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This is an arts-informed social inquiry that uses expressive arts and experiential learning modalities to explore the transformational stories of small group of White, privileged women at Green Street United Methodist Church, a multicultural church committed to the work of social justice, for the purposes of uncovering how they came to develop a commitment to social justice. The expressive arts inquiry was done during two group sessions during which the group focused on two specific questions: 1) How did each of these women come to develop a social justice identity? and 2) Why do they choose to be members of Green Street UMC with its mission for justice and healing in the world?

This study presents an education towards a commitment to social justice as one that allows the student to learn about social justice and to find ways to work for social justice. It is reflective and active. It embodies intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects of epistemology and ontology. It happens on individual, relational and communal levels. It is grounded in a critical/feminist theoretical framework of transformative identities and identifications, relational learning, and beloved community. The goal of the study is to use the data gathered to support a critical pedagogy for social justice identity development.

ART AND STORIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT
FROM WHITE, CHRISTIAN WOMEN OFFER INSIGHTS
FOR A SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

by

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Approved by

Committee Chair

In memory of

My mom, Marilyn Eileen Montagano Gardner

&

My mentor, Dr. Rebecca L. Carver

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

EDUCATING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IDENTITY

I am getting my doctorate because I want to change the world. I want to be another woman who breaks down barriers. I want to have the power to affect the way youth are educated and treated as human beings.

I came into this program wanting to learn more about power and privilege, and I leave this program wanting to disrupt power and privilege. Things have changed for me since I first began: I got married, had a baby, lost a mentor to breast cancer, then lost my mother to lung cancer. Things changed. I changed.

One thing did not change: I still believe everyone deserves to be heard. Like Lerner (2005), “It is central to my spiritual vision that every human being is a reflection of the God energy of the universe (in Biblical terms: created in the image of God). If so, then every person’s story is worth hearing” (p. 344). And everyone’s story needs to be told again and again. Constantly over a lifetime, people deserve the time to reflect and consider who they are, where they have come from, and where they want to go. I believe we would take better care of each other and be more inclined to “naturally care,” as Noddings (2005) puts it, if we knew each other’s stories. I believe we’d all feel better about the purpose of our lives if our lives were less about making money and more about making love—building relationships and nurturing the Spirit.

Through the process of my dissertation I created the time and space for several women to tell their stories and listen deeply to each other, and to try and find meaning, truth, or knowledge from their shared experience in community. Specifically, I wanted to

use expressive arts and experiential learning modalities to explore the transformational stories of small group of White, privileged women at Green Street United Methodist Church (UMC), a church committed to the work of social justice, for the purposes of uncovering how they came to develop a commitment to social justice or, as I refer to it, a social justice identity. My research focused on two specific questions that lend themselves to many sub-questions: 1) How did each of these women come to develop a social justice identity? 2) Why do they choose to be members of Green Street UMC with its mission for justice and healing in the world? Because I used arts-informed social inquiry, it was also appropriate, and/or imperative, to be reflexive and study myself as well. Therefore, I facilitated and participated with the group and incorporated my story as researcher-artist or scholartist, a term used in arts-informed inquiry.

In expressive arts and experiential educator/counselor practice I work with children, youth, and families, so one might wonder why is this study with adult women? In researching best practices for social justice education with youth, I found no evidence that supported the use of any particular pedagogy or curriculum (I will give more specific examples of this later in the chapter). I could not do a longitudinal study for my dissertation to inquire into the current practices we employ with children and youth at Green Street or in similar institutions, so I decided to work backwards and use a phenomenological approach to see if I could find some evidence to support social justice education in the life histories of a small group of women who self-identified as committed to social justice. I wondered, would their stories show that specific types of educational experiences, practices, or pedagogies encouraged them in their social justice identity development? Would I find common experiences from their childhoods that fostered a commitment to social justice in adulthood? Did participating in a spiritual or religious

community encourage or inhibit their social justice identity? Was there an education about power and justice? If so, from whom did they receive this education, and at what age? What types of relationships had significant impacts of their social justice identity development, both in negative and positive ways? Were they encouraged or impeded to engage in social justice actions as a child or adolescent? All of these questions and more stirred in me as I began creating this social inquiry to contemplate the validity of the social justice pedagogy I practice and of social justice identity development in general. I believe learning about the childhood experiences of adults who came to be committed to the work of social justice will enhance my professional knowledge of social justice education and add to the scholarly discussion of what it means to develop a social justice identity. I believe Green Street staff and congregation will be able to use this knowledge to inform our pedagogy and praxis and that is will serve as an inspiration for further inquiry within our institution and community.

An Education Towards a Commitment to Social Justice

What is it and why do a study on it?

The spark for this inquiry began when I read Gary Howard's (2006) *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know*. In Chapter 1, he writes:

As I travel throughout the United States and Australia, people continue to ask how I became committed to multicultural education. What experiences brought me to this place? What lessons can other White Americans learn? In the reflections that follow, I have tried to deal with these questions in a personal way, piecing together the strains of my own life's song, looking for the lessons that have drawn me into the dance. (p. 13)

He begins his story by saying that during the first 18 years of his life he had never experienced "other." He is talking specifically about race, and goes on to tell about his first encounter with a person of color (p. 14). Although in the context of his work on racial

identity development this assertion makes sense, it jarred me, and still does, that Howard would say he had never experienced “otherness” before the age of 18. It started me on a quest to consider the impact of our childhood experiences, relationships, and learnings in one’s overall education towards a commitment to social justice.

I found it a conundrum that in writing about multicultural education he dismissed the education of his first 18 years in his development of a commitment to multicultural education. If his first 18 years did not play a crucial role in his anti-racist identity, then why bother creating a multicultural curriculum for schools? I decided that before I started working on multicultural education or social justice pedagogy or curriculum, I needed to study social justice identity development. I would love to do this work with Gary Howard, and get him to explore his first 18 years and consider what experiences made him open to the personal transformation that came later. As that did not seem feasible, I thought I should start with myself and then the community in which I live, worship, and work. This was the catalyst for the dissertation focus.

In this study, I present an education towards a commitment to social justice as one that allows the student to learn about social justice and to find ways to work for social justice. It is intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. It happens on individual and communal; interpersonal and intrapersonal; and micro and macro levels. It is inquiry-based. It is grounded in the theories of transformative identities and identifications, relational learning, and beloved community. It explores the questions: What is social justice? What are the issues surrounding it? What are power, privilege, and oppression? What are the systemic, institutional, and interpersonal aspects of justice and power? And what are my roles as an individual in perpetuating and resisting these macro-level systems of oppression? This type of education would incorporate reflexivity and allow

the student to consider her or his personal role and identity as it relates to social justice. This type of education would also incorporate action and the student would engage in the work of social change and reflect on the impact of that work on her/his life. Finally, the student would consider how this knowledge and work impacts her/his beliefs about social justice and what kind of commitment these beliefs require. I am not trying to imply that these would be linear steps in an educational journey—notice that I did not label them 1, 2, and 3. I believe this type of education would have a cyclical process that would flow back and forth between theory, practice, and belief. This critical, reflective, and transformative learning would encourage the student to develop and name a social justice identity. I used the term “towards” because like any learning, the student must choose to engage, must want to participate, and therefore, educational endeavors like this should be set forth as an opportunity, not an expectation. An education towards a commitment to social justice would focus on creating the opportunity for an education that develops a social justice identity and a commitment to the work of social justice.

Why this Study—This Arts-Informed Social Inquiry?

My hope for this study was that these women could help me learn about what is involved in creating an education that develops a social justice identity and a commitment to the work of social change. By using art and experiential activities in a group learning environment participants were able to reflect on and share with one another about their lived experiences, the education they received about justice and equality, and their identity development in ways that created shared knowledge about how one comes to develop a social justice identity and a commitment to social change. I hope to use this knowledge to encourage parents, educators and community leaders

within the field of education and youth development around issues of social justice identity development.

Even though this is a small sample in a particular community, this process can still have generalizable implications, particularly in these two ways: The model for arts-informed social inquiry can inform professional development and trainings around issues of power, privilege and oppression; and the knowledge created from the inquiry can inform how parents, educators, and community leaders committed to social justice choose to focus their work and relationships with young people.

Working with this group of women taught me a lot about the struggle for people of privilege to reconcile our beliefs with the realities of the world and the intentional effort that must be taken to break down the myths of meritocracy and the impacts of power, privilege, and oppression, if we are to truly work for justice for all. The theories of relational learning, critical theories of power and privilege, and transformative identities create a conceptual framework that support and are embedded in this inquiry and the knowledge we created and I express. My goal is to weave the art, story, and theory together to create a foundation for my understandings of social justice identity development and an education toward a commitment to social justice.

What is a Commitment to Social Justice?

Let me begin by defining my use of the term “commitment to social justice.” A commitment to social justice begins with a belief that all people deserve respect and a chance at a good life. As Michael Lerner (2005) puts it, it is a belief that “all human beings are precious and sacred, deserving of respect and love, entitled to the fullest opportunities to develop their intellectual and creative capacities, and entitled to be supported in freely choosing their own life paths” (p. 345). A belief is not solely a

development of the critical mind. A belief is not always and only rational and reasonable. Sometimes people who believe things to be true will even put their lives on the line for that truth and yet, they cannot articulate or justify why they believe as they do. Listen to the American soldiers and their justifications for the current wars. It is often enough for them to say: "I believe in God"; "I believe in Liberty and Justice for all"; "Freedom isn't free." It is a useful and important thing in the life of a democracy to have citizens with critical thinking skills, but is it required when it comes to acts of love, compassion, and justice?

In this section I will explore the concept of a commitment to social justice, which is the premise of this dissertation. By looking through the lenses of critical and transformative pedagogies, I consider how people attempt to find meaning by committing their lives to the work of social justice and what aspects of self need to be developed to create that commitment. Because this study is situated within a Christian church with women who process a faith in that religion, part of my theory will focus on spirituality from a Christian perspective. I am not trying to position this perspective as better than others or that it somehow holds an objective truth. I use this focus only because that is the positionality of the participants which includes me as researcher/artist/participant. Through this transformative and critical pedagogy lens I posit that a commitment to social justice which is grounded in a spiritual faith requires the ongoing transformation of emotional, spiritual, moral, and intellectual aspects of the self while being engaged in a spiritual learning community.

A founding premise for my research is that a commitment to social justice is grounded in a belief that all people deserve respect and the chance to live a good life. As a practicing Christian working in a Methodist church, my belief comes from my

religion. I am not trying to espouse that a commitment to social justice requires a spiritual practice or a religious foundation. My aim is to learn more about social justice education through the lens of my work and my community, so that others might then apply this knowledge to their lives and practices. Therefore, I hope all readers of this dissertation can appreciate that my world-view limits the perspective of this study, but I hope it does not stymie critical thinking about the issues presented or discourage anyone from considering their own path towards social justice. As Kincheloe says, “Critical pedagogy believes that nothing is impossible when we work in solidarity and with love, respect, and justice as our guiding lights...Paolo Friere always maintained that education has as much to do with the teachable heart as it does with the mind” (p. 242).

As, I was saying, my belief is that everyone deserves respect and the chance to live a good life. Michael Schwalbe (2008) created an excellent definition of a good life as “one that is stimulating, intense, joyful, purposeful, caring and dignified” (p. 4). He went on to say that we are all obliged to one another to consider how our lives and the affects of our lives will impede others from living a good life, or will by contrast, create more possibility for the common and individual good. If I believe in social justice, then do I not have a responsibility to help others achieve a “good life” (p. 4-5)?

Social justice can be defined in many ways. Throughout the dissertation I will offer other scholar’s definitions, as well as, my own. But I’d like to begin with, Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton’s (2006) use of John Dewey’s writings and speeches to create a starting point of a discussion of equality and social justice in America:

“Each individual” requires a social environment that provides him with the “opportunity for release, expression, fulfillment, of his distinctive capacity.” Decent housing, public health, and tools for learning are all critical to such an environment. (p. 35)

Social justice requires creating a citizenry that will fight for these standards of equality and educate one another to become more capable of living within communities created by such a social environment as laid out above.

In the Judeo/Christian tradition there is a scripture that speaks to this goodness and equality and to the commitment it requires, the scripture says, "He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God? " (Bible, NASB, Micah 6:8). I would assert that people who have come to follow this type of call and believe that they must seek justice, mercy, and kindness because it is required by their faith need a spiritual community to teach them how to live a life of justice. Such a community is also needed to ground them in the morality and spirituality that they desire to learn how to think, feel and believe in the face of injustice (hooks, 2003; Purpel, 1989).

My personal definition of a commitment to social justice is that one's life is designed around working toward fair and equal treatment for all people; breaking down institutional barriers toward equality; and working for equity and restoration, not just equal opportunity and access. This kind of life's work requires me to believe three things: 1) that immoral and unjust behaviors have caused unrighteous acts that have created systems of privilege and oppression, 2) that all people are worthy of my love and compassion, and 3) through loving acts justice can be created. Through the creation of this definition, I came to the next question: how does an education toward a commitment to social justice begin?

Transformative Education

Education is the learning process through which people become committed to the work of social justice. By education, I mean the experiences of learning and

becoming. I agree with Shapiro (2006) that "If we are to see education for what it really is—a process that shapes all aspects of our being human...—then we can understand what John Dewey meant when he said that education shapes a world" (p. 52).

Schooling and education are not one in the same. Education is what humans experience as they grow and mature, we really cannot help it happening, it is part of living. Schooling is the formalized institution to promote a certain kind of learning and education. The type of education discussed in this dissertation is what is required to develop a commitment for social justice, and is not focused the boundaries of what can be accomplished within a school. This type of education would be longitudinal, lifelong learning. It would be a transformative, liberating education because it would yield learning that opened the learner up to possibility, mystery, and more questions than answers. As Parker Palmer says, "Education is about healing and wholeness. It is about empowerment, liberation, transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life" (Palmer as cited in hooks, 2003, p. 43).

For the purposes of this dissertation, it is important to also point out that many scholars do not separate spirituality from education (Lerner, 2005; Huebner, 2005; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2002; Shields, 2005). Carlson's (1998) definition of education is a good example of this:

Education is, in the fullest sense, a spiritual experience. It changes the way we experience our being in the world (to use Heidegger's phrase), it reconnects us to the cosmos and it transforms us in ways that affect our everyday relations with others and makes it possible for us to struggle and grow. (as cited in Dantley, n.d., p. 7)

Transformation is the process of having one's world-view reshaped and re-visioned as explained in transformative learning theory, which I will discuss in more depth in Chapter

2. Transformation makes us new, other than what we were. Shor and Friere (1987) explain that “Transformation itself is an educational event. Transformation teaches us, shapes and reshapes us” (p. 134). Thus transformative education is when learning changes who we are and how we see the world, and hopefully then with support, it changes how we *live* in the world.

Critical Intellect

This kind of transformative education is only possible when people can question authority, power and hegemony, which is at the heart of critical pedagogy and developing a critical intellect. There is a distinction that needs to be made here about the difference between obtaining knowledge and having the freedom to think critically. Developing a critical intellect is not about obtaining knowledge in the Cartesian tradition of sorting, ordering, and categorizing (Belsey, 2002). It is not of the objective, structuralist philosophy. A more subjective, poststructuralist view is that knowledge and intellect do not, by themselves, lead one toward justice. As Purpel (2005) points out, "Our history has made it painfully clear that smart people can do hateful things and that the impulse to be cruel and callous is not significantly mitigated by acquiring knowledge or analytic skills" (p. 352).

Developing critical intellectual thought is a process of questioning and trying to understand power, politics, and authority and how they manifest in society. A critical intellect is a necessity for speaking truth to power, which is a essential part of the work of social justice (West, 1999). If critical intellect is imperative in making a commitment to social justice, but is not *all* that is needed to make a commitment to social justice, then what else is required?

Shapiro (2006) argues that there is more than intellectualism needed to find a meaningful life, which I believe, would also apply to a life lived toward creating social justice: "The struggle for a meaningful life requires an education that will be at once intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual. It must deal with what it means to be a human being in all of its complexity" (p. 23). Let me now consider the complexity of these other aspects of self required for an education towards a commitment to social justice: the emotional, moral and spiritual.

Emotional, Spiritual, and Moral Embodiment of a Commitment

If through one's education a person learns to think critically about the world and realizes that change is possible; if one can be transformed through knowledge, relationships, and experiences then one can also change others, and thus, change the world. Making a commitment to this new way of seeing and being—the transformed self—will require the fullness of one's humanity. It will require intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual strength, fortitude, and skills. To commit to anything one has to have the emotional capacity to feel, the intellectual capacity to understand, the moral capacity to make judgments, and the spiritual capacity to believe in what you are committing to. I am not assuming that everyone has the same capacities in all these areas, but to whatever extent the student is capable, he or she would encounter emotional, intellectual, moral and spiritual challenges that would encourage fluidity, not stasis, in his or her educational development.

What does it mean to have the emotional capacity to feel as it relates to a commitment to social justice? Western, modern society is grounded in philosophies of reason not emotion. Emotion has been relegated to the feminine, and thus in our patriarchal hierarchy, is not as valued as reason. Noddings (2005) points out that "Kant

subordinated reason to feeling. He insisted that only acts done out of duty to carefully reasoned principle are morally worthy" (p. 298). Yet, I would assert that many people live out justice as acts of love, without having carefully reasoned arguments or justifications. For example, the film, "Weapons of the Spirit" (Savauge, 1989), tells the story of a French village and the Protestants there who saved the lives of 5000 Jews during WWII. There was no grassroots uprising. There was just a moral and spiritual imperative to follow one's conscience, to be guided by feeling and emotion. One should watch the film and judge for themselves, but to me, this is a story of daily lives being disrupted because of feelings of compassion through acts of love and justice.

