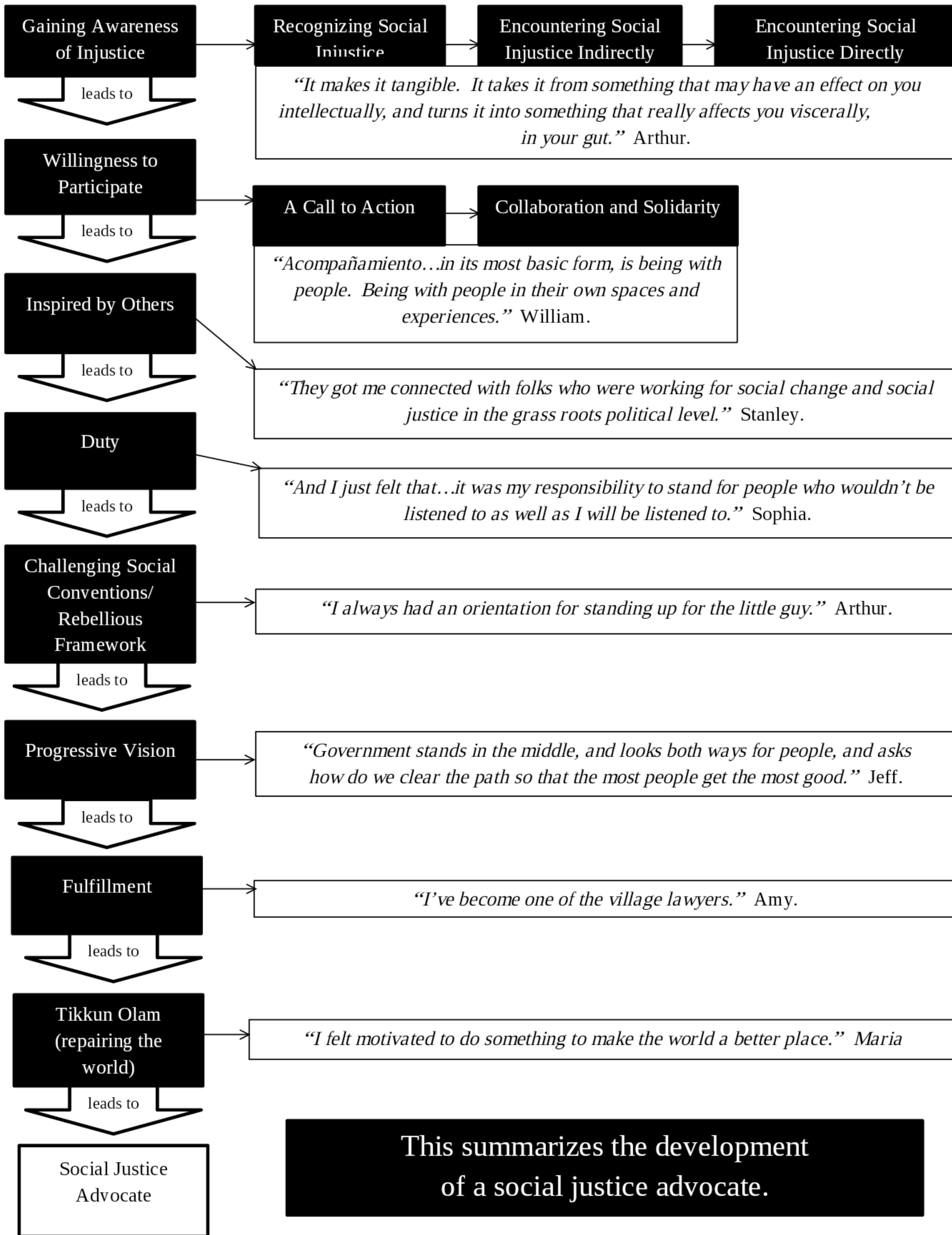

Figure 3

For social work research

There is a large body of research regarding a divide within the social work field that reviews the separation of clinical from macro practitioners. This was portrayed from different perspectives including that of social work education, research, and practice. This literature is most notably highlighted by Specht and Courtney's (1994) *Unfaithful Angels*. This work seemed to catalyze an entire branch of research that focused on the clinical versus macro division within the field. My research has included many works regarding this divide (Bowen, 2015; D'Aprix et al. 2004; Fogel & Ersing, 2016; Funge, 2011; Lane, 2011; McLaughlin, 2002; Weiss, 2006).