This brings me to issues of the Spirit and the spiritual in an education towards social justice. I argue that although we live with a constitution that prohibits the wedding of church and state, it does not mean that spirituality and education can be separated (Shields, 2005). Spirit and spirituality can be confusing terms because they are used in many ways. Let me give a few examples of definitions grounded in the critical and transformative pedagogies I am working from. Huebner (2005) writes that, "Spirit is that which transcends the known, the expected, even the ego and the self. It is the source of hope. It is manifested through love and the waiting expectation that accompanies love" (p. 311). Micheal Dantley (n.d.) defines the spirit as "that part of humankind that compels us into community with others, it establishes and prods our sense of justice and fairness and it constructs for us our notions of calling, mission, or purpose" (p. 6). And Purpel (2005) says, "the power of the spirit is the very energy we need lest we fall into paralysis and cynicism that are the consequences of moral despair and intellectual confusion" (p. 355). I believe, Spirit is the deepest part of who we are, and it connects us to others in a way that our intelligence does not. Intelligence is physical and contained within one's

being. The many genocides and human atrocities wrought by educated, intelligent people should be enough to show us that knowledge and intellectual skills alone will not bring forth justice or help one stand up for a fellow human.

I wonder if my intellect requires anyone else for it to function or exist. Descartes famously said, "I think therefore I am." I would argue that being human is more than that: I am because I am in relationship with others, because the Spirit in the world connects us all. Michael Lerner (2005) expresses this point nicely, "It is central to my spiritual vision that every human being is a reflection of the God energy of the universe" (p. 344). The energy flows through each of us and gives us life. Some people feel the energy powerfully and are motivated by it to care for others. Some may feel absolutely isolated and disconnected and incapable of tapping into the energy. Many people dismiss any idea or notion of a universal Spirit. I believe that no matter how or if we relate to the Spirit, it is there—part of the world. To quote Ted Perry from the motion picture *Home* (1972), "Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect." Do we need to believe this if we are to live for social justice and the healing of our world?

In examining Cornel West's (1999) concept of prophetic spirituality, Michael Dantley (n.d.) speaks to this same notion of connection and healing in the African American tradition:

West maintains that African Americans have subscribed to these prophetic practices in order to build a *communitas* or a community of healing, nurturance, and resistance. The spirit that motivates this prophetic behavior is the source of strength and the call to revolution that undergirds African Americans' sense of tenuous well being and persistence in calling for societal transformation. (p. 8-9)

Do we, as parents, educators, and community leaders, need to embody a spiritual commitment to social justice? Must we believe that we are bound together by forces more powerful than ourselves? If yes, then what type of learning communities would build *communitas* and support acts “healing, nurturance, and resistance”?

There are many names for the “spirit” that motivates, centers, or calls one forth into caring for fellow humans. The emotional and spiritual connection one feels towards the spirit and other living things is again just a part of what one needs to commit to love as acts of justice. Morality is another part of the equation that sums the total towards social justice identity. Morality is one's sense of right and wrong. I posit that it is subjective and socially constructed. Morality is the term used for the guidance one needs to make decisions and judgments about what is right and wrong, good and bad, worthy or unworthy. We can use emotion, intellect and spirituality to inform our morality; thus, morality is the compass that can lead one toward justice. As Noddings (2005) explains “the purpose of moral reasoning [is] to establish and maintain caring relations at both individual and societal levels” (p. 302). One needs morality to work for social justice because one needs to make reasoned, critical judgments about justice. For many people, including myself, religion is at the center of morality. Religious communities can help one construct morals, values and beliefs. (I will use the term shared beliefs and values in place of morality throughout the dissertation). One of the difficult conundrums of religion is that it can be used as an institutional force for oppression and it can also define one's sense of justice and peace. Therefore, religion and morality cannot be thought of as always and only right and good, and that is why it takes the fullness of our human capacity to work towards social justice in varying, resisting, and positively conflicting ways.

For someone like me, faith can be a guide towards a life committed to social justice and our religious affiliations continue to support and challenge our social justice identity development. When I looked up social justice, on a popular sociology website (“Social Justice”, n.d.), I found this quote about justice, morality and religion. It speaks to my point that for many of us our sense of justice and morality are embedded in our faith.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) says, “Justice is a certain rectitude of mind whereby a man does what he ought to do in the circumstances confronting him.” This reflects the Christian view that, before God, all people are equal and must treat each other with respect. Hence, the framework of the argument shifts to require obedience to natural principles of morality to satisfy a duty owed to God, and the outcome of social justice is driven by the tenets of morality embedded in the religion. (Social Justice, n.d.)

For those of us whose morality is grounded in religious beliefs and the social constructions of religious communities, we act or work for social justice because we believe it is a “natural duty owed to God”. We are taught to act in these particular ways because this is what our faith community believes to be right or good. For instance, if we are taught to believe that God created all people equally, then we use our morals to judge what it means to create equality. And the religious community to which we belong gives guidance about ways to create equality and ways to offer compassion to those who suffer injustice. This is why we should question the role of spiritual learning communities in developing a commitment to social justice. As I will show in my findings, religion can create as much confusion about justice as it can support for justice. Those of us who work in Christian, or any other, religious education have to be willing to confront the duplicity our faith traditions have in creating oppression and trying to heal oppressive wounds. It is a complicated and ongoing history that must be addressed and not suppressed, if liberation is the goal.

To express the argument for morality another way, in Nel Noddings (2005) theory of care there is natural caring and there is ethical caring. There is a need for ethical caring because sometimes one does not feel inclined to care for the "other". Thus one needs a feeling of "I must" to move one towards the act of caring. I would say, which might not align with Noddings, that the feeling of "I must" comes from a belief in the common good, in the humanity of others, but we need morality or as she puts it, "ethics", to guide us towards action. Thus, I believe an education towards social justice would include intellectual, emotional, spiritual and moral components within a holistic pedagogy.

I began this dissertation with this argument for an education towards a commitment to social justice to establish the premise for my professional reasoning for why I do the work I do and to make explicit the belief system which is lens through which I view the world and the questions that brought me to this study. Because of my social justice identity, I cannot live out my faith if I am denying someone else's right to a good life, whether it be through my acceptance of or inability to act against such things as unfair housing practices, discriminatory marriage laws, lack of equal access to health care, segregated schools, and the list goes on. How did I come to believe such things when so many people like me, people who were raised in very White, rural, evangelical Christian communities, did not? I think that question has many layers of answers. One important layer is that I believe that I am transforming. I had educational experiences that opened me to the possibility of other: Other ways of being, other ways of knowing, seeing, and believing. This sense of the validity and respect for Other allowed me to think critically and ask questions about morality, spirituality and emotion without being afraid that the answers would not match the previously sustained knowledge and beliefs

created by my very White, rural, evangelical Christian community.

A transformational sense of self took me beyond what I knew. It liberated my sense of being. As Maxine Greene (1988) puts it, I tapped into a state of freedom; "think of it as a distinctive way of orienting the self to the possible, of overcoming the determinate, of transcending or moving beyond in the full awareness that such overcoming can never be complete" (p. 5). My commitment to social justice requires the possibility of "becoming different from what we have been" (Greene, 1988, p.3). It asks me to be awed by the human capacity for transformation; to find wonder in the emotional, spiritual, moral and intellectual aspects of the self; and ultimately to try and love as openly, freely, and unconditionally as I can. I believe social justice is the collective, communal work of eradicating socially constructed and/or unnecessary human suffering and planetary destruction. It is not easy work and it will require the fullness of our humanity to make it more of a reality and less of a dream.

Overview of Research Design

This research is an attempt to uncover, analyze, and report on ways that a transformative education helped create adults committed to social justice, and particularly, how that happened for women who come from a stance of privilege. I hope that the women's stories about how they were educated to develop a social justice identity, my representation of their art and stories, and my analysis will lead to better practice and pedagogy within my community and add to the scholarly debates about how we educate young people and prepare them to be citizens in a diverse world and global communities. My hypothesis coming into the study was that all the participants would have had significant relationships that taught them about the importance of "Other"; that these relationships connected to their spiritual values about how to be in the

world; that they were taught the critical constructs of power, privilege and oppression; and that this knowledge and these experiences helped create a value system embedded in social justice work. I will argue whether this hypothesis was validated in Chapters IV, V, and VI. My educational foundation is based in critical pedagogy, experiential education philosophy, feminism, and identity development theories which led to a theoretical framework that focused on transformative identities and identifications, relational learning, and beloved communities.

For the purposes of this dissertation I focused on the lives, experiences and knowledge of White, Christian women because it helped to limit the variables of data and because I wanted to focus on aspects of privileged identities. I believe this type of reflexive work should be done in all types of communities with people of varying identities and hope to pursue this in further research, but I wanted to begin with an exploration of how women whose identities and identifications incorporated the intersectionality of multiple privileges and oppressions came to be committed to social justice and came to participate in a religious community focused on social transformation and justice.

One of the labels I use to identify myself is a social justice-oriented activist/educator. It is another label to remind myself not of what I do, but rather to remind myself why I do what I do. I will discuss my use of the term and my professional identity more in the final chapter, but I wanted to introduce the term, as another way to identify a collective “we” that I am speaking to. I believe it is imperative that social justice-oriented activists and educators, even parents, understand the many aspects of identity and identification that can contribute to one’s reality of power, privilege, and oppression. To do this, we need to understand the concept of social positionality.

Howard (2006) espouses that “how we view the world, how we construct reality, how we ascribe meaning and value to our lives are intimately connected to our position within social and historical hierarchies of dominance and subordination” (p. 33).

Educators/activists focused on social justice work should understand how positionality is at work in their own lives and in the lives of the youth they work with if they want to do the work of social transformation.

Social justice-oriented activists and educators also need to be able to acknowledge and breakdown their privileged identities. In his book, *Privilege, Power, and Difference*, Johnson (2006) does an excellent job of explaining how difficult it can be to deal with one's privilege and address issues of power. He writes about the paradox of privilege and how even though we may “be” privileged we do not always “feel” privileged. It is all about understanding privilege as a part of the social system, that privilege is “a social arrangement that depends on which category we happen to be sorted into by other people and how they treat us as a result... privilege is more about social categories than who people are” (p. 35). Understanding privilege and positionality gives the educator/activist knowledge necessary to work for justice and knowledge necessary to help youth understand themselves within social systems, categories and constructs. Therefore, in this study my goal was to explore how these women came to learn about their privileged identity or did they? What was their social justice education? Was it adequate for the lives they wanted to live? What experiences encouraged their social justice identity development? How did their privilege impact their ability to learn about and process injustice and oppression?

My other focus in this research goes beyond the individual education and centers on the spiritual and faith-based aspects of why White, middle class, heterosexual women

choose to commit to membership within a reconciling ministry; a ministry committed to the inclusion of all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual identity, or any other aspect of self that can create exclusion? What need is being met by participating in an inclusive, multicultural spiritual community with a commitment to transformation, service, and social justice?

The White, middle class women at Green Street UMC have broken the boundaries of White isolation that so many White, middle class people seek (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Membership at Green Street church is not homogenous in many aspects of identification, such as class, race, education, family make-up, religious affiliation, to name a few. Another aspect of identity that is often exclusionary in Christian churches is homosexuality. The invitation to this study did not specify sexual orientation or identity, but it turned out that all of the women able to participate in this study identified as heterosexual. Along with race and class, sexuality became another aspect of privilege and oppression that was revealed in the data. Homosexuality is a current area of conflict within many religious communities. Although many churches and religious institutions make an active stance against homosexuality—going as far as to call it a sin—Green Street UMC has worked to become intentionally inclusive of openly LGBTQ identifying people and continues to struggle to find ways to work for equality within church practices (I describe Green Street UMC later in the chapter). Like race, this is another aspect of identity where the women could isolate themselves and participate in a church that was more homogeneous, yet the women in this study have embraced in an inclusive, difference oriented way of being in community. What I find compelling is why they are actively engaged in a church that reminds them often of their privileges and also gives them opportunity to work for social justice and to nurture their spirit in an inclusive

community that practices liberation theology? Are there some common learning experiences among these women that have brought them to make such a conscious choice to resist the norms of the dominant ideology of middle class, White America? As Christians in contemporary America, it is all too common to be lumped into the conservative Christian right which is exclusive at best and hate mongers at worse, so how did these Christian women find themselves in a church that preaches liberation, reconciliation, and inclusion, as opposed to, conformity and the American dream of meritocracy and individualistic freedom?

To explore these concepts of social justice identity development and participation in spiritual communities committed to social justice, I did an arts-informed social inquiry with a group of eight women who self-identified as White women committed to social justice that have been members at Green Street UMC for at least two years and have served in some leadership capacity within the church. These membership parameters were important because our church has been growing very quickly and if too many of the participants were new to the church it may have skewed the cultural perspective of what it meant to participate in this spiritual learning community.

Data Collection

Because this is an arts-informed study about participation in a spiritual community, I used expressive arts activities in a group setting to collect the data. The data collection included creative writing, visual art, audio-taping, and photography. I will discuss in detail the formation of the group, the collection of the data, and the group process in Chapter 4. The study included a series of three group sessions. The first two sessions incorporated experiential and expressive arts activities for inquiry. The third was a focus group style session that offered a chance for participants to evaluate the

sessions, share artwork that had not been completed, and gave closure to the group. In the first group session, we went over the purposes of the study and laid the groundwork for how we would work together. This session focused more on introducing and exploring the first research question: How did each of these women come to develop a social justice identity? The first part of the second session was spent sharing the self-portraits which were a response to the first question and then we delved into the other question: Does being a member of Green Street UMC with its mission for justice and healing in the world nurture and continue to develop their social justice identity? Because of the group process we ended up spending most of our time on the first question and thus the data analysis follows this trend.

We used expressive arts activities and the experiential learning cycle as foundations for storytelling, reflection and inquiry. Together all this art and artistic reflection was the basis for creating an arts-informed narrative of social justice identity development and participation in a spiritual community committed to social justice. Eisner (2002) says that "Knowledge is less about discovery than it is about construction" (p. 211). This applies to my theory of arts-informed social inquiry: It is about constructing a narrative using art to represent and express ideas and images. In Chapter 4, I construct a narrative using the art and stories of the group to the inform the notion of social justice identity development. Eisner explains that the process of representation "stabilizes ideas and images, makes the editing process possible, [and] provides means for sharing meaning"(p. 239). He goes on to say that "The act of representation is an act of discovery and invention and not merely a means through which an individual's will is imposed upon a material" (p. 239). My data analysis was a process of discovery and

invention that culminated in a representation of images and ideas and the construction of the knowledge presented herein about social justice education.

My overall goal was to use the art and stories as data to gain insight into the education towards a social justice identity and the impacts of participating in a spiritual community focused on social justice work. My hope in the success of this project was best exemplified by Ellen Levine (1995) in *Tending the Fire*. Like her, I hope to make my voice “one flame that joins with others in our field to keep the fire alive” (p. 15).

My Positionality

My business card says, AmyBith Gardner Harlee, expressive arts and experiential educator. It took 15 years of working in a variety of educational settings to realize that I identified as more than just a classroom teacher. I have a Master’s degree in expressive arts therapy and mental health counseling, but I have never pursued work in clinical settings or licensure as a counselor/therapist. I was drawn to the expressive arts program at Lesley University because it was so interdisciplinary. Estrella (2011) points out how expressive arts therapy, as a field, was created in the 1960s and 1970s “to break through conventional boundaries of self-expression and artistic expression and to bring interdisciplinary arts experiences into therapy, community, and education in a new way” (p. 43). I embraced this openness and have been exploring ways to use arts as inquiry and healing in a variety of professional settings.

I have been working at Green Street UMC for the past ten years as the youth director. This experience has afforded me the opportunity to expand my professional expertise beyond the isolation of working with youth in a classroom setting or in individual teaching or counseling. Working in a faith-based youth development program that is linked to an Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) grass-roots organization and an

anti-racist training and community building program has broadened my perspective of social justice youth development and of what it means to be an educator. This experience helped me adopt the label of social justice-oriented activist/educator. This interconnection between spiritual development, meaningful education, and civic engagement through grass-roots organizing and anti-racist programming creates a personally meaningful and publicly involved education. I now understand the importance of interwoven public relationships and “overlapping spheres of influence” that Epstein (2001) wrote about in her research (p. 27). I needed to do this dissertation because no matter how validated I feel in what I do I constantly wonder: Will the experiences we are offering eventually lead our youth to develop social justice identities and commitments as adults? And how can we bring this inquiry-based, relationship-focused work to other children, families and communities? I know we cannot guarantee our work as teachers, counselors, educators, and ministers, but that does not mean that we should not constantly strive to better understand our practice. Therefore, in some ways, this dissertation is an elaborate professional development plan for educational practice and youth development that focuses on how to create an education towards social justice identity development.

Audience

I am writing this dissertation from a pluralistic perspective. I want to speak to the many aspects of my professional identity; therefore, I hope to speak to multiple audiences. First, I hope to offer insight to our community at Green Street UMC, the other educators, ministers, and community leaders working to offer our children and youth an education towards a commitment to social justice. I hope that the stories and the theories presented would help to further their own social justice identity development

and enhance the work they are doing in our community.

I also want to speak to members and leaders of other spiritual learning communities about the importance of self-reflective identity work, learning about power, privilege and oppression within religious settings, and the use of arts-informed social inquiry. I hope that the work this group of women did together would be a catalyst for other groups to do similar work in their own communities and consider the educational development of children, youth, and families in their institutions.

I am also speaking to parents and families because they are the first educators of children. They have the power to choose to participate in communities where they and their children will receive a social justice education. As I will show, the women in the study all mentioned their parents and the influence they had both positive and negative over their social justice identity development. Therefore, I believe this dissertation would be lacking and ill-informed if I did not speak to and about the importance of parents and families in social justice identity development.

And of course, I want this dissertation to speak to scholars in the fields of social justice education and arts-informed social inquiry. I hope that I can continue this type of research and become part of the ongoing growth of creative qualitative inquiries that focus on educational issues through arts-informed inquiry.

Finally, I also want this dissertation to be accessible to the women in the study, and people like them, who want to understand more about social justice and ways they can grow and work from their own perspective and positionality as it relates to social justice.

The Setting for the Study

Becoming a member of Green Street UMC was one of the best decisions I ever made. In January 2002, I joined the church and then was hired soon after to start a music program and a youth program. We were a small congregation at the time, but growing by leaps and bounds—ten other people joined the same day I did. Working and being a member at Green Street during my studies at UNCG has offered me a real testing ground for some of the theories we explored in educational and cultural studies. Even though I had access to school settings, I often used Green Street as the focus of my coursework when I needed to do research. I knew from the projects I had done and from readings in the field that Green Street UMC would be fertile soil for a study on social justice identity development. I also felt that my dissertation could be of service to the church by creating scholarly research to support the work it does.

It is important to give the reader some background on Green Street UMC, to put the study into context. In the following section the reader will learn a little about the history of the church, the focus on social justice, and the commitment to community partnerships. I have used a lot of information from the church website (www.greenstreetchurch.org) because I know how hard they worked to tell their story and I want to give the reader a sense of the church “voice”, as opposed to looking just through my lens for the history and description. To begin, this is a short history and description of the church from the website (2012):

Green Street United Methodist Church began with a tent revival outside Old Salem in August 1902. A month later, a group of converts organized themselves as Salem Methodist Episcopal Church and built a wood frame church in the West Salem neighborhood. Some 20 years later, a brick sanctuary was built at the present location, and the congregation was renamed Green Street Methodist. In the 1960s, the congregation began a long steady loss of members. The West Salem neighborhood became racially diverse and many charter residents moved

away from the city. At one point in the late 1990s, Sunday morning attendance dipped to 15 people. A group of people, who called themselves “the remnant,” remained and re-visioned the church, opening the doors wide to embrace the community around them.

Today, Green Street Church is alive and thriving, with 300+ members and approximately 160 people in worship each Sunday! The congregation reflects the make-up of the West Salem community—White, African-American, and Hispanic; the affluent, the middle class, and the poor—and also includes many from other neighborhoods who seek a diverse congregation. (“About” section)

Another important step in the history of the church was its decision to address issues of exclusion and injustice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) people. On October 23, 2009 the leadership council of Green Street UMC ended almost a year of conversations, research, and prayer about becoming a more inclusive congregation. They ended that year with a unanimous vote to become a part of the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN). This is the mission statement of RMN from their website (2012):

Mobilizing United Methodists to create full inclusion of all God’s children regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity since 1982. The Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) is a growing movement of United Methodist individuals, congregations, campus ministries, and other groups working for the full participation of all people in The United Methodist Church.

The participation in RMN meant we would construct a reconciling statement and we would be included in a registry to let people in the LGBTQ community know that we were a welcoming congregation. At the time of our inclusion we were the only United Methodist Church in our district and only one of two in North Carolina. The following is the reconciling statement that can be found every Sunday morning in the church bulletin, and also in the email newsletter that is sent out every week:

Green Street United Methodist Church is called to the ministry of the sacred worth of all people. We embrace as a gift the diversity of our neighborhood and the world. We celebrate our human family's diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, age, faith history, economic status, marital status, physical and mental ability, education, and any other difference, real or perceived. We affirm that all people are created in the image of God and as beloved children of God, all are worthy of God's love and grace. We welcome the full inclusion of all people in the life and ministries of Green Street United Methodist Church as we journey toward reconciliation through Christ. We recognize that there are differences among us, but believe that we can love alike even though we may not think alike. We proclaim this statement of welcome to all who have known the pain of exclusion and discrimination in the church or in society and know that everyone's participation in our ministries enriches us. We invite all people to join us in our faith journey toward greater love, understanding, and mutual respect.

The leadership council recently took another step toward reconciliation with the LGBTQ community by taking action on marriage equality within our congregation. The leadership council unanimously voted to issue a public statement on marriage and adopt a new policy on marriage within the church that attempts create a more equitable approach for all couples within the constructs of the United Methodist Church. The statement received national attention and continues to be a part of the ongoing work of justice within our church. Below is the statement as presented by the leadership council which also appears on the church website as of March 17, 2013.

**A Public Statement on Weddings at
Green Street United Methodist Church
Adopted by the Leadership Council
March 10, 2013**

As an Anti-Racist, Reconciling Congregation, Green Street United Methodist Church seeks to be in faithful ministry with all people in the brokenness of our world. This statement is being adopted as a sign of our commitment to love and justice for all people.

The Marriage Covenant between two people is a ministry of the church. Couples making a commitment to one another need a supportive community of faith to sustain and uphold them so as to grow in faith and love. Weddings are the occasion for covenant making, a time to seek God's blessing on their

commitment to one another. When a couple chooses to be married in the church, they should also be conscious that they are making a declaration of their relationship as a new ministry for the congregation and the world. At Green Street Church, we claim the committed same-sex relationships as no less sacred in their ministry to us and the community.

But sadly, at this time in the United Methodist Church, marriages, weddings and holy unions are limited to heterosexual couples. As our nation struggles to provide legal recognition to people in same-sex relationships and provide them the privileges allotted to opposite-sex married couples, our denomination struggles to overcome the sin of reserving these sacramental privileges for straight people only. We, the leaders of Green Street Church, see people in same-sex relationships as completely worthy of the Sacrament of Marriage. We reject any notion that they are second class citizens in the Kingdom of God. Using the Social Principles Preamble and the Call to Inclusiveness from The United Methodist Church Book of Discipline 2012 as our foundation (see Appendix 1), the Leadership Council of Green Street Church witnesses to our United Methodist denomination, community and world in making the following requests of the pastors appointed to serve Green Street Church:

1. We request that our pastors be active in the ministry of pre-marital counseling for all couples, regardless of orientation, guide them toward a life of commitment to one another, and lead the congregation in providing communal and spiritual support for the health and stability of all relationships.
2. We ask that our pastors, at their discretion, offer to all couples regardless of orientation a *Service of Relationship Blessing* in the Sanctuary of Green Street Church. In consultation with the couple, such a service can contain a Processional, Scripture Lesson, Homily, an Exchange of Blessings written by the couple, and a Prayer of Blessing for their Relationship. (Note: service will avoid vows, rings, a public pronouncement of marriage, and language of covenant-making.)
3. Until the United Methodist Church removes its restriction for LGBTQ people, we request that pastors under appointment by the Bishop refrain from conducting any wedding ceremonies, opposite or same-sex, within the sanctuary or building of Green Street UMC. (The United Methodist Book of Discipline, Para 341.6:*Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.*) (Note: We define a Wedding Ceremony as a service that contains the exchange of Marriage Vows, Rings, a Public Pronounce of Marriage, and language of Covenant-making.)
4. Until the state of North Carolina changes its restrictions on marriage, or has that restriction overturned, we request that pastors under appointment by the Bishop refrain from signing any marriage license issued by the state of North Carolina, or any other state where there is a similar restriction, until full privilege is offered to same sex couples.

These requests recognize that at the Pastor's discretion, he/she may perform a wedding ceremony at location other than Green Street Church, as long as it is in line with United Methodist Discipline.

Congregational Partnerships

One of the aspects of Green Street that many people are drawn to is our focus on serving others. The following is a description of two non-profits that grew out of Green Street ministries and individual's commitments to social justice work. Again from the website (2012):

The Shalom Project, born out of the outreach ministries of Green Street Church, is a 501c3 non profit, community organization. It seeks to build a strong and healthy community by meeting the needs of people with compassion, celebrating diversity and working for justice. Programs of The Shalom Project include an after school Kids Cafe, a free health clinic, The Welcome Table (Wednesday community supper), the Community Knowledge Center (computer lab), a clothing closet & food pantry on Tuesday mornings, and the Peter's Creek Community Initiative (community/economic development).

IDR (The Institute for Dismantling Racism) builds teams to dismantle internalized racism and systemic racist structures—with a common definition of racism: Race prejudice + the misuse of power by systems and institutions = Racism. Through internal organizing and training workshops, IDR develops community trust across lines of difference to help transform institutions from the inside out.

Green Street also houses the offices and many of the meetings for Winston-Salem's Industrial Areas Foundation chapter. This alliance is an important one to Green Street members and to the CHANGE leadership (2012):

CHANGE (Communities Helping All Neighbors Gain Empowerment) is an interfaith, multiracial organization that trains leaders to take action in the public arena. CHANGE collaborates with over 50 congregations and community organizations in the Winston-Salem area. Over the past 10 years, CHANGE has helped people of faith bring about justice, working with public education, community health, economic development and increasing voter turn out.

Green Street UMC is not unique as a religious institution with a focus on social justice and community service. But just as no two people are the same, no two congregations are the same, and definitely no two pastors are the same; therefore, Green Street is unique by virtue of the people who call Green Street home. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the role that Rev. Kelly Carpenter has played in the growth and sustainability for Green Street UMC. Under his leadership since 1999 (which is unusual for a Methodist congregation, as most pastors are assigned for periods of seven years or less) our church has continued to expand, not just in size or in missions, but in theology and vision. His leadership and partnership with associate pastor, Willard Bass, are foundational to the work of social transformation by Green Street UMC and its membership.

Conclusion

Because I identify as a social justice-oriented activist, therapist, parent, and educator, I wanted to learn about how someone might be educated to develop a social justice identity. I wanted to understand how I came to be committed to social justice and how that relates to the work of education and the theories of pedagogy related to social justice. I wanted to find scholarly support for the kind of work I want to do with youth and families. I wanted to know if what we are doing within our church's children and youth ministries has the possibility of creating adults committed to social justice. As pointed out earlier, unfortunately in my reading and researching for my dissertation, I have not found research that discusses what type of learning experiences have a profound impact on White, middle class children who grow up to become social justice activists.

There are documentaries and/or docudramas that highlight the personal growth and learning for students who go through the transformative learning experiences, such

as “A Class Divided” (Peters, 1985). There are also personal memoirs of teachers who have profound impacts on their students and vice versa, such “The Ron Clark Story”(Haines, 2006); “Freedom Writers” (LaGravenese, 2007); “Stand and Deliver” (Menendez, 1988). None of these works shows analytic research or critical analysis about what types of learning experiences bring about development of a social justice identity.

There are curriculums and pedagogies for this type of learning: multicultural transformational pedagogy is the term commonly used that works as an umbrella for other terms like social justice education, anti-bias curriculum, anti-racist pedagogy, multicultural education, and others (Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey, 2008). Yet again, I found no research basis for why these pedagogies will work; just a belief in or commitment to the value of teaching in an anti-oppressive nature. For example, I really appreciate the work of Louise Derman-Sparks (1989) which focuses on creating an anti-bias curriculum for early childhood education. I have read some of her writings and have worked with her in an anti-bias workshop in Chicago. I absolutely stand behind the importance and value of using her anti-bias curriculum with children and families. Although her stories of working with families are powerful and engaging, where is the research that shows that teaching in this way influences how life-long learning and commitments? Will it really change society? I believe it will, but I also think we need to know how.

I think we need to work backwards, instead of starting with what to teach children, let's ask adults who are living role models what worked for them. No one is perfect, and no one experience will speak to creating a model curriculum or pedagogy, but stories can offer insight and truth into the human condition, and this can give us, as

educators and as scholars, validity for backing the types of social justice educational reform we find so necessary. I agree with Luciani's (2004) statement about this:

Stories point to issues about multiple ways of knowing, telling and showing; about creativity, healing and spirituality in education; about the infusion of the arts into research; about learning at home and bringing that learning outside of home, outside of the kitchen, about bringing my heart, our hearts, into inquiry. (p. 40)

I wanted to take the time to listen to stories to create new knowledge about changing hearts and lives. Luciani goes on to say that "listening takes courage in the context of academic research, where heart-full and art-full tellings are disavowed, de-legitimized and denounced" (p. 40). Maybe that is why there are not more studies about art-full stories of social justice. The why or why not is not as important as the doing. I needed to listen. I needed to tell these stories, so that there can be more art-full and heart-full stories of social justice identity development.

There is a growing body of scholarship that focuses on researchers/activists who work with urban minority youth doing social justice youth development particularly in the Los Angeles area (Ginwright & James, 2002; Rogers, Morrell, Enyedy, 2007; Oakes, Rogers & Lipton, 2008), but there also needs to be attention paid to how to develop a social justice identity for White, middle class youth, so that they can learn to be allies with youth of color. There is research in the service learning field that touches on White youth and issues of social justice (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004); but again this research is about the programs youth are currently participating in, not the longitudinal effects of their experiences.

Overall, there is significant research about White adults and social justice, but it all seems to be centered on White people who are ignorant of power, privilege, and

oppression issues, with conclusions on how they grow and learn through classroom and group experiences or how they continue to perpetuate oppressive and racist monoliths (Diangelo, 2006; Hytten & Warren, 2003; Thompson, 2003; Applebaum, 2008, Brantlinger, 2003; Soo Hoo, 2004). More specifically in the field of educational research there is a focus on how pre-service teachers are taught to develop anti-racist and anti-oppressive identities, but most start from (or focus on) the assumption that White people come to them ignorant of social justice issues (Sleeter, 2008; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009; Vavrus, 2002).

There is also the field of racial identity development (Helms, 1983; Tatum, 1997). As mentioned earlier, Gary Howard's (2006) *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know*, was influential in my desire to analyze social justice identity development. Howard, who is a well-known White, anti-racist educator, also focuses on adulthood and how teachers should develop a transformationist White identity. His work is about teacher identity development, not student identity development.

Howard's work is grounded in Beverly Tatum's (an African-American) racial identity work. In her book *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, Tatum (1997) does discuss the development of racial identity for African Americans from childhood. It makes sense in her work that children feel the effects of oppression and are shaped by it. Why is it that Gary Howard can start his identity development in early adulthood and mention one story about a person of color from his adolescence and that is enough? Why do we not question more about his childhood? What made him capable of being shaped by his experiences at Yale in such a profound way as to lead to a life committed to social justice? I think it also matters what happened to him when he was younger, even if it did not involve people of color. Was he somehow along the way

already developing a social justice identity? This is what I wanted to figure out—how do we become White adults capable of developing transformative identities and commitments to social justice?

I cannot fully answer that question, maybe no one can, but I can answer the question of why a particular group of women at Green Street UMC came to believe in social justice and how they try and live out its principles by being members of a spiritual community dedicated to justice and transformation. I can tell a new story through arts-informed inquiry of an education towards social justice. As Luciani says:

I want to tell a story that unearths and composts the soil beneath my inquiry: the ways in which consistency, commitment and compassion create the possibility for openness and authenticity in my process, enabling me to be grounded in my work in my roots, so I can stand still and listen. (p. 40)

I think unearthing and exploring these stories will add to the scholarly discussion about social justice identity development. I believe there has not been enough looking back to reflect on what we have done in the education of young people that has led to social justice advocacy. I think it is important to not just create educational practices because we think they will be good for kids; rather, we should be studying best practices to uncover what we believe has worked. We do this to uncover best practices in academic skills, why not in social ones? We also do this in psychological skills. The field of psychology studies families and individuals to try and learn about what helps children develop healthy self-esteem, confidence, etc., and then educational practices are put in place to help develop those aspects of the self, so why not focus on aspects of social justice education in this same vein?

Layout of Chapters

In Chapter II, I discuss my theoretical framework of transformative identities, relational learning and beloved communities for creating a social justice education. I begin by discussing identity theories and support my use of transformative identities and identifications from a feminist, postmodern perspective. I then discuss relational learning theories from critical, feminist perspectives as a way to develop skills to deconstruct issues of otherness, difference, privilege, and power. I bring it all together with the concept of the beloved community, a term used to embrace and define how transformative identities, relational learning and a commitment to social justice can be lived out and worked through by building and sustaining relationships that struggle with difference, power relations, and identification with others through coalition building and reflective solidarity.

Chapter III is all about my methodology of arts-informed social inquiry and how it relates to other forms of qualitative inquiries. I situate my use this terminology within arts-informed and participatory social inquiry methods. I then give a description of my research design and process to set the stage for presenting the data in the next chapter.

Chapter IV contains the data analysis. I present the data in the format of the expressive arts sessions that the group participated in. I introduce the women through their journal writing and a poetic collage of our individual “I am” poems that is followed by a short analysis. Next each of the women’s self-portraits and descriptions are introduced with a short analysis after each. Finally, I present the human sculptures and descriptions and analysis. When I first organized my dissertation, I planned to have a complete chapter about my process as research/artist—reflexive inquiry, life history approach—but then I realized, I was part of the group. I had a unique role in the group as

creator/facilitator/researcher, and I was also a member of the group. I shared my portrait and stories, too. And thus, I determined (because I'm also the author) that my social justice identity self-portrait belonged in this chapter with everyone else's. My sculpture and poetry are there, too.

In Chapter V, I present my findings as the core elements of social justice identity development. I sorted the emerging themes from the data analysis into three categories of intellectual/individual, emotional/relational, and spiritual/communal which also correlate to the previous categories of knowing self, understanding other, and making a commitment to social justice. This also relates back to my opening argument in Chapter I that an education to a commitment to social justice would require intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects.

Chapter VI returns back to the original premise of this dissertation as an elaborate professional development plan, and questions whether I have found a pedagogy for a social justice education that can support the work I do within a spiritual community committed to transformation and social justice. I also consider strengths and limitations of the study, and of course I discuss ways in which I would like to expand the research in future inquiries.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL JUSTICE IDENTITY FRAMEWORK

We make our way in the world—whether we are carpenters or researchers—according to the stories we tell each other. We could call them illusions. And in the academic world we call the discussion of these stories theoretical debates. (L. Neilsen, *Aesthetics and Knowing*, 2004, p. 45)

In this chapter I explore the theories that inspired my research. My theoretical framing for this dissertation lies in not only an understanding of these theories, but in a belief in their ideals and a commitment to them through my practice. Although each theory blends and folds into one another like overlapping spheres and spiraling conifers, I find that the theories that best support a framework for this study are transformative identity, relational learning, and beloved communities from a feminist, critical, spiritual, postmodern, poststructuralist perspective.

I begin with a historical reference and contemporary situating for each of the broad topics and then attempt to show how through my analytical lenses they work together to create a theoretical framework for this dissertation on social justice identity development. First, I take the immense topic of identity and try to situate transformative identities for privileged people by giving historical reference to identity development theories, identity politics, and more current debates on identification and identity. I then move to transformative identities and identifications which begins with an explanation of transformative learning theory to situate my use of the term transformative and to show the links between the theory in adult education and use of the term in feminist identity

theory.