While Specht and Courtney (1994) shed valuable light on social work's drift from social justice, the subsequent research shows that it does not appear to have changed this trend. Perhaps this is due to emphasizing differences in practice, rather than similarities. Working with individuals is a skill that is closely associated with clinical practice. But why is that so? Much of Don and Amy's union organizing took place on individual levels. To pass bills, such as Arthur's work to support legislation for transgendered equality, much of the vote garnering done among legislative peers takes place on individual levels, too. John and Harry, both lawyers, use individual skills when working with clients, judges, and opposing counsel. William's view of solidarity, which he called "*acompañamiento*" and defined as "*being with people in their own spaces,*" is a representation of both person and environment. These are all examples of how participants in my study used individual skills to advance social justice. Likewise, advancing social justice is not a practice that excludes clinical work. Frequently it is the injustice in a client's environment that clinicians encourage them to change.

As previously stated, there are volumes of research that view different forms of social work practice as combatants. This approach may be an exhausted perspective of study. This

dissertation found commonality among the skills employed in clinical and macro settings. This presents many implications for future study as further research could explore how social work skills are interchangeable, are not practice-level specific, and can be utilized universally by social workers. This is a new, possibly paradigm-shifting notion of skill and practice-level compatibility. If schools of social work pay equal deference to social work's branches of practice, then those who do student recruitment can utilize the findings from this research to identify and appeal to social justice advocates who are looking for an educational home.

For social work practice

I came to this research based on my own recognition of these differences within our field. My research led to me a deeper understanding of where these differences came from – historically, educationally, and in practice. What I found is that many of these intra-field distinctions were incorrect, and their common perception unjust. As I described above, many social work skills can be utilized with equal effectiveness in different practice settings. Just as there is injustice in excluding social justice advocacy from social work education, there is injustice in propelling the perception that different avenues of social work practice are adversarial.

There is a body of research that has studied the divide between different areas of practice (Andrews & Reisch, 1997; D'Aprix et al., 2004; Gil, 1998; Weiss, 2006). Seiz and Schwab (1992) identified that this division is not a new development. Related research has identified that social work education treats direct practice as being significantly different than macro work (Funge, 2011; Lane, 2011; Regehr et al., 2012). Others have questioned whether social work student goals were divergent from the social work value of social justice (D'Aprix et al., 2004;

GlenMaye & Oakes, 2002). Fogel and Ersing (2016) even strike a call of fear that maintaining this division could result in future social workers having underdeveloped or absent skills.

But the skills used in differing fields of practice should not be perceived as entirely different. In fact, as my findings have shown, it is quite the opposite. Bowen (2015) referenced how social work performed in clinical settings is bound to community and policy work. Chernus (1995) suggests that "comprehensive social work education addressing both social and psychological issues would reduce the polarization" (p. 382). This is a field of study – ways that social work skills can be applied across the spectrum of social work practice – that has received little attention. Future study should focus on this, as it would represent a paradigm shift: instead of promulgating the perception of a divided field where specialization pushes us apart, studies could focus on how the application of social work skills can be utilized throughout practice arenas.

For social work policy

A finding of this study is that social justice advocacy skills can be practiced with different populations – from one-to-one clinical settings to lobbying the Federal government. It became clear that these competencies can complement each other; therefore, social work's micro versus macro chasm is an artificial divide. It is incumbent on schools of social work to incorporate social justice advocating interventions in all levels of practice. Extant literature shows that executing this may be difficult (Funge, 2011; Fogel & Ersing, 2016). But, as eminent social work professor Ernest Greenwood (1957) remarked, professions must determine their policies of practice to their clients, not the other way around.