Transformative identities introduces the concept of relational learning as important for doing the work of social justice, and thus the next section discusses relational learning. I begin with a broad explanation of the current use of the term and then focus more specifically on how the concept of relational learning from a critical, feminist perspective is key element in dealing with issues of otherness, difference, privilege, and power.

Finally, I focus on the concept of the beloved community, a term used to embrace and define how transformative identities, relational learning, and a commitment to social justice can be lived out and worked through by building and sustaining relationships that struggle with difference, power relations, and identification with others through coalition building and reflective solidarity.

Defining Social Justice

I find it important to begin this chapter revisiting the term that is so prominent in this study. Social justice is a commonly used term that can stir up a lot of emotion when used; for example, two women in my study made it clear that this was not a word they used or even liked. I find it imperative to share some definitions of social justice that relate to my use of the expression, so that the reader can better understand my analysis and implications. Shriberg, Bonner, Sarr, Walker, Hyland, and Chester (2008) wrote an article focused on social justice in school psychology in which they argued that:

Social Justice is a term that is not easily defined, but is associated in education with the idea that all individuals and groups must be treated with fairness and respect and that all are entitled to the resources and benefits that the school has to offer. (p. 455)

Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) also define social justice as the fair distribution of resources, but they also incorporate the idea of each person having agency and being a social actor in the process of democracy toward social justice. Specifically Bell (1997) defines social justice as:

full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. (p. 3)

Developing a social justice identity allows one to name as an essential part of oneself a commitment to the work of social justice. This identity would also imply that others would respond to the individual as a member of a group that is committed to the work of social justice. There is also an implication here that the individual critically reflect and observe how this identity is reflected back by others in the group and from outside the group.

As Huebner (2005) puts it “to be in the company of co-journeyers is to be enabled to identify personal and collective idols, to name oppression, and to undergo the continuing transformation necessary in the vocation of teaching”(p. 322). Developing a social justice identity would help one recognize other co-journeyers who are also committed to social justice and transformative learning. Huebner also points out that “all activity in school has moral consequences” (p. 322). I would expand that to argue that all education has moral consequences; therefore, the educator who identifies with social justice must consider the moral and ethical perspectives of teaching and learning.

Identity Theories

Throughout my studies in Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations, I continually found myself drawn back to concepts of identity, even though that was not a major focus in any of my classes. I found that for me the common thread linking

education to social justice happened within the development of identity and the process of identification with others. Creating an identity could be likened to what happens when one looks in the mirror everyday over a lifetime—one starts to be able to imagine what the mirror will reflect without even looking. Sometimes not even really noticing what one is seeing—other times scrutinizing over every line and bump. From a poststructural perspective of identity development, society becomes our mirror—individual people, small groups, and the larger collective of society as a whole reflect back to us who we are in relation to them and we construct a sense of self. I believe educators must look to our pedagogies and practices to consider not just what we are teaching our young people, but whom we are teaching them to be. If leaders of progressive education agree with Lerner (2005) that we hold as a:

master narrative...that all human beings are precious and sacred, deserving of respect and love, entitled to the fullest opportunities to develop their intellectual and creative capacities, and entitled to be supported in freely choosing and shaping their own life paths, (p. 345)

then educators, parents, and activists must find ways to promote the development of transformative identities that can support people in reaching for their fullest participation in society and creating a public where love, respect, and justice are more powerful than consumption, competition, and individual rights.

I begin this discussion on identity with a focus on identity development theory from the psychological field, as this approach to stages of development have influenced Howard (2006) and Tatum (2003) in their racial identity development theories. Since I refer significantly to Howard's work I find this helpful in the analysis. Then, in the next section, I move on to identity and identification. I give a brief history of identity politics and then break off into focusing specifically on the opposition to identity politics from

feminist perspectives. This evolution of identity politics and theories leads to my framework of transformative identities and identification, which I ground in Alison Weir's (2008) framework of transformative identity politics. My goal is that by the end of this exploration of identity theories the reader will understand my positioning of social justice identity development within the field of identity theories.

Identity Development Theory

In the twentieth century Erik Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development and his stages of development helped many people name the problems of identity and feel empowered by their own stages of growth. Maybe this is because he was among the first to acknowledge that identity is embedded in social, cultural, and historical contexts. Erikson's theory was that identity formation required all of one's mental functioning "by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves" (as quoted in Tatum, 2003, p. 19). Thus identity is created through a "process of simultaneous reflection and observation" (Tatum, 2003, p. 19) encompassed by the question, "Who am I?" In Erikson's theory development was an individual process that involved relationships but was essentially focused on the self rather than on collective identities.

Referring to Omi and Winant's (1986) concept of "micro-level" race formation, Hudak (1993) defines identity as "the ways in which one forms an understanding of self and society in practical everyday activity" (p. 173). In contemporary society and postmodern thought, identity has become not something we are, it is something we create through the social construction of meaning. My own definition of individual identity draws on Tatum's (2003) more specific definition of racial identity development: Identity is the complex process of defining for oneself the personal significance and social

meaning of belonging to a particular group and to many groups at once (p. 16). Therefore, identity is the daily act of becoming one's self through interactions with others, reflections on those interactions, and assimilations of what we think others want us to be. Identity is created in individual encounters at the micro and macro levels creating opportunities to identify one's self in each of the multiple groups one is situated within. This is the complexity, and I believe a limitation, of identity development theory. We do not belong to one identity group, and even within a group we feel we belong to, there is not a homogenous "we/I" that is fixed and static to claim, therefore each of us has to struggle with the plurality of all our identities continually reconsidering "Who am I?" in any given context.

Bauman (2005) addressed this issue of the limitation of static, individual identity in contemporary society. Whereas, Erikson used the terms, "sameness and continuity" to describe what identity feels like when you have one (p. 449), Bauman asserts that identity has become so elusive, so quickly changing that it is difficult to grasp what particular group offers personal meaning. "Men and women look for groups to which they can belong, certainly and forever, in a world in which all else is moving and shifting, in which nothing else is certain" (p. 452). The fast pace of growth and information gathering in our ever more globalized lives and the innovative technologies that allow one to literally change an identity or identity marker, such as sex/gender or physical appearance of skin and facial features, makes the notion of "sameness and continuity" almost antiquated. And yet we still need to answer the question "Who am I?" There is no less need for a sense of self in connection with others.

Gilligan (1982) also questioned the limitations of theories of identity development and helped to shape how we think about what is "normal" in development. Even though

Gilligan was limited in her focus on just gender issues, her work points to how important it is for scholars to consider how dominance and bias can blind theorists to visions of otherness. Her goal in writing *In a Different Voice* was “to expand the understanding of human development by using the group left out in the construction of theory to call attention to what is missing in its account” (p. 4).

An important focus of Gilligan’s theory that relates to my work is how her concept of the differentiation between male and female maturity correlates to Greene’s (1988) dialectic of freedom. Gilligan points out that the difference between male development and female development is “the contrast between a self defined through separation and a self delineated through connection” (p. 35). Her conclusion is that separation and individualization, which are typically associated with men, are seen as normal development, while the female pattern of a self-assessed through relationships was deviant to the life cycle theory. Gilligan’s theory created contrast between an ethic of rights and an ethics of care. Her conclusion brought into question that there is more than one way to develop an identity and if researchers looked for more than one way they would find it—that a woman’s way of developing through connection and a sense of responsibility to others should not be undervalued or seen as immature. As I will point out later, identity politics problematizes research like Gilligan’s because it assumes generalizations about female gender by privileging a White, middle class perspective as the norm, but Heyes (1997) argues that scholars should not assume a completely anti-essentialist stance that embarks to throw out all research and findings like Gilligan’s because although:

some second wave feminist theorizing both created and perpetuated overly general claims about women's oppression; in no way should the racist, classist, or heteronormative bases of some of this theory be minimized...the constant reiteration of these problems seems paradoxically to reinforce them even as it decries them. (p. 144)

Heyes supports deconstructing second wave feminism for what it leaves out and how it falls short while also appreciating that work like Gilligan's did "form the basis of opposition to conventional sexist political theorizing"(p. 144).

Theorists and researchers like Gilligan (1982), Tatum (2003), Helms (1990) and others have built upon earlier theories of development to add more aspects of identity to the research that encourages a movement toward incorporating multiple perspectives and critical analysis into identity development theory. Identity development is a complex process. The important word here is process. Unlike developing film, humans are never done processing. Development is not an end it is a means of becoming more fully human. For me, the term development signifies a process of growth and change. If my goal is to help others see themselves as part of a solution for a better world then I have to understand what it means to grow and change, to become, to transform. Other perspectives of identity speak more to this process or transformation of identity; they come from the area of identity politics and the concept of identification.

Identity and Identification

In this section I introduce my discussion of identity politics by exploring the terms identity and identification. I begin with Bauman's explanation of the terms in "Identity in the Globalizing World." Bauman (2005) asserts that an earlier discursive explosion on the concept of identity has now triggered an avalanche. He states:

No other aspect of contemporary life, it seems, attracts the same amount of attention these days from philosophers, social scientists and psychologists. It is not just that “identity studies” are fast becoming a thriving industry in their own right: more than that is happening—one may say that “identity” has now become the prism through which other topical aspects of contemporary life are spotted, grasped and examined. (p. 443)

Bauman explains this differentiation between identity and identification by giving some historical context to the concept of identity. He asserts that modernity reshaped the notion of human nature. “Predestination’ was replaced with ‘life project,’ fate with vocation, and a ‘human nature’ into which one was born was replaced with ‘identity’ which one needs to saw up and make fit” (p. 445). No longer were humans bound to act out certain dramas based on birth, expectation, or given understandings of life. Questions and possibilities abounded. In previous centuries there was no middle class or bourgeois. There was only servant and master, with very few options for moving from the former to the latter. With modernity people began to see the possibilities of human potential in a whole new light. In this vein, Rousseau “would insist that the capacity of self-transformation is the only ‘human essence’ and the only trait common to us all” (p. 455). It became the task of the individual to be responsible for completing one’s identity, for maturing, and transforming into one’s best self.

Bauman (2005) goes on to say that although it is now common understanding that our individuality is socially produced, it cannot be understated that the “shape of our sociality, and so of the society we share, depends in its turn on the way in which ‘individualization’ is framed and responded to” (p. 446). One can see in contemporary American society how our focus on individualism is being played out in the ideologies of freedom and the myth of the American dream. For instance, in *The Dialectic of Freedom*, Maxine Greene (1988) challenges the notion of freedom as individual rights and

autonomous action. She argues that for many “If freedom comes to mind, it is ordinarily associated with an individualistic stance: It signifies a self-dependence rather than relationship; self-regarding and self-regulated behavior rather than involvement with others” (p. 7). Thus, our society is shaped by the prevailing notion that individualism means self-dependence rather than individualization as a responsibility to become one’s best self for the benefit of all. It should be noted that this is not a universal norm, as feminist Ann Ferguson (1999) points out “rational self-interest’ as opposed to ‘my neighbor’s interest’ or ‘collective good’ are concepts that developed only under Western capitalism” (p. 98).

Of course, not all Americans hold to the notion of individualism as self-dependence. I was reminded by Rev. Aaron, a preacher at a recent, local interfaith youth event that, “We believe our job is to leave the world better than we found it and so we come here (to church) searching for ways to better ourselves.” This is the dialectic of freedom that Greene is discussing: The challenge of individualization that leads to personal fulfillment versus individual freedom that leads to social transformation. Our identification with freedom, liberation, justice, and humanity shapes how we perceive individualization; and therefore, our beliefs and knowledge about identity development and/or the process of identification shape how we approach becoming our “best self.” What Bauman (2005) argues is that:

Perhaps instead of talking about identities, inherited or acquired, it would be more in keeping with the realities of a globalizing world to speak of *identification*, a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity in which we all, by necessity or by choice, are engaged. (p. 453)

Bauman is not espousing a new theory for identity development, but the questions he raises and the final point he makes give pause to the notion that human beings are

constantly evolving, and at ever faster rates. Why would our notion of identity or identification not also have evolved? Is it not imperative that scholars, with a focus on social justice, constantly question the notions of identity that have come to be taken for granted? This leads to the arguments made by scholars in their struggle with identity and politics and the expanding philosophies of human interaction and justice.

Identity Politics

In the second half of the twentieth century, America was witness to massive political movements from marginalized groups such as the Civil Rights Movement and second wave feminism. These and other political endeavors brought forth the concept of identity politics. Juliet Perumal (2006) posits that:

Although the phrase ‘identity politics’ has served many different purposes, it has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice to members of certain social groups. Rather than organising solely around ideology or party affiliation, identity politics typically concerns the liberation of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. (p. 728)

Perumal goes on to discuss how identity politics became a process of developing positive collective identities and analyzing the power structures that created the “negative scripts” of inferiority and powerlessness. Therefore, identity politics became an opportunity to transform one’s self through consciousness-raising and collective action (p. 729). Yet, almost as soon as it was constructed, scholars started deconstructing the idea of identity politics. One of the primary limitations was the construction of collective identities as categories of appropriative sameness that required already marginalized people to limit their sense of self into one fixed and static category of identity, i.e. woman. These collective identities often continued to promote dominant ideologies of the fixed categories through arrogant and assumed perceptions and did not offer

individuals the possibilities of heterogenous, multiplicity of identity, i.e. Black, middle class, lesbian woman (Weir, 2008, Perumal, 2006, Heyes, 2002, Okin 2004). Therefore Perumal points out that:

Barely had intellectuals started to systematically outline and defend the philosophical underpinnings of identity politics, than they simultaneously began to deconstruct it. The notion of identity has become indispensable to contemporary political discourse, at the same time arousing troubling implications for models of the self, political inclusiveness, and possibilities for solidarity and resistance. (p. 729)

One of the main arguments against or deconstruction of identity politics was that of essentialism. Heyes (1997) discusses use of the term essentialism from a feminist perspective in which she argues that “any feminist theory that is variously determinist, exclusionary, ahistorical; that fails to recognize diversity among women; that falsely gener-alizes, [or] reifies femininity” can be deemed “essentialist” (p.144). This argument is also made of other categories of collective identity that fall under identity politics, such as race, class, sexuality, etc.

Out of this deconstruction of the essentialism of identity politics came such constructs as: the politics of difference, positive identity politics, and positional identity politics. Perumal (2005) discusses the history of identity politics and the contribution of poststructuralists, such as Derrida, who created questions and complications about the nature of identity formation in identity politics and the issues of difference and power which has become known as the “politics of difference.” Perumal describes the politics of difference as an ideology that “aims to decentre or subvert, rather than to conquer or assert. It does this by seeking to reclaim a stigmatised identity, to revalue the devalued pole of a dichotomised hierarchy, such as White/Black, male/female, First World/Third World, etc.” (p. 728). This binary approach to the reframing of identity still had to make

generalizations about the categories it was trying to “decenter or subvert.” Although it was fighting against a universality of privileged identities, it still had the limit of sameness in these binary categories and did not allow for the complication of multiple categories of identity that can allow for one person’s privilege and oppression. It still tried to create a “principle of unity based on what was perceived as a shared oppression” (p. 734).

Ann Ferguson (1998) uses the term “positive identity politics” to discuss these same difficulties of essentializing and generalizing identity categories. She asserts that:

positive identity politics cannot take into account powers and privileges that some in an identity group have over others: for example, positive feminist gender identity politics downplays class, racial, national/ethnic and sexual differences between women...as poststructuralist critics have emphasized, positive identity politics tends to reinstitute the same dualisms as those in socially dominant positions do...this marginalizes those who do not fit comfortably into such categories, such as hermaphrodites, transsexuals, and people of mixed race.
(pp. 104-105)

This type of category-based identity politics forced a critique from feminists focused on creating solidarity and breaking down normative, authoritative power constructs. Out of this critique came “positional identity politics” (Ferguson, 1998, Alcoff, 1988, de Lauretis, 1987, Riley, 1988, hooks, 1990). Positional identity politics focuses on the social categories that a person is assigned to based on the given categories that exist within oppressive and dominant hierarchies. Ferguson explains that in positional identity politics, instead of just resisting or subscribing to the fixed category identity and trying to create a new form of “femininity, Blackness, multicultural Whiteness, upwardly mobile working-class-ness”, collective groups can work together “by agreeing with others defined by a similar positionality to fight for certain social justice demands, such as abortion rights, freedom from male violence, affordable childcare, or adequate research on women’s health issues” (p. 107). But Weir (2008) argues that although positional

identity politics did make positive movement towards empowering women it still limits women's ability to define themselves by forcing them into a binary category:

This kind of positional identity politics reduces women's identity to a simple matter of category, defined through opposition to another category. While this model avoids positing a shared essence or universal experience, it nevertheless takes women's identity as something that is given and objective. Perhaps it is constituted by various systems, structures, or histories, but for us, it is simply given: we find ourselves assigned to it. (p. 114)

Thus Weir (2008) argues for a theoretical reconstruction of feminism and identity that is based on solidarity around share issues. She argues that women do not feel solidarity because they are forced into the same category by societal schemas of power and oppression. She also argues that learning about other women and their struggles and the political history of the shared interest is an important part of identifying with someone and creating solidarity (p.115). I will discuss in more detail later Weir's development of "identification with" as a foundation for "transformative identity politics." This is one example of what Perumal (2006) describes as a "proliferation of oppositional feminist discourses which have unearthed various other interlocking systems of oppression" (p. 734).

Current Discourses on Identity

Whiteness and Identity

In an attempt to understand the stories of the women in the study (this includes my own story), it is important to consider the normative structures of privilege that influence their notions of social justice. All of the women in the group identify as White and middle class. As has been mentioned previously, these two constructs of privilege have often worked against White, middle class feminist scholars and activists trying to promote the rights of women because they tended to generalize women's experience

based on their own identity. If women do not learn about, critically reflect on, and deconstruct their Whiteness and middle class-ness then it will be difficult for them to create solidarity with anyone that has.

Whiteness studies have grown in academic popularity in recent decades; particularly involving the participation of White scholars and activists (Hytten & Warren, 2004; Case, 2012; Eichstedt, 2001). There is still work to be done and as Case (2012) points out little research is based on the voices of White anti-racist activists. She and others (Thompson and Neville, 1999) suggest that this:

gap in the literature be filled with research on not only the processes through which Whites learn racism, but also the processes involved in unlearning privilege and dominance. In addition, research is needed to address White anti-racists' struggles with silence in the presence of racism and obstacles to White anti-racist activism for social change. (p. 80)

I believe the process of “unlearning privilege and dominance” could also fall under what is involved for people of privilege to learn about social justice. Therefore, this is a foundation of this study and my data analysis. I am interested in ways that privileged people construct or assume their sense of Whiteness in childhood, and how or if disruptive learning experiences made them more aware of their privileges, and how or if that knowledge impacts their commitment to social justice. I think this knowledge could help educators develop a social justice education that could enhance the tools of privileged youth to resist dominance and oppression. This study focuses specifically on White, middle class women and so a consideration of the current discourse on Whiteness in contemporary America will help to inform this work.

I want to make sure I acknowledge that blatant racism still exists in many forms, but that only understanding racism as blatant racial policies or personal interactions,

even group affiliations, such as White Supremacy groups, is a limited and dangerous view of the impacts of racism. I believe that White people who want to work for justice also need to understand that there are many ways to “be racist.” I think too often White people want to essentialize Whiteness into two categories: Swastika tattooed, redneck, openly hate-filled violent men and White people who opened their homes to the Underground Railroad or who marched with Martin Luther King, Jr.—the saints of the race in the eyes of so many White people wanting to erase their privilege. I argue that Whiteness needs to be de-essentialized in the same way that other identity categories have been; to do that we need to explore the many ways of being White, the multiple aspects of Whiteness that offer privilege, as well as, the many ways that White people have worked for or against social justice and the impacts of those attempts.

I think White people can find people who look like them to be proud of; we can see that progress has been made, there are things to be hopeful about, but we also need to continue to be critical of ourselves and of Whiteness. I consider myself a critical optimist, which I will discuss on more detail in the final chapter, but for now I want to acknowledge that I take a positive view of the ability of some White folks to grow and change and work for justice because they are willing to do the hard work of learning about White history and contemporary identity and reflecting on how they are complicit in White privilege and domination. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore critical White studies in depth, but there are three aspects of Whiteness and identity that seem salient to my data and analysis: (a) White Nationalism as a response to Black identity politics; (b) colorblind racism and the privileges of invisibility; and finally, (c) de-essentializing Whiteness to allow for anti-racist White identifications with others working toward social justice.

I wanted to include a discussion of White Nationalism as a response to Black identity politics because this aspect of Whiteness is particularly powerful in today's political climate in which this study is socially positioned. My discussion focuses on Steven Gardiner's (2006) article on White Nationalism in which he attempts to re-present the White Nationalist social movement, its ideological core, and strategic orientation. He summarizes the movement by saying:

The new White nationalists have a non-utopian praxis aimed at preserving "White civilization" as guaranteed by the "White gene pool" by restricting non-White immigration. In effect they organize in the name of Whiteness to preserve the power and privilege they already have. (p. 84)

He also asserts that this group is represented by its flagship organization "*American Renaissance*." One can find information about the group and its ideology by visiting their website www.amren.com (retrieved Feb. 25, 2013). Gardiner offers this definition of White Nationalism:

White nationalism is a secular political orientation, grounded in an ideology of biologically determined racial hierarchy and the presumption of a necessary link between race and nation, and a praxis that includes, but is not limited to, pragmatic engagement with electoral and pressure group activity on the model of identity politics. (p. 61)

This definition posits that the White National movement is made up of individuals who believe in the biology of race and more specifically the superiority of the White race and that "the primary goal of contemporary White nationalists is to preserve (and ideally expand) the White racial majority in the United States" (p. 64). The strategy of this is twofold—oppose immigration from non-Whites through political policies and have more White children—no really—Gardiner quotes Pat Buchanan from his book, *Death of the West*, in which he says, "If Americans wish to preserve their civilization and culture,

American women must have more children" (as cited in Gardiner, 2006, p. 68), of course American is read as White, Christian. One might wonder why I find it necessary to broach this aspect of White identity, even though it is not specifically mentioned in the data. I believe it is salient to the women in this study because it is part of our political climate and a dismissive attitude or monolithic understanding of White identity politics will undermine any attempt towards social justice by a White person who is trying to identify as anti-racist. I believe we must acknowledge the political and social power of the White Nationalist movement and other groups like them, and understand their agenda and strategy if we are going to fight for equality. During the last election cycle in 2012, it was made perfectly clear that the White vote was no longer the majority, and there continues to be critical debates about the identity of the Republican party and the role of the Conservative Right. It is not feasible here to breakdown the correlation and go into the right-wing agenda on women's reproductive rights, the marriage equality debate, and immigration policy, and the White national stance on White women bearing more children and sustaining American values. I do think that if a White person wants to be anti-racist, they should be well aware of the multiple ways a person can be racist and being a White Nationalist is one way.

Another way racism presents in current American society is through colorblind racism and the invisible privileges of Whiteness. Since the Jim Crow South and the Civil Rights Movement of the 60's, the ways racism lives out in the lives of Americans is changing. This can be heard in the stories of the women in the study group who have lived through those changes, in contrast to the younger women who grew up in the era of what Bonilla-Silva (2010) calls "colorblind racism." He asserts that through this racism "Whites rationalize minorities' contemporary status as the product of market dynamics,

naturally occurring phenomena, and Blacks' imputed cultural limitations" (p. 2). It is important to note that this is not completely separate from the White Nationalist perspective on race. That is why White people who try and ignore or remain oblivious to their race and its power are so dangerous to the perpetuation and prosperity of groups like the American Renaissance—without "meaning" to Whites condone these groups by their passive adherence or what Bonilla-Silva calls "White common sense" and an acceptance of the racial status quo "in a casual, uncritical fashion that helps sustain the prevailing racial order" (p. 11). Colorblind racism and White common sense are inert and non-confrontational. They allow Whites to interact with people of color without feeling a sense of obligation to understand racism, because in their mind either it does not exist (we are post-racial), or the way to "solve" the problem is to ignore it or worse not see it as a problem. Has that ever worked? As any recovering addict will tell you—the first step to overcoming an addiction is to own it and name it. But how can Whites name something they cannot (or choose not) to see?

I believe the main issue of privilege, and race privilege in particular, is that having it makes it seem natural and invisible. As Johnson (2006) and others point out (Tatum, 1995; Hytten & Warren, 2004), when a person falls within privileged categories of White, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied and minded, male, even Christian, these people often talk about themselves as "normal". Case (2012) points out that:

In fact, the invisibility of Whiteness frees Whites to view themselves as individuals rather than systematically linked with racial domination and unearned privilege. In an intricate system of White privilege, Whites have the power to ignore and neutralize race when race benefits Whites. Making Whiteness visible, in order to question the assumption that White defines normal, receives much attention from critical White studies. (p. 79)

Peggy McIntosh (2008) wrote the seminal article that has been republished and used over and over again in my educational experience to help make Whiteness visible: "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." It is a really useful tool because it does what White people need—it shows us what had previously been hidden or obscured from our view. Her list of unearned, usually invisible, privileges is simply stated and can be eye-opening. Johnson makes a similar list in his book, but adds other privileges as well. The idea of using lists like these is to make visible what was unseen—to challenge the idea of normal—not to be exhaustive in all privilege offers or presumptive that privilege is not complex and can be reduced to a list; rather, it can be a tool to begin to see, understand, and know what was unknown. Johnson explains that privilege is a trouble that benefits some groups at the expense of others. "It creates yawning divides in levels of income, wealth, dignity, safety, health and quality of life. It promotes fear, suspicion, discrimination, harassment and violence. It sets people against one another" (p. 7). This is what I believe White people who want to work for justice need to accept; White privilege still exists, racism still exists, and if you are White you benefit from it and by sheer existence within it you perpetuate it. If you want to dismantle racism and oppression you must do the work of critically understanding privilege and power—you must stop being passive and inert. As Howard (2006) points out, we cannot "un-become" White. Once we see the privilege and let go of the notions of colorblindness being a virtuous thing, then we must struggle with the meaning of Whiteness and the difficult legacy that entails (p. 115).

This brings me to my final point about Whiteness: it is not a monolith and must be de-essentialized, like any other category of identity, for White people to be able to develop a sense of self that is at once White and privilege and also White anti-racist.

Hall (1991) wrote about the complexities of identity and ethnicity post-identity politics. His discussion introduces the current issues in debates about the conceptualization of race and Whiteness, he says:

there has simultaneously been a fragmentation and erosion of collective social identity. I mean here the great collective social identities which we thought of as large-scale, all-encompassing, homogenous, as unified collective identities, which could be spoken about almost as if they were singular actors in their own right but which, indeed, placed, positioned, stabilized, and allowed us to understand and read, almost as a code, the imperatives of the individual self...These great collective social identities have not disappeared... They cannot any longer be thought in the same homogenous form. We are as attentive to their inner differences, their inner contradictions, their segmentations and their fragmentations as we are to their already-completed homogeneity, their unity and so on. (p. 44-45)

Hall goes on to discuss the history of identity politics and the construct of the Black political identity and how positionality is always at play in counter-politics. He says that any organized effort to bring together a “diversity of identifications has to be a struggle which is conducted positionally. It is the beginning of anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-classicism as a war of positions, as the Gramscian notion of the war of position” (p. 57). It is within this struggle of positionality that monolithic, static notions of category identities no longer hold value to the construction of an anti-racist White identity. One needs the ability to hold all the conflicting senses of self together. We needed a theory of intersectionality.

Scholars such as McCall (2005) and Anthias (2005) argue that intersectionality is the most important contribution by feminist scholars to theorize inequality (Levine-Rasky, 2011, p. 240). Levine-Rasky (2011) writes about intersectionality as it relates to Whiteness and middle-classness. She says that “In intersectionality theory, identity is experienced not as composed of discrete attributes but as a subjective, even

fragmented, set of dynamics" (p. 242). Thus the language of identity and difference as categories that reify difference is not as effective as language of identity as process and subjective (p. 242). She argues that intersectionality can inform dominant positionality by focusing on postmodern identity formation in which oppression and dominance are co-conditional with an emphasis on the relational aspects of this co-condition, which can allow for political practice against dominance (p. 243). Case (2012) also looks at how White women trying to develop anti-racist identity need the support of a theory of intersectionality:

Initially used to acknowledge the complex identities of women of color, intersectionality among White women includes a privileged racial status, a subordinate gender status, and additional intersecting identities. Anti-racist feminist research and critical race feminism are attentive to the effects of non-racial identity on a White woman's anti-racist identity development. (p.81)

It is through the theories of intersectionality, social positioning, and postmodern identity formation that I can de-essentialize Whiteness as a category and still recognize the impacts of normative structures of Whiteness and White privilege at play in the stories of the women in the study. Hytten & Warren (2004) also try and offer an example for how to manage the tension of paradox that a White anti-racist racist, or to use their term, a "Critical Democrat," must embody to do the work of social justice. They use the metaphor of the bridge to describe "the liminal, the effort to span difference, the betwixt and between. A bridge is a space one must occupy before s/he arrives...the bridge of Critical Democracy is a way of moving toward a position of flux, an ethical retraining of the mind, body and spirit to rehear, to reimagine" (p. 337). It is in this liminal space of the bridge that one must float between shores of justice and injustice or privilege and

oppression. Anti-racist identity formation is about finding oneself in the spaces in-between and still feeling grounded enough to do the active work of justice.

Feminism and Identity

The same struggle to move away from generalized notions of collective identities is experienced in feminism as well. The process to de-essentialize femininity and fixed categories of sameness based on assumed perceptions of being a woman have created more, not less, distinction of identity within feminism. Perumal (2006) gives an exhaustive account—too many to name here—of the multiple perspectives now being explored under the term feminism. She points out that:

As many critics now attest, feminist theory is currently experiencing a crisis of identity, one that not only threatens the very foundations of feminism as it has been articulated to date, but also its continued existence. The voices of ‘other’ feminists, such as women of colour, Jewish, the physically challenged, have introduced the notions of ‘feminisms’, rather than simply ‘feminism’. Among the daunting challenges facing contemporary feminism is the pressure to reconcile diversity and difference with integration and commonality. (p. 735)

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore the many aspects within current feminist discourse. What I do want to explore are the aspects of current feminism that support my theory of social justice identity development as relational and situated within a beloved community. For this I look to Ferguson’s (1998) “bridge identities,” Perumal’s (2006) “pedagogy of coalition building,” and Weir’s (2008) “transformative identity politics.”

In her explanation of “bridge identity politics” Ferguson (1998) explores how privileged identities can be wrestled with through ethno-politics in “a process of self-interrogation and a political practice of rejecting and reconstituting our given social identities in the context of the production of new knowledges” (p. 96). She encourages

an identity politics that is inclusive and based on a solidarity that has to be struggled for not given. She charges that women with dominant positions must assume what she calls “negative identities” that reject the perpetuation of privilege. Including herself in this conversation, she argues that “Social dominants must refuse who we are by uncovering our horizons of ignorance around the material structures and ideologies, as well as the individual habits of behavior that perpetuate our social privilege” (p. 107). Thus creating a solidarity that is earned not given and that is based in an “inclusive and integrative feminism” that is built upon “a solidarity that fosters alliances to fight any other social domination relations of key importance to those in one's affinity networks (such as... liberation theology struggles)” (p. 109). Although she uses different terms, Ferguson’s theory acknowledges the three areas of importance that fall within my framework: knowing self, understanding other, and making a commitment to work within a community. All three areas of my theoretical framework (identity development, relational learning, and beloved communities) can be linked to Ferguson’s bridge identity politics.

Next I would like to discuss what Perumal (2006) discusses as the “pedagogy of coalition building.” She draws on many theorists to make her argument, including Brah (1991), Sasaki (2002), Fisk (1993), Molina (1990), Young (1990), and Reynold & Trehan (2001). Her synthesis of a pedagogy of coalition building from these varied viewpoints is that:

It is not consensus that is important, but the common/shared context of struggle because we are all implicated in one way or the other in various interlocking systems of oppression. Of equal importance is the knowledge that we are not isolated, and the experience of working with others against common oppression strengthens the challenge against oppression. (p. 741)

She argues that it is consensus comes from an ideal of community that is unrealistic and perpetuates dominant power relations if people cannot challenge the power dynamic, especially if they cannot challenge that dynamic based on the multiple perspectives and positions they personally identify with. Coalition building challenges one to self-interrogate and struggle with the conflicting narratives within one's own identity while working with others around the shared interest of fighting oppression. Perumal says, "coalition building addresses the ways in which identities, affiliations and desires are dynamically produced in the multiple, intersecting, and often competing narratives of the personal, political and social" (p. 739). Difference then becomes something to be explored, not just celebrated. Differences can be expressed, defined, even contested, if honest interrogation of the self is part of the process of coalition rather than trying to find agreement and consensus of a shared identity, as well as a shared interest for common work. Perumal goes on to say that communities built around coalition "require an honest examination of our differences, knowledge of our interdependency, and an understanding of the necessity of interdependency. Coalition building is difficult because it is oppositional and relational" (p. 740). I find this theory to be useful in supporting social justice identity development because it speaks to the work of creating and sustaining beloved communities. It requires individual, relational and intellectual work on the part of each community member. Perumal also discusses the importance of creating solidarity that is based on shared values and visions, not simply blind solidarity or empathy (p. 739). I will discuss this further in the section on creating beloved communities, but, for now, I will just say that I also agree that coalition, solidarity or beloved community requires a belief in the interdependency of all participants and a

commitment, not based on service to others or for others; rather, it is based on a belief in working toward a common goal for the betterment of each of us.

I complete this section with a discussion of Allison Weir's (2008) "transformative identity politics," in which she calls for the reshaping of an ethical and political identity that can hold people together through solidarity and purpose, not just fixed categories of sameness. She argues for a shift in identity politics:

from a static to a relational model; from a model of identity as sameness to a model of identity that focuses on what matters, what is meaningful for us—our desires, relationships, commitments, ideals. Finally, it requires a shift to a model that can take account of change: a model of *transformative identity politics*. (p. 111)

Weir argues that it is through "identification with" that transformative identity politics is possible: "identification with others, identification with values and ideals, identification with ourselves, as individuals and as collectives" (p. 111). She bases her identity politics in a Hegelian-existential model that sees identity as a problem of meaning, not a process of category placement or stage development. She says, "This is a model of identity not as sameness, but as an historical process of holding together: not through stasis, but through transformation" (p. 112). Therefore, people come together because of a commitment to a value or belief through an act of solidarity which requires self-exploration and creation of a collective "we" (which she situates in Dean's (1996) theory of "reflective solidarity" and the "communicative we", I will give more explanation to this in the section on beloved community). Thus, identity becomes a process of finding meaning and purpose by identifying with others around issues, in this case, issues of justice and oppression. This correlates and resists identity development theory in that it

is still asking the question “who am I?”, but there becomes a different purpose in the answering. Weir’s argument of identity development is that:

I am not asking what makes me the same as others, or what makes me unique. I am asking, rather, what matters to me. What is the meaning and significance of my life? In other words, to what and to whom am I attached? With what and with whom do I identify? (p. 117)

Weir questions whether the focus on sameness in identity politics comes not from a fear of exclusion from restrictive categories, but from a fear of opening up. In her definition of the collective “we” of identification there is a necessity of opening up “to deeper relation to others, to self-critique, to inclusion of difference, to the risk of participation, conflict and dissent” (p. 128). This is similar to my research question in that I wonder what brings people into a community that requires these things because in my experience it did go against the research and what I knew of societal norms for privileged people to seek out diversity, not just for diversity’s sake or for personal gain, but rather as an act of solidarity, coalition or beloved community—as an act of being held together in shared meaning and purpose. This is why I resonate with Weir’s transformative identity politics—it speaks to my epistemology and ontology. This theory as well, Weir’s transformative identity politics, speaks to all the pieces of my framework. I will continue to refer back to transformative identity politics, bridge identities, and coalition building as I move through the next sections of my framework: relational learning and beloved community. Before I do, I want to conclude this section on identity by situating my use of the term transformative in transformative learning theory and bring it all together with a definition of transformative identities and identifications.