Implications summary

These four categories of implications are not simply theoretical. They are represented in the social justice advancement work that advocates participate in daily. James shared that *"I feel like I've had three different careers, all revolving around social justice but with different roles."* In addition to his schooling, James' career covers all four of these categories. In this summarizing sub-section, I use James' experiences to show how this study is not a merely a hypothetical, or philosophical, pursuit. Instead, his experiences represent how social justice advocates work within all four of these arenas daily.

Education. James' experience as a college student identified how even someone who wanted to learn about social justice was not given the opportunity. James is not a social worker, and while there were individual courses that he found helpful, overall this was not the case. This is an example of how social justice can be advanced through social work education.

> *I can't say it was the classes that prepared me but the experience of being in the…anti-war movement, organizing marches, going to Washington, being part of the SDS chapter…That was an incredibly good experience.*

Research. James spent many years working as a leader in policy research. He headed organizations that explored social justice ideals and researched related policy development. This is an example of how social justice can be advanced through effective research.

> *The next fifteen years were really as a policy advocate… And what I took from all that is that you also need ideas and policy development, and message development; people thinking about ways that the basic and fundamental values of social justice can be implemented.*

Practice. As a young man, recently out of college, James worked as a grass-roots community organizer. He practiced his craft in working class circles. This is as example of how social justice can be advanced through effective, "Back of the Yards" style, community organizing (Horwitt, 1992, p. 68).

> *So the first fifteen years of my professional career, post-college career, were as a community organizer. From Chicago to Massachusetts to Connecticut…And what I learned from that is that organizing at the grass roots level and having pressure at the grass roots level is essential for making social change. Unless you have an active citizenry things are not going to change. You can't expect the political system to change by itself.*

Policy. As an elected official, James was instrumental in policy implementation. As explained in chapter 4, he played a crucial role in the advancement of progressive legislation. This is an example of how social justice can be advanced through changing government policies.

> *So then my second career was politics, so I did…fourteen years…and what I learned from that was that it was really really important to have people in public office who are willing to take the plunge, run for office, but while in office stay connected to the grass-roots movement outside. I always felt like I wasn't in the legislature as an individual, I feel like I was in the legislature as a representative of the progressive community…But it's very difficult for grass roots organizations to make the progress they need to make unless there are sympathetic people on the inside…So I learned that. That was also really really important.*

James summarizes these four different arenas of practice, and how their policy implications interconnect:

> *I came away from all this, which adds up to all of forty five years, thinking that there are different roles within the idea of creating a socially just, economically just, democratically accountable society that different people have to play…Anyways, my point is it all matters. And having…grass-roots organizations, political leadership, and idea leadership really all fit together. And you need all of them.*

This underscores the importance of social work education being the home for those wanting to hone effective social justice advocating skills. As I stated earlier, social justice can be advanced exponentially further if practitioners of social justice advocacy were armed with the knowledge and skills that accompany social work education.

Limitations

Despite my efforts to have a diverse sample this did not come to complete fruition. The majority of participants in this study are white. Future studies with greater heterogeneity could tell a fuller story of social justice advocate development. In addition, the age group with the greatest representation among participants was senior citizens. With regard to participants' lived experiences, and the meaning that they drew from them, age did not appear to be a differentiating factor among those interviewed; individuals shared commonality in their paths to becoming a social justice advocate regardless of age.

The majority of participants in this study are in an age group where they were raised prior to the advent of social media. In fact, many were well into their adult years before the internet was even invented. Social media's dominant influence in modern society is without debate. It is possible – even likely – that the role of social media would be a factor in a predominantly younger cohort of research participants.

This study also had a geographic limitation. The sampling method began through the use of my professional contacts, from which snowball sampling ensued. One result of this is that the majority of participants had a direct or indirect connection to the same city. Many participants lived in this community for most of, or their entire, lives, while others only spent a scant few years working and/or volunteering there. A minority of participants had no connection to this community at all. It is unknown how time spent in this community influenced participants' development as social justice advocates. But when looking at this research from a person-in-environment perspective, there is no doubt that the persons (each participant) were affected by the environment (this community). Replicating this study in different regions of the country, and internationally, could show consistent or differing results.

Participant interviews occurred by telephone. This method of communication limits interaction. Phone dialogue is not as robust as face-to-face communication colloquies, as body language cannot be conveyed. Online networking, such as Skype, was considered but determined unfeasible due to the senior age of many participants. This speaks to an aforementioned limitation.

Researcher as Student

Memo review

There are many pieces of a dissertation that are being juggled all at once, and perhaps the most helpful aspect of the memoing process was how this helped me to work through ideas. I put effort into keeping my ideas separate from those of my participants. But I found that as I would conduct and analyze each interview, my personal reactions – in the form of new thoughts and ideas – would come quickly. One aspect of memoing that was particularly helpful was that it allowed me to write these things down for later review. Though sounding simple, the memos

were able to work as an idea container. Separate from the interview and analysis process, I would reach into this container and be able to consider my own reactions. In addition to separating my voice from that of my participants, thus giving their experiences the proper respect, this was a helpful part of my own thought evolution.

Through the early memo process it was also interesting to see the foresight of my Dissertation Chairperson, Dr. Heidi LaPorte. Through the course of many (many) discussions, she consistently inferred that the two perceived sides of social work today – clinical and macro – were not as diametrically opposed as they are often presented. The bulk of the extant literature focuses on ways that direct practice and macro social work are different, frequently portraying these different forms of practice as adversarial. Despite this, my findings supported Dr. LaPorte's suspicions. This will be a topic for further study for me personally.

After successfully completing the dissertation proposal process, I reviewed themes found in the literature. From this review I identified five themes: *"the value of partnerships and alliances; the role of hope in advocacy and activism; the importance of the social environment, community; the meaning of shared experiences (shared between social worker and client/citizen); the influence of social connections among people."* This was a critical part of the research process for me. Identifying themes in the literature aided me to be better equipped to identify themes found in the data.

The data-driven themes changed and evolved from their first iteration to this final draft. This is the combined result of the memo and coding process and the open dialogue that Dr. LaPorte and I shared. Memos elaborated on my thoughts and this drove the many updates to my coding system – this two-part process is what led to over 1,000 coded statements. Viewing and

reviewing the data, and then reviewing it again, is a time consuming but necessary process. Each code's evolution represented my progression of thought.

Following my interview with John I wrote about how he described the fulfillment he gets form this work. I identified that he views ego and fulfillment as distinctly different. I wrote: *"The motivation of the participant is not for personal gain (ego) but to help others (fulfillment). I think this is key."* His words, which I included in chapter four, were clear about this distinction. This was a sentiment which was shared by many other participants, and aided me in framing this work.

After interviewing Jill I realized that the term "social justice" is not universally familiar to people. I wrote: *"The other interesting thing from my conversation with Jill was that she did not know what the term 'social justice' meant."* I have spent the last few years doing doctoral research which has immersed me in this topic, and its ramification for social work. Due to my familiarity with this term I lost sight of the reality that not everyone else is. Jill was an example of someone who advances social justice but is unfamiliar with that specific terminology. If I were to do this study again I would ask each participant what term they would use that best describes the work they do rather than give them a term – social justice advocate – which may not have personal meaning for them.

It was my interview with Don that first brought to my attention the importance of people in the eyes of participants. I smiled when I reviewed the memo I wrote following his interview. *"In total he mentioned 38 different people by first and last name (that's honestly just an estimate as I could have missed a few as I tried counting them all)."* Following this interview, I created an ecomap of the people Don spoke about, and their relationship to him. I had a similar reaction for Jill's interview: *"The fact is the conversation always returned to people in Jill's life."* It

turned out that talking about other people was a common thread among all of my interviews. In fact, there was only one interview in which the participant did not mention others by name.