Transformative Theories

Transformative Learning Theory

I find it helpful at this point to break from identity theories and focus on the use of the term “transformative” from an educational perspective, before I apply it back to identity theory. I do this to underscore the framework from which I use the term as an educator, and also because I find it important to define commonly used terms so that readers do not make assumptions about my use of the term based on their own definition of, and/or experience with the term.

Jack Mezirow (1978) founded the theory of transformative learning more than 30 years ago. He stated as a founding principle that “a defining condition of being human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience...in contemporary societies we must learn to make our own interpretations rather than act on the purposes, beliefs, judgments, and feelings of others” (1997, p. 5). Thus he created a theory for adult education that would aid in the practice of helping teach adults to become autonomous thinkers, capable of critical self-reflection. To explain the breadth of the theory is beyond the scope of this chapter, but what is imperative here is to show how his theory has been used to expand the thinking about how humans can transform. His explanation of the process has been pivotal in the work of many that came after, and as, we can see in current literature regarding critical theories, “transform” is one of those terms often used, yet rarely defined.

Mezirow (1997) defined transformative learning as the “process of affecting frames of reference” through critical reflection (p. 5). Frames of reference are “structures of assumptions and expectations that frame an individual’s tacit points of view and influence their thinking” (Taylor, 2008, p. 5). Thus, for an individual to have a

paradigmatic shift, change of world view, or “perspective transformation” (Taylor, 2008, p. 5) a person must be challenged to rethink their previously held beliefs about the way the world is. For an experience to be transformative it must reshape or change some aspect of a person’s beliefs, values, assumptions, and ways of being. Transformative learning theory claims that this type of change cannot happen until adulthood because young people do not have the capacity to critically reflect on their life experience in ways that would be transformative (Mezirow, 1997). This is one area of the theory which I find troubling because I do think youth are capable of reflecting on the lived experiences they have had and youth are not static in their worldview until adulthood, therefore my study assumed that the women would tell stories from their childhood that had at the time been transformative for them, changing how they had seen the world up to that point, and leading them in a new direction. They did not disappoint, and as we will see this new direction often became a path different from that of the adults in their lives, which truly required them to become something different from what they had known and been taught.

Merizow (1997) points out that another important aspect of transformative learning is that “we do not make transformative changes in the way we learn as long as what we learn fits comfortably in our existing frame of reference” (p. 6). Thus transformation is only possible and necessary when one’s values, assumptions, beliefs, and/or ways of being are challenged by a new experience or new information. Many people choose to become defensive or deny this type of conflicting experience or knowledge, but for those who find ways to critically reflect on the experience and its meaning there comes a possibility for transformation, for a shift in a frame of reference, or a shift in perspective.

Taylor's (2008) article on transformative learning theory discusses alternative conceptions of Mezirow's theory and how other scholars have drawn on the theory to expand their work. These theories draw on the main principles of transformative learning but address factors often ignored or overlooked in the dominant theory (p. 7). For my framework, I would like to point out three conceptual views that elaborate on Mezirow's (1967) original theory and show a link between transformative learning and theories of identity.

First, according to Taylor (2008), the "psychoanalytic view of transformative learning is seen as a process of individuation, [which is] a lifelong journey of coming to understand oneself through reflecting on the psychic structures that make up the individual's identity" (p. 7). Second, Taylor (2008) explains that, a social-emancipatory view is:

rooted primarily in the work of Friere (1984)...a theory of existence that views people as subjects, not objects, who are constantly reflecting and acting on the transformation of their world so it can become a more equitable place for all to live. Its goal is social transformation by demythicizing reality. (p. 8)

The third view from Taylor's explanation (2008) is the cultural-spiritual view, which focuses on the interconnectedness and positionality of human relations: "Its goal is to foster narrative transformation—engaging storytelling on a personal and social level through group inquiry" (p. 9).

Taylor's (2008) links between the different views on transformative learning theory are enlightening and helpful, but not everyone using the term transformative or transformative learning is using Mezirow as a source. For instance, although Taylor (2008) discusses Friere's social-emancipatory view, I could find no reference to Mezirow

in Friere's work. So let me move on to making my own connections between transformative leaning theory and identity theory.

Transformative Identities and Identifications

Now that identity and transformative learning have been defined and a sense of the historical context of the terms has been explored, the next question might be: How is an identity transformed? I would argue that use of the term transformative identities does not assert that the identity is transformed, particularly when identity is seen as a fixed category. Rather, it is the person's frame of reference or perspective that is transformed, thus allowing them to become a person who identifies with change, openness and plurality (Taylor, 2008, Weir, 2006). A transformative identity is one in which a person views the world through multiple lenses, sees that perception and judgment are socially constructed and individually interpreted, understands how power is at play in all relationships, and works to build relationships that will offer the opportunity to dismantle privilege and create justice and liberty.

It is imperative that a person developing a transformative identity learns to analyze power and how it works in society. As Hall (1988) puts it, it is about the "relations of representation" (as cited in West, 1993, p. 19)—who is defining whom and for what purposes? A person with a transformative identity acknowledges that identity representation and power are critical concepts to consider. As pointed out earlier from Weir's (2008) argument, a person with a transformative identity is not limited by one notion of truth or sameness. This person is not static in their world-view. This person is constantly seeking experiences to alter perspective and add to an ever expanding notion of the human experience.

As related to Ferguson's (1998) concept of "negative identity politics," if I adopt a transformative White identity, then my Whiteness has not changed or been reshaped. Rather my assumptions and beliefs about what it means to be White have been critically examined, and I am open to a new way of thinking about race and living within a racialized society. As pointed out earlier, "we do not make transformative changes in the way we learn [or in the way we identify ourselves] as long as what we learn fits comfortably in our existing frames of reference" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7).

Howard (2006) uses a similar terminology of transformationist White identity. He asserts that in adopting this identity one has been challenged by multiple theories and perspectives on race and Whiteness—difference is no longer something to fear, one understands that construction of truth is a dynamic process, and one seeks to participate in the process of social justice (pp. 110-111). I would assert that someone who identifies as transformative never feels done in terms of learning about relationships of power and social constructions of knowledge and identity and that any fixed category of identity around which we collect can be a point of transformation, this is not specific to race. Men can adopt transformative identities about masculinity, heterosexuals about sexuality, etc. Transformation allows for the breaking down of generalized norms that restrict and exclude.

As Weir (2008) points out in her "transformative identity politics," this type of transformation happens in relationship—in relation to other. That does not mean that the other must take responsibility for my transformation—that is why self-critique and critical reflection are so important. There needs to be a mutual responsibility for one another, which requires one to be open to change and identification with the truth that the other brings. Which leads to the importance of relational learning in my framework.

Relational Learning

As I did with the term transformative, I again find it necessary to break down the term relational learning so that I can situate it within my framework of social justice identity development. As stated in the last section “relation to other” can be a key component of identity politics (Weir, 2008), and therefore I want to explore this commonly used term from a feminist, critical perspective.

Relational learning has become a new buzzword or catch phrase in educational literature and I believe there is a good reason for that (Ramsden, 1987; Aitken, Fraser & Price, 2007; Grace & Wells, 2007; Dewhurst, 2010; Otero, 2011; Mercogliano, 2011). The dialectic of individualism and collectivism is coming to a head in American ideology. The current political activities around trying to outlaw collective bargaining, the healthcare debate, and the Tea Party’s platform of individual rights and smaller government, are all a part of the individual rights vs. collective responsibility conundrum. As Greene (1988) points out in the opening of her book, *The Dialectic of Freedom*, “Talk of personal freedom refers to self-dependence and self-determination; it has little to do with connectedness or being together in community” (p. 1). The need to bring relationship into conversations about education refers to the fact that connectedness, relationship, and community have become so disassociated with standards, curriculum, and pedagogy in schools, classrooms, and learning.

I will begin by laying out many of the current uses of the term across disciplines, just to show the multiple uses of the term and to somewhat situate my feminist, critical stance. In this section I show how an understanding of relational learning as viewed through critical, feminist, and spiritual pedagogical lenses grounds my epistemology and

connects relational learning to a social justice identity framework as a means for working with difference in learning communities towards a commitment to social justice.

Relational Learning Across Disciplines

I just want to point out quickly that there are many uses of the term relational learning that do not relate to how it is being used in this dissertation. There are concepts of relational learning that refer to mathematical and conceptual learning that are about relation of objects or concepts and not about relationships between people (Getoor, L. & Taskar, B, 2007). Moreover, use of the term relational learning in healthcare and related fields like social work have become prominent because of a relational learning model created by Browning and Solomon (2006) for pediatric palliative care. This model uses the term relational learning to encourage people working with clients in medical or social service settings to apply experiential knowledge with empirical and objective knowledge to better understand how to serve their population (Cohan Konrad, 2010; Edwards & Richards, 2002). Also in Australia and New Zealand, there is use of relational learning, relational perspective, and relational pedagogy in higher education and in the arts where the focus again seems to be to help students connect lived experiences to classroom knowledge acquisition (Ramsden, 1987; Aitken, Fraser & Price, 2007). This same use of relational learning in the arts can also be seen less prominently in some American writing (Grace & Wells, 2007; Dewhurst, 2010). Finally, there is also a Center for RelationalLearning created by Dr. George Otero and Susan Otero which has developed a model of relational learning that shows how students relationships with varying people and subjects need to be incorporated to create a more holistic and/or cohesive learning environment, but this model lacks the critical stance discussed in the chapter (Otero, G., 2011).

In most of the educational literature, relational learning, and similar terms, such as learning relationships, seemed to be used like many other common words in theory, such as, trust, transformation, and love—words that have common usage and therefore can be referred to and understood by many without specific definition of the intention of the words in the theory. I came to use relational learning in a similar way myself, without fully defining it; I used it to describe a process I had seen at play in learning communities and in individual identity development. I have since come to appreciate the importance of defining concepts and grounding a term in theories that can help to develop the concept for theory and practice. The following is my attempt to ground relational learning in the theoretical work of scholars in the fields of critical, feminist, and/or spiritual pedagogy to build upon my theoretical framework of social justice identity development through transformative identities, relational learning and beloved community.

Defining Relational Learning

“What is relational learning if not an exchange between people that is grounded in love?” asks Mercogliano (2011). Relational learning, as the healing power of friendship and community, can be seen in the “transformative effect of the deepening bond of friendship in diverse communities”(Mercogliano, 2011). More specifically, relational learning as situated in critical pedagogy and feminist theories of development is what happens between people that allows them to “see” differently than they did before knowing and loving this new person or persons. It is about the exchange of ideas, questions, stories, and feelings between people in learning communities that opens one up to transformation (Weir, 2008). It allows a person to change her/his world view and reshape her/his frames of reference (Taylor, 2008). These types of relationships that

have deep connections also leave deep impressions: Places where new information can land, a new wrinkle that might not have been available before.

Relational learning can also be a healing space. As I will discuss in more detail later, these relationships that are open to difference allow individuals to create the potential to heal some of the wounds inflicted by society's systems of oppression, violence, and separateness. Healing can happen when "othering" stops and valuing begins: when love breaks the bonds of mis-representation and domination. Relational learning in this context is built upon the foundations of feminist perspectives of: (a) psychological developmental theory, (b) critical pedagogy's understanding of difference, power, and dialogue, and (c) spiritual perspectives on love and liberation in learning communities.

Feminist Perspectives on Aspects of Relational Learning

Developmental Theory

Carol Gilligan's (1982) work as a pioneer in reframing developmental psychology brought relational ontology into theories of human growth and development. As discussed earlier, her book, *In a Different Voice*, uncovered the limitations of a theory of human growth that determined anyone outside the White, middle class, male norm as deviant. Gilligan attempted to expand the theory of human development by "using the group left out of the construction of theory to call attention to what is missing in the account...potentially yielding a more encompassing view of the lives of both sexes" (p. 4). Gilligan discovered that the women she studied developed through an ethic of care and through relationships with others. She analyzed the work of Erikson and Freud in which, "development itself comes to be identified with separation, and attachments appear to be developmental impediments, as is repeatedly the case with women" (p. 12-

13). Through her research, Gilligan countered their claims and argued that women's development is not about separation and individuation of self. She claimed that women's development is more about interconnection and individuation within context, about responsibilities in relationships, and about attending "to voices other than their own and includ[ing] in their judgment other points of view" (p. 16). Although her study had its limitations which were discussed earlier, she still brought to the forefront a discussion about relational ontology and identity. I agree with Heye's (1997) that Gilligan's work helped bring us to current political dialogue, such as Weir's (2008) argument that transformative identity includes relationship as a key element.

Epistemology of Relational Learning

In *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986), relational learning is explained as an epistemology that grows out of an understanding that morality built in connection to others and responsibility in relationships is a way of growing and maturing. This epistemology is not just about women, although it may center more on women. This way of knowing is about understanding ourselves through the perspective of connection to others and moral development that happens by making decisions and creating meaning based on these learning relationships and responsibilities. We know what we know because of who we know—because we connected and learned within relationship.

A feminist perspective on relational learning creates a foundation for the importance of interconnectedness within learning environments for purposes of growth and social change (Weir, 2008; Ferguson, 1998). The epistemology of relational learning can also be connected to spiritual theory that is grounded in connecting with others to learn about one's self and find purpose and meaning. Huebner (2005) explains this well:

Others see the world differently, talk differently, act differently. Therefore they are possibilities for me...By being different they bring my particular self under criticism. What I am I do not have to be. What they are, I could be. Other people call attention to a future that is not just a continuation of me, but a possible transformation of me. Through the presence of the “other” my participation in the transcendent becomes visible—the future is open if I will give up the self that is the current me and become other than I am. (p. 317)

I feel it is important to note that Huebner’s quote speaks to the spiritual transformation of a person, not the race, class, or gender identity of a person. By learning from the “other,” he is alluding to their way of being and thinking not their identity categories, because this would be problematic. People of privilege often want to discard their identities of privilege and relate to subordinated others when they are learning about power and oppression (Tatum, 2003; Howard, 2007; Ferguson, 1998; Perumal, 2006), but Huebner’s point is about being open to the spiritual journey of other as strangers that can enlighten and transform. He goes on to assert, “I have others to listen me into consciousness of self and the world. I have the gift of other stories of the great journey” (p. 317).

All together, the epistemology of relational learning is: a way of being and knowing that opens one up to the possibilities of people; a way of knowing that allows one to listen to stories of otherness and be changed and shaped by the exchange; a way of knowing that values the responsibility of relationships; and a way of knowing that encourages relationships across lines of difference and outside our comfort zones. Thus, relational learning must take into account how relationships are created.

Love and Difference

Love is a difficult word—a difficult subject. Everyone has an idea of love whether they have ever defined it or not. Maybe because of its complexity it is taboo to speak of it in educational practice. Yet, I have found theorists that are not afraid of the word,

especially those grounded in spirituality (hooks, 2000, 2003; Lerner, 2005; Purpel; 2005). Here I offer a few different definitions of love that can offer insight into how an understanding of love can inform relational learning and my framework for social justice identity development.

bell hooks (2000) wrote a whole book titled, *All About Love: New Visions*, in which she defined love as a “combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility respect and trust. All these factors work interdependently. They are a core foundation of love irrespective of the relational context” (2003, p. 131). She strongly argued the difference between love and affection, and used M.Scott Peck’s definition of love as her grounding, which is "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth" (Peck as cited in hooks, 2000, p. 4). This type of love required a choice to be in a loving relationship for the sake of the spiritual. She also says that “to be guided by love is to live in community with all life. However, a culture of domination, like ours, does not strive to teach us how to live in community” (p. 163); thus, we have the need for intellectual understandings of power and domination, intentionally thinking about relational learning, and a commitment to creating beloved communities to build the foundation for justice as acts of love.

Purpel (2005) argues that we should ground our education in *agape*. He uses Mary Daly’s definition of *agape* to explain his point:

in the fullest sense, *agape* is God’s love. It is generous love, not appetitive in the sense that there is a need to satisfy oneself...It is therefore spontaneous and creative, and it is rooted in abundance rather than in poverty. (as cited in Purpel, 2005, p. 358)

Purpel adds that “it is only unconditional and dispassionate love that can truly overcome unnecessary suffering” (p. 358).

All of the definitions mentioned above are grounded in a spiritual notion of love that is unselfish. The love discussed here is about love that is redemptive and hopeful (Huebner, 2005). It connects people through generosity, respect, and compassion. Relational learning, in the context of my framework, is born of this kind of love—Love that can bind people together even through struggle, hardship, difficulty and differences; Love that is beyond all understanding, and yet is waiting for us all. Freire (1993), as well as hooks (2003), argues that love is an act, not just a feeling; that love, as an act of commitment to others, is justice. Freire (1993) states, “Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is a commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation” (p. 89). If a learning community is born of this kind of love then there is hope that it can withstand the struggle of dealing with issues of power, privilege and oppression. Relational learning as seen through a critical pedagogy lens would have to deal with issues of difference, and would want to be diverse. As hooks (2003) points out “segregation simplifies: integration requires that we come to terms with multiple ways of knowing, of interaction” (p. 78).

Relational learning would require communities to address issues of power, identity, and representation. McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) discuss this issue of social power in determining cultural and ideological practices in schools and society, and they contend that: “Issues of identity and representation directly raise questions about who has the power to define whom, and when, and how” (p. xvi). There would have to be intentional work on the part of the White, middle class or other privileged participants to really deconstruct their ideas of power, and position themselves within this new context of relationships as listener, as Ferguson (1998) pointed out in her focus on “bridge

identities.” It can be difficult in these situations for people of privilege to not get defensive, or to not want to just focus on what we have in common—we all bleed red. But it is imperative for people of privilege to sit with the truth of power and oppression and create coalition with new allies in this type of learning community. I argue that one does not always have to empathize, but one does have to respect and value if one is going to love.