While many participants shared about many different people who have been part of their life's experiences it was Anthony who helped me to put this in proper context. During our interview he explained how he is oriented to being influenced by others in ways that his brother is not (see chapter four). Reflecting upon his interview, I wrote, *"Being open to the influence of others could be a key component in the development of social justice advocate."* Anthony's words helped me make the connection between participants speaking in great detail about other people in their lives and their being open to their influences. This became a powerful theme.

As a social worker, I am interested in people. Whether a client or colleague, I engage with people, and make an effort to learn about their life experiences. I learned that social justice advocates, too, are interested in people. They engage with them in ways that can bring betterment to their lives. One more note from a memo about Jill. I wrote that *"for Jill, it's all about people."* This reality may be the transcending theme of this work: for social justice advocates, it is all about people.

I found many of the statements shared by each of my participants to be poignant. In many cases, they allowed themselves to be vulnerable in their sharing. I found that this had an effect on me. Perhaps the strongest of these reactions came to me from interviewing Natalie, when she shared about the way she perceives her influence on her daughter. After her interview I wrote the following.

> *One thing she said that struck me as very touching was that she is most proud that her daughter is becoming (or may have already become) a social justice advocate, also. I*

think that's very sweet. If there is anything that anybody has said to me that would fit into the theme of fulfillment, it is that.

Words painting pictures

The first step I took following the transcribing of each interview was to thoroughly review each transcription. One experience that I had, without exception, was my own recognition of the beautiful language that participants used. During the interview itself this was frequently overlooked as I was more focused on determining the most effective, next probing question would be. Following each interview, and without the pressure of time restraints, I was able to immerse myself in this data by reading and rereading it over and over again. One result of this immersion which had the greatest influence on me was being drawn to participants' language and how they painted pictures with their words. Additionally, my immersion into the data – the actual words spoken by each participant – was critical to my identification of the themes outlined in chapter four. In this way, it was more than simply participant words which guided me; it was the way their language gave meaning to their life experiences. The pictures they painted with their words added depth and color to the experiences they conveyed. This lent me a greater understanding of their story's meaning and assisted me in finding the commonality of themes that were described in chapter four. I share several of these examples below.

Understanding participants' world views. Amy is an avid gardener and her language flourishes much like her blossoming flowers. She does not complicate things, even when speaking about herself. She summarized her life by saying, *"I came here with two dollars in my suitcase and I got my master's degree."* But it was her description of the need for social justice advocacy that painted a picture for me. In doing so, she tied a historical perspective – dating from Marcus Garvey's work – to the modern day. *"If they could have an opinion about black*

people going for greatness, why is it now we cannot have an opinion and strive for greatness?" It is a compelling argument, and one that is a call to action. Her statement painted a picture in my mind that reminded me of the 1960s campaign slogan "Hands that picked cotton can now pick the mayor" which was used by Charles Evers' during his Civil Rights Era mayoral races in rural Mississippi ("Mississippi Civil Rights Project," n.d.). Amy's language, as with Evers, is but one powerful sentence, which connects their hearts, beliefs, and history, and calls others to action. In reviewing the transcript of her interview, this was a statement that gave me a clear view of Amy's world view. This added context to everything she said. Gaining understanding of participants' world views gave much needed context to the stories they shared.

Learning what it means to be a Progressive. Jeff shared quite a bit about his views of government. His views were clearly tied to progressive beliefs. But one statement he made painted a picture for me. *"Government stands in the middle, and looks both ways for people, and asks how do we clear the path so that the most people get the most good?"* Jeff's words painted a picture for me where I envisioned a road, anywhere in the country, and the government (represented by anyone from Uncle Sam to Atticus Finch) is standing by its side wondering if it is safe to cross or if there is danger. Are people hungry or fed? Are they represented or disenfranchised? Are they facing oppression or freedom? Throughout our interview Jeff shared about his political views – perhaps more than any other participant. In examining the transcription of our interview this sentence stood out because it gave a prism through which I could view all of his political statements. Also, I came to think of this statement as a working definition of progressive political beliefs that was more succinct, more direct, and more understandable than any of the scholarly definitions I came across in doing literature review part of this research.