One theoretical approach I find useful in explaining how to deconstruct ideas of power is Cornel West’s (1993) explanation of demystification. This process could be helpful in relational learning because it breaks down paradigms and monoliths and focuses on the re-telling, the re-presentation of the self within a new paradigm, a “new politics of difference.” According to West, demystification requires a:

social structural analyses of empire, exterminism, class, race, gender, nature, age, sexual orientation, nation and region...for the most desirable forms of critical practice that take history (and herstory) seriously. Demystification tries to keep track of the complex dynamics of institutional and other related power structures in order to disclose options and alternatives for transformational praxis. (p. 19-20)

This critical work is not easy, but it is necessary to help participants in relational learning develop a deeper understanding of how people are interconnected through systems that are larger than individual choice. Although the systems may be too large to breakdown, demystification of the dynamics of the systems would allow the community to exist in a more authentic, self-determining, collectively conscious way.

Dialogue

How does one go about demystification and critical analyses of social structures? In a word: dialogue. It is the root praxis of critical pedagogy—the foundation of Paulo Freire’s (1990) teaching. He defines dialogue as:

An encounter among women and men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another...Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of profound love for the world and for people. (p. 89)

Freire's idea has inspired many theorists to develop theories of their own about dialogue and/or to draw on his concept in their work (Bohm, 1996; hooks, 1994, 2003; West, 1999; Noddings, 2005). Dialogue has become an important concept distinguishable from other forms of communication. It implies creativity, reciprocity, and the best of human use of language to truly understand the "other." David Bohm (1996) writes that "in a dialogue, each person does not attempt to *make common* certain ideas...rather...the two people are making something *in common*, i.e., creating something new together" (p. 3). There is full attention, deep listening, mutual respect and turn taking. Everyone speaks and everyone listens, which also requires thinking and reflecting. Dialogue encourages questioning and honest response.

Relational learning from a critical and feminist perspective would require use of dialogue as a means for building community across lines of difference and developing a commitment for social justice. One's participation in dialogue as a creative act opens up the possibility for social transformation and collective action. West's (1999) thoughts on the subject show how dialogue can also be a spiritual practice which is the focus of the next section:

Dialogue is based on a fundamental respect for the "other". This dialogue Requires active listening and candid speaking...an occasion for openness so that a spirituality of genuine questioning can take root in one's mind, heart and soul. Such questioning is the vehicle for intellectual change and existential transformation. (p. 534)

Emancipatory Spirituality

Emancipatory Spirituality is a term used by Michael Lerner (2000) in *Spirit Matters* to describe a kind of spiritual community practice that seems to marry well with relational learning. As a youth director in a Christian church that preaches emerging church theology and practices social justice, Emancipatory Spirituality describes our practice of trying to create spiritual learning communities that are committed to the work of social justice, and relational learning seems to be an epistemological approach to working through issues of power and difference within our community. Here I will define Emancipatory Spirituality and show how relational learning can be used to foster growth within this type of spiritual community.

Emancipatory Spirituality refers to the work of justice issues meant to challenge systems of oppression that are grounded in spiritual commitment (Lerner, 2005). It can be any type of spiritual practice, but there must be a commitment and a supportive community in which to do the work of justice while developing spiritually. Emancipatory Spirituality encourages spiritual communities to “work together in social and political movements and to fill those movements with powerful spiritual practices” (Lerner cited in Tolliver & Tisdell, 2002).

Such communal work requires an openness not found in all religions. Lerner refers to religion and spirituality that is close-minded and views itself to have the one “right” way as “Reactionary Spirituality”. Relational learning as discussed in this dissertation could not be supported by this type of spirituality. It requires the pluralistic approach of Emancipatory Spirituality. It requires that people are capable of accepting other ways of being and other ways to God. As Lerner (2005) states, “There is no one right way. No one has the only way to God, to love, to spiritual truth” (p. 343). This is not

to say that he agrees with moral relativism which would say that each way or journey is equally good. There can be paths that are hurtful and cause unnecessary suffering; these are not spiritual paths toward liberation or love.

Emancipatory Spirituality holds that people continually question rightness and goodness within the frameworks of their faith and spirituality. Remaining open to the many lessons learned from diverse communities and bridging across differences is the foundation of another value of Emancipatory Spirituality, which is having humility about one's knowledge and being open to learning from others. Lerner (2005) explains that:

A humility about the limits of our knowledge and understanding, and an openness to learn from others. The more we learn from others, the greater chance we have of strengthening our sense of mutual connection and interdependency, shared interests, and shared moral vision. (p. 345)

Relational learning as discussed here is defined by the type of humble approach to learning from others that Lerner describes. People of privilege especially would need this type of humility when it comes to learning about difference and recognizing their positionality within learning communities and how power is always at play in relationships.

None of this work is easy, but it is necessary. Once one becomes aware of the concepts of power, privilege and oppression it becomes difficult to constantly face them, but Lerner (2005) speaks to a balance I have found necessary in the work: The balance of faith and justice. Emancipatory Spirituality holds this balance—to do the work of justice within social and political movements, while also practicing spirituality that will hopefully renew, replenish and revive the soul.

When relational learning is constructed within critical, spiritual, and feminist perspectives it becomes not just a tool for using life experience to teach new knowledge,

it becomes a powerful practice for creating learning communities that can work through issues of difference and power to then get to the work of social justice. In Chapter 4 and 5 the reader can note that relational learning was crucial to the social justice identity development of the women in the group and it helped them create and sustain a commitment to social justice and working within diverse communities to achieve social transformation.

Beloved Communities

In this final section of my theoretical framework, I want to contain transformative identity and relational learning into a basin of beloved community for my theory of social justice identity development. In the previous sections, I expressed my views on transformative identities and relational learning and the role they can play in social justice identity development. In this section I lay out a context for how those identities and relationships work toward social transformation: beloved community. This section is more of a summary or cohesion than it is another drawn out explanation of support. I feel that the theoretical support offered in the previous sections is still relevant in this one and thus this is more about bringing it all together. I will define my use of the term beloved community and situate it within critical pedagogy from a spiritual and feminist perspective.

In *Knowledge and Critical Pedagogy*, Kincheloe (2008) says that “critical pedagogy believes that nothing is impossible when we work in solidarity and with love, respect and justice as our guiding lights” (p. 234). In the previous sections I explained the types of transformative identities and relational learning I believe are necessary to be open to love and justice in the kind of beloved community I am supporting. I also discussed my use of the term love as it is grounded in critical, spiritual, and feminist

theory. To reiterate, the love discussed here is about love that is unconditional, dispassionate, redemptive and hopeful (Purpel, 2005; Huebner, 2005). It connects people through generosity, respect, and compassion. Transformative identities, relational learning and beloved community, in the context of my framework, are born of this kind of love—Love that can bind people together even through struggle, hardship, difficulty and differences; Love that is beyond all understanding, and yet is waiting for us all.

In *All About Love*, hooks (2000) argues that we are all raised in community and there is no better place to learn about love, and thus we are all seeking a loving community. She also makes it clear to point out that all communities, relationships , and families are not loving (p. 129-133). If one is lucky enough to learn about love as an unselfish act of compassion and nurturance, as more than just the act of caring for basic needs, then love can encompass forgiveness, humility, dialogue, compassion, and hope. In the Christian tradition there are four types of love: affection, friendship, eros, and agape. C.S. Lewis (1960) and hooks (2000) both point to the fact that love should be about the nurturance of the spirit, which encourages us to take care of other's even when one does not "feel" like loving, especially when it is not for our own personal gain but for a greater good that we are moved to love. As hooks (2000) puts it "without justice there can be no love" (p. 30) It is this type of love that engenders a commitment to the well-being of all people and a life lived for justice for all people. It is this type of love and commitment that creates beloved communities. In my framework I define beloved community as a group of people who are held together by shared beliefs and values and are committed to living out love as acts of justice.

When love is defined as an act of justice then it becomes more than just the relationships we have with friends and family and people who are like us. Not every type of love encourages a commitment to social justice. Sometimes fear of others or the dogma taught in the community trying to love keeps a person from deeply understanding human suffering and injustice. In my experience it has not always been easy to find beloved communities willing to do the hard work of being inclusive and living out love as justice. Maybe it is because, as hooks (2003) points out, "Love can bridge the sense of otherness. It takes practice to be vigilant, to beam that love out. It takes work" (p. 162). As the saying goes, "If it were easy, everybody would do it." Justice is not easy, loving can be painful, and yet, some of us still persist—why?

The work of social justice and thus of dismantling oppression requires that educational leaders within these beloved communities appreciate the complexity of the human experience and the human identity. To return to Weir (2008), if transformative identity is about finding a meaningful life and finding others with whom we can process the suffering and injustice of the world, then when we talk about beloved communities, for me, "We're talking about an experience of belonging, of connectedness, of being *held together*. By the values, ideals, commitments, attachments, and relationships that matter to us" (p.117). Maybe more than mattering, these relationships and experiences in beloved community become a necessity to sustain our spiritual wellness.

This study is an attempt to uncover why some people need to process justice and oppression in pluralistic ways and seek the opportunity to build trust and work in a beloved community to work for social justice. It seems natural to me that like in any other aspect of education, this process is different for everyone. One of the reasons I engaged in this study is to explore these processes of developing a commitment to social justice,

to consider how for some people this education happens in the family or in a religious setting while growing up; for some it just seems that it was always part of who they were and how they saw the world and their role in it; and, for others, their privilege masked the need to work for social justice and transformative experiences happened later in life or outside their family or what they considered the communities they grew up in. In this study I have used this framework of beloved community to establish the arts-informed inquiry and to inform the data analysis. From this researcher perspective I explore how these women came to develop a social justice identity and whether beloved communities or relationships taught these women about love as justice.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have laid out my theoretical framework for social justice identity development. I situated my framework under the broad topics of identity theory, relational learning, and beloved communities. I situated my framework within these broad topics by focusing on them from critical, feminist, and spiritual perspectives that I hope showed how they come together. Each theory folded into and supported the next so that beloved community became the basin that held the idea an education based on transformative identities, relational learning, and a commitment to social justice can be lived out and worked through by building and sustaining relationships that struggle with and learn about difference, power relations, and identification with others through coalition building and reflective solidarity.

Hooks (1994) said, "Learning at its most powerful can liberate" (p. 4). I believe this and thus it is part of my pedagogy. It comes from part of my moral and spiritual being that education is and can be a practice of freedom and learning can liberate the learner. The more stories I listen to the more connected to the world I become. I connect

deeper with my soul and find that I am part of a larger story. The more loving the community is, the greater the potential for freedom and the greater my commitment to social justice. Some communities are caring or loving but do not develop a sense of social justice or an awareness of injustice, and some communities or classrooms focus on developing a critical intellect with an awareness of power, privilege, and oppression but do not focus on building loving or caring relationships. I believe it is in the beloved community where people truly explore who they are in the world and who others are in the world and are transformed by that knowing. These are the beloved communities that embody a spiritual, emotional, and intellectual commitment to justice for all. This dissertation is an attempt to prove that statement to be true. I offer up the following stories and this process as evidence that an education towards a social justice identity can happen for people of privilege and it is an education worthy of our understanding.

CHAPTER III

ARTS-INFORMED SOCIAL INQUIRY

I wanted my research to reflect my practice of expressive arts and experiential education, so I chose to do an arts-informed social inquiry. This methodology is situated within the fields of arts-informed inquiry and social inquiry, so I will give a historical and situational context for how these two methods can come together to create arts-informed social inquiry. I begin the chapter by providing my researcher perspective—my lens through which I view methodology and philosophy of research/inquiry. Then I discuss the scholarly foundations for arts-informed social inquiry and situate my definition within them. The end of the chapter is devoted to the methods of my research for this dissertation. I discuss the inquiry process and data collection, which I hope will clearly set the stage for the reader to engage with the presentation of the data in Chapter IV.

Grounding/Groundless Researcher Perspective

Expressive Arts

This research process took me back to my expressive arts roots. I always feel at home doing expressive arts work with groups but have often veered away from a professional identity as an expressive arts therapist because I am not clinically-focused or problem-focused or in any way interested in retaining a license. I have always seen my work as a process of inquiry and connection for the people I have worked with. Through the readings for this research I have been reminded that the field of expressive arts is inclusive of work outside the clinical fields and is more about play and opening that about closed diagnoses. In *Art in Action*, Ellen Levine (2011), a founder of the field

of expressive arts therapy, discusses her professional identity development and her struggles between clinical and community work. I relate to her journey and like how she explains this difference between psychoanalysis (more clinically focused) and expressive therapy:

Psychoanalysis seemed problematic in several ways: first, in its emphasis upon the individual rather than the community, and upon deficits and pathology rather than resources; second, in its reduction of the person to a set of explanations deriving from experience of the past; and third, in making a one-to-one correspondence between the artwork and the life or personality of the artist. By contrast, I found that expressive arts therapy placed the emphasis upon the individual's capacities and resources and promoted a notion of the artwork as opening up to and as being part of the world. (p. 36)

These differences between being clinically/pathology focused and being community/capacity focused are some of what has separated the creative therapies associations and more individually focused arts therapies, i.e. music, art, drama, dance, and art, from expressive arts therapy. Estrella (2011) gives specific examples of these professional and disciplinary struggles in her chapter on “Social Activism within Expressive Arts ‘Therapy’” (p. 44). She discusses the struggle within the expressive arts therapy field to legitimize practitioners with licensure to be able to practice psychotherapy, while also remaining open to those in the field who are more interested in community-based practices of conflict resolution, education, spiritual enrichment, etc. Levine (2011) also makes the same point that, “It became clear that although the work of expressive arts had begun in psychotherapy, the basic principles could be extended to other areas of practice. Most recently...the field of social change” (p. 23). This all speaks to my experience in my graduate studies in expressive arts therapy. I participated in a program that gave me the credentials to attain licensure in psychotherapy and yet my master’s thesis was focused on use of the arts to create

healthy relationships in classrooms. Since leaving Lesley, my professional experience and doctoral studies have expanded my work beyond the classroom and into community-based organizing and spiritual education. I believe my use of expressive arts as experiential education is an example of “expressive arts’ capacity to strengthen and support individual, family, and community resilience in the face of personal, societal, and global forces of oppression and injustice” (Estrella, 2011, p. 49). This inquiry has helped me feel more grounded in my professional identity as an expressive arts and experiential educator. I look forward to sharing my work within the professional community of expressive arts therapy to add to the movement to use expressive arts for social change.

Groundlessness

What has been a great challenge in this journey has been situating my methodology and defining my researcher perspective because, like my use of the arts, it is intermodal, plural, and fluid. I respond to the moment and try and make connections where I am. I am not static in my professional identity, so why would I be in my research identity? Neilsen (2004) explores this idea of groundless theory in *Provoked by Art*:

As one of the scurrying creatures now participating in theoretical discussion of the nature and forms of inquiry, I really don't know clouds at all. Nor do I pretend to know anything for certain, or for long. Increasingly, I am comfortable with groundlessness. Researchers whose work is informed by the arts, or scholarartists as we have come to call these explorers, work in media and with ideas that cannot easily be fixed, determined, cannot be foundational in the ways that our controlling selves have come to need in education and the social sciences...What of the aesthetics of knowing? If we are to find a way to live between earth and sky, we must learn to surrender to new and larger stories, ones that continually bring us to the edge of deeper questions: How to be here? What can we know? What is good, and beautiful? What matters? Who are we and what must we do for one another in order to live fully, safely, equitably on this struggling planet? (p. 45-46)

I used that quote because for years professors, academics, and other students have asked, "What is your theory grounded in?" I often answer that question the same way I would if some asked, "What's your favorite book?" I proceed to tell them all about the newest exciting thing I read. I find connection with new knowledge and information all the time. I am not fixed, static, or essentialized, so why would my theory be? I am creative and exploring and willing to find solutions in multiple places, willing to let the space and place and people seek the solution that is best for them in that moment.

I started my dissertation research with questions and practice: Inquiry and praxis, not theory and praxis, not pedagogy and praxis: Questions and practice. I know that what I do with people and how I do it has value. I can feel it in my whole being—there is value in my work, which is my art and my relationships. I wanted to connect my work to theory, to find where my practice and pedagogy lived within the greater construct of educational theory and try and offer something new, new stories, new knowledge to the field and to my work. Then I realized that my form of inquiry was also my practice and thus it also needed to find its place. Where did expressive arts and experiential education fit into research methodology?

Defining and describing the work itself—the inquiry with the women—was the easy part, but then I had to explain why and how and what that meant in relation to research methodology—that was the hard part. What theories grounded the stories, experiences, and knowledge of this inquiry? More importantly, how do I use theory and methodology to represent our work/my work? It has been through answering these questions that I have found my comfort with groundlessness, while also acknowledging the academies requirement for situation and connection to the broader work. My researcher perspective is as fluid as the times we live in, and I am okay with that. My

goal is to draw my picture/portrait of my current positionality within contemporary research and theory so that the reader can situate me, this work, and themselves in relation to this work. This picture/portrait of the now will guide us through this journey of representation and creation. It is an alive process that continues to become as I continue to become with it.

Reflecting on my Researcher Perspective

Since my methodology is arts-informed, I used the arts—poetic language—as a tool for critically reflecting and expressing my connection to theories of methodology. Hopefully, this poem will offer the reader more insight into my theory and praxis.

I am...going to write a poem because that is what I do to express ideas.
I am...giving myself this structure so that I can contain ideas that seem to seep from my grasp when I try to give them voice.

I am...trying to write words that swirl and swim in my head into sentences that stand firm on a page.

I am...explaining my groundlessness and my grounded-in-everything-ness.
I am...a pragmatist. I believe that experience is the driving force of learning.

Somewhere in my education I was taught that a student cannot learn anything new if it is not somehow connected to knowledge and experiences they already hold. Thus inquiry and knowledge must be connected to experiences and knowing that comes from those experiences.

I am...an optimist, a problem solver. I am hopeful. I look for solutions, I don't diagnose problems. I believe that we can learn something of value from just about any experience if we are afforded the time and opportunity and have the skills to reflect on and inquire about said experience.

I am...a feminist. I believe in the relational and transformative power of people. I believe that living in community with others against domination has the greatest potential for liberation. I am a Christian who believes in radical love.