Recognizing the value of community. It seemed that almost all of the data, in some capacity, included the notion of community. Many participants, including Jill and Jeff, shared about being in a political community. Abe, Don, Arthur, and James shared about being students in a collegiate community. Amy and Don shared about being within the labor movement community. Mitch and Anthony shared about growing up in a religious community. Throughout chapter four I described this. Many participant references of their various communities were only tangentially tied to social justice advocacy. However, there was one statement that highlighted the sometimes omniscient role of community for me. It was Sophia's description of the rural town in which she grew up, one where the homes were spread out and the land was filled with endless fields of shade tobacco. She said, *"there was a lot of tobacco but there wasn't a lot of community."* I was not raised in the same town that she was; in truth, I grew up in a town that was much the opposite, but this description painted a picture for me that helped me to better understand the differing role of social and geographic communities in my participant's lives.

Gaining my own awareness that gaining awareness of injustice is a process. Both Harry and John told stories that helped me to better understand the process of gaining awareness of social injustice. They shared early childhood experiences and in both cases they explained to me that they did not fully understand the meaning of these experiences until they were older. In reviewing their transcripts, these stories helped me to recognize that gaining awareness of social injustice was a process. This was important for me because prior to identifying that this process has three main components, I first had to recognize that this was, in fact, a process. Both of these stories painted a picture of an inquisitive child whose understanding of the world was expanding.

Harry shared in reference to the work his mother did for the March of Dimes – and its influence on him his childhood. This was when he was beginning to comprehend that though he and his friends were healthy children, there were other children who fought health afflictions. *"I have memories of when they did the marches they would come in our house…with those cans full of dimes."* With his words he painted a picture of how a curious child found fascination with his home being filled with cans of dimes. As he grew he always remembered this.

John's boyhood love was baseball, though he remembered being *"around three or four"* years old when his father began to broaden his horizons. This started with his father subtly challenging him with new topics. He said *"very specifically, I have memories of sitting at my father's knee and he was asking me about Watergate…He'd say, 'so tell me about Watergate, boss.' It was frustrating because I had no idea what that meant."* In reviewing the transcript of my interview with John this was something that I returned to several times. He painted a picture of a little boy sitting on his father's knee – I imagined the staid strokes of Norman Rockwell – and beginning the process of expanding his young mind. However, what struck me was that in opposition to the comfortable picture his words painted, the topic was one of our nation's most historically prominent examples of crime and injustice. John's father had planted a seed of intellectual curiosity, just as Harry's mother had done, and as the seed germinated so, too, did the process of gaining awareness of social injustice. Reviewing these transcripts played a valuable role in my own recognition that there is a process to gaining awareness of social injustice.

Forever changed

At the beginning of this dissertation process I, like many of the researchers I have referenced in the preceding pages, viewed social work as having two distinct sides: one side clinical, and the other side macro. After all, the majority of my own social work education

presented social work skills, values, and knowledge in clinical contexts. With this influence, I came to this study with a belief that social work had two separate parts that made up the whole.

But this study has changed my view. I no longer see clinical practice skills and macro practice skills as adversaries. I no longer see them as disconnected. Through this process I have come to recognize that social work skills can be utilized in all practice settings. This was a two-part epiphany for me. First, of course, was the time and effort spent researching this topic. The data I gained through the participant interview and analysis process led me to this profound conclusion. In addition to this I participated in a life altering experience.

Like many of my study's participants, I have a personal history of political organizing and progressive advocacy. During December, 2017, I felt compelled to take a week out of town to volunteer for a United States Senate campaign. While doing this I saw the workings of campaign mechanisms in a different light than I had previously. In witnessing how certain campaign leaders gave direction and took feedback I recognized that they lacked the skills a social worker would frequently refer to as "individual skills." I found myself scanning a room of volunteer phone bankers, and rather than observing them alternate between making calls and socializing with their neighbors, I saw what a social worker would call "group dynamics." When campaign leaders spoke, I did not hear their words as much as I saw their body language and presentation of self.

I have been involved in more campaigns than I can honestly remember – as volunteer, as paid staffer, and as candidate – but it was this campaign experience in which I saw things differently. Social workers would traditionally refer to those practicing their craft in campaign environments as performing macro work. But during this campaign, I was witnessing what social workers would traditionally refer to as individual and group skills in action. This

experience reinforced this finding of my study: that social work skills are utilizable throughout different spectrums of practice. *Unfaithful Angels* identified a concerning social work trend, whereby the person-in-environment approach was emphasizing the person at the expense of the environment. This has led to more than two decades of study which frequently portrayed social workers as rivals within their different arenas of practice. Based on my research, and my own lived experiences, I believe it is now time to shift this paradigm. Social work education can teach how skills correspond. In this manner, social workers in different areas of practice are compatible rather than combatants.

Future Directions for Social Work

Social work's progressive ties

This dissertation has enumerated many ways that social work, and progressive beliefs, have been historical partners. In addition, the social justice advocates who participated in this study have strong progressive convictions. Hrostowski (2013) states that social work must play an active role in heralding the start of a modern Progressive Movement. This task is not the invention of a new idea, but rather the continuation of a longstanding social work approach. A brief summary of the close relationship between longstanding progressive ideology and modern social work policy follows.

The 1912 Progressive Party Platform stated its support for a unified national health program, and that this service includes coverage of therapeutic methods ("PBS," n.d.). Hitchcock (2016) identifies that the profession of social work has advocated for increased accessibility to health care since the early twentieth century. Reaffirming this commitment, in a 2011 letter to congressional leaders, the NASW stated their support for the Affordable Care Act, in part, because it codifies mental health as a mandatory section of insurance coverage ("NASW,

Affordable Care Act," 2011). The 1912 Progressive Party Platform endorses expanded suffrage ("PBS," n.d.). In a 2013 policy statement, NASW stated its opposition to the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision because it repealed portions of the Voting Rights Act and, therefore, opens the door to new voter suppression laws ("NASW, DC," 2013). Section six of the Social Work Code of Ethics, titled "Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society," states values of social welfare, public participation, and social and political action, that closely align with the Progressive Party's 1912 Platform ("NASW, Ethics," 2016; "PBS," n.d.).

Social work's sextant to the future

A sextant is a seaworthy navigational tool that operates by identifying two points – one in the sky and one on the horizon. Both points are needed for the traveler to gain proper direction. This equates to effective social work practice, which also requires two points – the person/people and their environment. Without an eye to both distant points, social work can lose its way (Specht & Courtney, 1994). Social work's progressive sextant to the future, similar to the proposals espoused by Hrostowski (2013), requires two points: one focused on the person and one focused on the environment. This cannot happen in a clinical vacuum, or in a macro only arena.

Jeanne C. Marsh (2005) in her farewell editorial as Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Social Work*, proposes that social work's future is related to social and economic justice. Social work practice does not need to choose micro or macro sides: a 1948 paper from the National Conference of Social Work convention connected political dynamics to mental health (Andrews & Reisch, 1997). Without a progressive sextant that advocates for social justice within society's oppressive superstructures (the environment), and also investigates the individual's personal

challenges (the person/people), the field of social work can lose its unique rudder with which it navigates the world.

A Last Thought: You Never Know

> *I think the other thing that I find most interesting is that, it's kind of like you never know…You never know exactly what will happen…You never know what could happen. And so you have to keep working toward it. I think that's what I mean about being hopeful and about pursuing social justice is that you can't stop just because it looks like it's too big of a hill to climb, or it's too difficult to achieve. You just have to keep working toward what is the right thing to do.* Maria.

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