I am...grounded in hermeneutics: studying the self has to be part of the educational experience. If I do not know myself, how can I assume anything about anyone else. And yet I know I can only do this self-reflection in relation to my world and others, so maybe I'm an existentialist, too.

I am...grounded in phenomenology. We have to find some common ground if we are gonna live together. How can I know anything in isolation? That does not mean that our experiences are the same, but if I am to learn from you I have to start by finding where our stories connect—they may connect

only in their opposites, but opposites still attract and make sense of one another—binary theory? No, I'm not that dichotomized, essentialized. We can be different without limiting our difference to opposite of other.

I am...grounded in postmodernism. Knowing is unfixed, changeable, interpretive. Language has meaning because we give it meaning. Knowing is because we have known. Nothing is static or fixed, all I can assert is that this is my story, my telling, my interpretation, my representation, and my assumptions about how this could all be important to someone else.

I am...grounded in poststructuralism. We are beings of our own making. This Social world is because we made it this. Einstein said, "We know what we know because of the questions we asked." I would add, we know what we know because of which answer was determined "right" or "good" or "truth".

I am...grounded in arts-informed inquiry. I believe that self-expression through the arts unlocks our unconscious and accesses information and knowing at a deeper, different level. The interpretation of this "data" can be tricky, but the process and products are invaluable in unearthing the stories of life. We are beings of story, aesthetic, and experience—arts-informed inquiry gives researchers a modality to access our humanity in ways that I value.

I am...things I do not know yet.

I am...grounded in not knowing.

I am...deciding to not live in a theoretical box or graphic map.

I am...trying to tell you something.

I am...trying to be honest.

I am...sure that what I know and how I know it have a place in the academy.

I am...sure some people will reject my ideas, my structures, and my living in between the lines.

I am...grateful for the process.

I am...thankful you are reading this.

A More Grounded Perspective

In attempting to limit my perspective and situate myself within contemporary research theory, I found Bulter-Kisber's (2010) description of her research perspective and I had an "ah-ha" moment. Her description of her researcher perspective became a jumping off place for mine:

From the pragmatists I am heavily influenced by the notion that knowledge is experience. Therefore inquiry is a way of knowing that includes all aspects of what is fundamentally a relational and holistic process that takes place over time. It involves not just the approach to interpretation, or a series of methodological steps, but it is the overall way of being in and doing the research. What I draw particularly from the constructivists perspective comes from the Vygotskian (1978) notion that the tool/language of the form mediates understandings in different and potentially interesting ways. This opens the doors to artful forms of inquiry where different mediums reveal different interpretations and possibilities. Furthermore, my work is guided by feminist and postmodern notions with a view to action and social change. (p. 9)

The three distinctions she makes here of a pragmatist, constructivist, feminist/postmodern perspectives speak to the three conceptual areas of my framework: experiential education, expressive arts, and relational learning.

My grounding in experiential education also roots me in a pragmatist's perspective. Like Dewey (1938), I believe that all learning must start from where the learner is (p. 74). A collection of experiences and learning from those experiences brings us into each moment. "Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into" (p. 38). Experiential education philosophy undergirds pragmatic research and supports research as a holistic process of inquiry, rather than just a snapshot of a single case or particular situation (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

Butler-Kisber (2010) explains that a constructivist's perspective also encourages a holistic process because it is created or constructed from the social practices, interactions, and experiences of the individual: "Therefore, all constructed meanings represent a particular point of view. There is no such thing as a single reality" (p. 7). The "tool/language" used to construct meaning in my inquiry is expressive arts. Use of images and storytelling are ways to view meaning and create understanding. Estrella (2011) explains how the field of expressive arts therapy understands the connections

between the knowledge created, the images being interpreted, and the self, “expressive arts therapy has recognized the importance of self-in-context, the power of the individual in community and the strength of the power of the image to give voice to cultural, universal, transpersonal, and personal meanings” (p. 48). I will go into more detail about the importance of image later in this chapter, but I also want to point to the importance of the “individual in community,” as it relates to my perspective. This is where the framework of my perspective overlaps and each point of view works in relationship to the others. The expressive arts flows through each aspects of pragmatism, constructivism, and feminism.

From a feminist perspective, my ontology and epistemology are rooted in relational learning which again goes back to experiential education. As Belenky, et. al (1986) point out:

We believe that connected knowing comes more easily to many women than separate knowing...educators can help women develop their own authentic voices if they emphasize connection over separation...if they accord respect to and allow time for the knowledge that emerges from firsthand experience. (p. 229)

Like many feminists, I do not believe this way of knowing is exclusive to women and should not be generalized as such, yet the concept is still a good one: “connected knowing” supports a more holistic endeavor. A holistic process of inquiry from a feminist perspective incorporates the knowledge participants bring with them to the study, the importance of empowering participants in the study, and the potential for transformation of the study as it evolves. For me inquiry is education, and thus, like bell hooks (2003) says in *Teaching Community*, it should be “a place of passion and possibility, a place where spirit matters, where all that we learn and know leads us into greater connection,

into greater understanding of life lived in community” (p. 183). I hope that this study was and is a place where love and understanding is a guide toward better living and greater commitment to justice and social change—this is where I am grounded.

Foundations of Arts-Informed Social Inquiry

From this researcher perspective grounded in expressive arts, experiential education, and relational learning, I arrived at a methodology that is an amalgamation of arts-informed research and participatory social inquiry. In this section I will give historical context for my use of these terms and situate my definition of arts-informed social inquiry within the academic parameters of current research.

Arts-Informed Research

One of the struggles in choosing a methodology was to determine whether I was doing arts-based or arts-informed research. When I did my master’s thesis at Lesley University in expressive arts therapy, we were inspired by Shaun McKniff’s (1995) *Arts-Based Research* and were encouraged to use the arts in our methodology. Looking back, I would argue that even my master’s theses was arts-informed, more than arts-based—allow me to make the distinction.

Arts-based research focuses on the art, the artistic process, and the artist(s) as primary in the study. McNiff (2008) says:

Arts-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience...These inquiries are distinguished from research activities where the arts may play a significant role but are essentially used as data.(p. 29)

Arts-based research focuses on the creative process and the artistic knowing that is rendered through that process. It can be done by an individual or in a group. McNiff also

points out that “you cannot define the final outcome when you are planning to do the work” (p. 40). The data and final outcomes of arts-based research are determined by the direction the art takes the artist. Artistic inquiry is dependent upon the belief in the value of the art and the meaning make through the art; therefore, particular artistic skills may be required when engaging in arts-based research to make the findings of value to the targeted community (McNiff, 2008; van Halen-Faber & Diamond, 2008; Higgs, 2008). By contrast, arts-informed inquiry does not have the same distinctions of artist and artistic process, but it connected by the commitment to artistic epistemology and aesthetic experience.

I am grounding my use of the term “arts-informed” in the work of Cole and Knowles (2004, 2008). They have edited two books on arts-informed and arts-based research and started the Center for Arts-Informed Research. They state that their work in furthering arts-informed research was an attempt to seek out inquiry processes, representations and methodologies that were more inclusive and accessible: “Our goals related to integrity, accessibility, and engagement. We wanted research to reach audiences beyond the academy to make a difference” (p. 57). They ultimately created what they term arts-informed research, which they define as “a mode and form of qualitative research in the social sciences that is influenced by, but not based in, the arts broadly conceived” (p. 59). They attempt to redefine research form and representation which challenges logical positivism and technical rationality as the only acceptable means to understanding the human condition. They also challenge who is capable of creating knowledge or who should have access to research. Cole and Knowles was arts-based research to involve individuals in society as meaning makers and to use research for the express purpose of making a difference or transforming communities and society

at large (p. 60). In another chapter, Cole (2004) wrote, “Readers of research needed to be moved to feel and think to be inspired in some way by their experience...Research, like art, could be accessible, evocative, embodied, empathic, provocative” (p. 16).

To form a foundation, Cole and Knowles (2008) created seven defining elements for a qualitative paradigm of arts-informed research: 1) commitment to a particular art form (or forms in the case of mixed media) to frame and define the process and representation of the research; 2) the methodological integrity would require the art form of the inquiry process and representation to support and illuminate the research goals and findings; 3) an openness to the creative inquiry process would require the researcher to follow the natural progression of the artistic process and be guided by commonsense, intuition, and responsiveness to the natural flow of the experience, rather than being constricted by a rigid accordance to a preconceived guideline; 4) subjective and reflexive presence of the researcher-as-artist, whereby the artistry of the researcher includes not just technical artistic skills, but also creative and aesthetic sensibilities; 5) there should be strong reflexive elements even though not all arts-informed research is about or focused on the researcher; 6) there should be explicit intent for the audience of the research to include communities within and beyond the academy; and finally, 7) there is an expectation of engaging the audience “in an active process of meaning making that is likely to have transformative potential” (p. 62) because there is a moral purpose in arts-informed research to advance social responsibility and epistemological equity(pp. 61-62).

These elements helped give my work structure and purpose and supported my goals in creating a dissertation that could allow me to use my expressive arts skills to create an inquiry that could include, engage, and hopefully impact the community

which I work and worship, while also serving the academy and living up to its expectations for research quality. I am committed to the transformative potential and educative possibilities of arts-informed research. As I discuss in Chapter VI, I look forward to ongoing work in the arena.

Apart from Cole and Knowles (2004, 2008) and those included in their works, I found other researchers who were using the arts in research to explore issues of social justice and social change that were informative and inspirational for my study (Levine & Levine, 2011; Bell, 2010; Kaplan, 2007; Gwyther & Possamai-Inesedy, 2009). One of these examples is Bell (2010) and the participants of the “storytelling project”. This group of researchers and educators used the arts to inform their research of social justice in education. This group knows how useful the arts are when it comes to exploring the deeply embedded and complicated issues of social justice. Bell says:

The arts provide a way to engage body, heart and mind to open up learning and develop a critical perspective that affords broader understanding of cultural patterns and practices...The aesthetic experiences of stories told through visual arts, theater, spoken word and poetry, can help us think more creatively, intimately and deeply about racism and other challenging social justice issues. (p. 17)

Bell is one example of this growing connection between the arts and social justice research. Gwyther and Possamai-Inesedy (2009), who are also part of this ever expanding connection, wrote an article exploring the arts-informed social inquiries and their recent emergence in social science research, particularly in Australia. I should note that my use of the term “social inquiry” is different from theirs, although there are strong connections to the overall research methods. They assert that in arts-informed social inquiry:

methodologies are all premised on various notions of social justice as practice, brought to fruition through the validation of new ways of knowing and consequently new knowledge. The methodologies are also an attempt to bridge the divide between the researcher and the researched...to provide space and method for the 'researched' to be an integral part of the research itself, beyond just informants 'giving voice'. (p. 106)

This also shows my connection between arts-informed methods and participatory social inquiry methods. Something about the use of the expressive arts offers participants more than just the chance to "tell their story"; it offers them opportunity to create "new knowledge" that can lead to personal and social transformation. As Estrella (2001) points out, "expressive therapy has from its beginnings defined itself not only as a practice of 'therapy' but as a practice of social change via the arts" (p. 49).

Gwyther and Possamai-Inesdy (2009) also assert that arts-informed inquiry allows the researched to "express their views and standpoint and, importantly, allows their participation in the construction of knowledge" (p. 110). The researcher and the researched all become part of a movement towards growth and change. It was exciting for me when developing this research to think that women in this study would have a chance to create art born of their experiences that would contribute to the educational knowledge about social justice and that through the development of community this process would affect us and have the potential for inspiring personal and social transformation.

Distinguishing Social Inquiry

I believe this connection between arts-informed inquiry and social justice is strongly connected, if not rooted in, the field of participatory action research. The desire for participants to be an active part of the research, not just a passive person being researched, goes back to my explanation of pragmatism and feminism as foundations

for my research. Now that I have explained the arts-informed aspect of my study, let me discuss the history and choice of method of social inquiry and then I will show how they are linked together.

Social inquiry is a term grounded in experiential education, it comes directly from Dewey's philosophies. Oakes, Rogers and Lipton (2006), who utilize participatory social inquiry in their work with youth and families, write that Dewey "argued that citizens engaged in public, social inquiry will better connect forms of educational inequality to their social, cultural, and political contexts and account for the ideologies of privilege that sustain those inequalities" (p. 17). "Participatory" social inquiry has a history rooted in experiential education and social activism; a connection between researcher and citizens coming together to form better educational policies and practices (Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006). Because of this history, I struggled with whether to use the term participatory in my research. I wanted the participants to build community, feel connected to the work, and see the potential for how the study could impact their community; but, in the end, I felt my study did not fit the parameters of participatory research. I do, however, think it is important to give a little background on participatory research as it relates to my choice in methodology.

Participatory research comes from two lines of research, experiential education, as mentioned above, and action research as put forth by Lewin (1948) in the 1940's. Both theories are based in the work of social organizing, but action research became much more widely used in the 1960's and 70's. Three terms are commonly used—sometimes interchangeably: participatory research, action research, and participatory action research. In defining participatory research, Conrad and Campbell (2008) wrote:

First conceptualized in the 1960's & 70's, this "new paradigm" approach to community-based research is viewed as a means of producing knowledge, a tool for community dialogue, education, raising consciousness, mobilizing for action, and amplifying needs, demands and critiques from the "margins". (p. 248)

Participatory action research is focused on engaging marginalized citizens to improve their communities through research. Although my aims are similar, I do not feel action research best speaks to the process of the goals of my work. First, the women in my study are not coming together to directly improve the conditions of their community. Any impact we have will be more indirect or would be a by-product of the initial research. Also the participants in the study will not have decision making power about the process of the research. They are not creating actions and goals; they are participating in pre-determined formats led by a facilitator. I think this creates a clear distinction from action research.

Participatory social inquiry is also rooted in social action as shown in Oakes, Rogers, and Lipton (2006), when researchers and educators collaborated with activists to create a community of learners that worked together as allies to affect social change. They explain, "participatory social inquiry is a process of knowledge construction that aligns research-based knowledge, newly acquired knowledge and lived experience" (p. 18). Although my project is not rooted in creating an activist project, it is a study focused on connecting the knowledge of the lived experience of the participants with research-based knowledge. Therefore, I have chosen to leave out the term participatory and just incorporate "social inquiry".

Defining Arts-Informed Social Inquiry

My research methodology is arts-informed social inquiry which focuses on the identity development and culture of engaged citizens—women making conscious

choices to participate in creating a more just and equitable society. It is social inquiry because we will work as a group or community to be reflexive of our (being that I a member of the community and culture) spiritual practice and our development of a commitment to social justice. It is arts-informed because we will be using expressive arts activities to guide our group discussions and reflections of the topic of social justice identity development. Halifax (2004) says, “Arts-in / formed research is active, interpretive, and relational: aesthetic processes have a corporeality that produces and carries meaning” (p. 176). As a group we will embody the work together. As the scholartist, I will interpret our embodied work and attempt to give it structure and form on the written page in a way that brings new knowledge to my practice, our church’s pedagogical perspective, and potentially the academic field of social justice education.

I feel confident in my use of arts-informed social inquiry to express the work I/we did and to ground this study in previously supported scholarly research. It can be a difficult thing to choose a name. Halifax, et al, (2004) expresses my own struggle with naming, and thereby potentially constraining, this research: “This is a collective effort, you hear my voice, but know this: I’m not alone. I use thoughts and perceptions of others to push toward as aesthetic shape for our theorizing, I do not know how to constrain this writing or how to call it; perhaps it will be easier, later” (p. 181). Hopefully through my process and product, arts-informed social inquiry will take a shape that gives meaning and structure in ways that the academy and my fellow practitioners/educators find purposeful. The hope is that I was able to authentically represent the process—the relational connection, the art and story, the living embodiment of theory through art, the being together in the word—social justice—the process had meaning and method, but process is hard to contain on a page. Representation has limitations and biases. I tried

to be transparent in my process and honest and authentic in my work. The following section shows my focus on my ethical commitment to the research and the participants.

Ethical Issues and Concerns

It is good practice, whether doing art, research, and/or education, to always be reflecting on the ethics of our work. Before I began my qualitative inquiry, I explored the topic of ethics in research. I found there were six issues most commonly considered: validity, generalizability, access and consent, reflexivity, voice, and transparency. Then I found that others who have studied arts-informed and narrative forms of inquiry have problematized the language typically used to discuss ethical issues in the research, especially since these methods of arts-informed inquiry are relatively new and experimental. Butler-Kisber (2010) noted that “the huge increase in narrative work and the burgeoning interest in arts-informed inquiry necessitated thinking and talking differently about qualitative studies” (p. 97). She went on to articulate how Lincoln (1995) defined the “new paradigm” of ethics in qualitative inquiry “as one that embraced the need for ethical and deep relationships between researchers and participants, one that committed to research activity that would engender change...and would be oriented to social justice and equity for all” (p. 97). This “new paradigm” makes “positionality of researcher, reciprocity between researcher and participants, the reflexivity of the work, and the inclusion of voices” more relevant ethical concerns than the previously mentioned issues (p. 97). She goes on to say, “Far less effort was directed to answering questions about validity and generalizability as notions of trustworthiness, persuasiveness and credibility” (p. 97). Thus for my research I used Butler-Kisber’s criteria to address ethical issues and concerns.

“Positionality of researcher” is a significant concern, especially when working on issues of social justice and equity, even with groups considered to have privileged identities. That is one reason why I have included myself as part of the research. This centralizes my positionality and forces me to be transparent about the research process, consider my power within the group, and address the assumptions, biases and beliefs that I bring to the work.

“Reciprocity between research and participants” is especially salient in this study. It was important to have open lines of communication between the researcher and the participants throughout the inquiry. Doing so helped to offer validity and make sure that the interpretative process stayed true to the expressive intent of the artist/participants. This is also why the “terms of engagement” that were created during the contract portion of our group work were significant in helping set the tone for how the group interacted with one another; including how I, the participant-facilitator-researcher, interacted with the participants. Bell (2010) points out the importance of “the articulation of ground rules that acknowledge the challenges of recognizing and countering inequality from the different social positions occupied by members of the group” (p. 21).

“Reflexivity of the work” will be addressed through constant memos, artistic reflections, and explanations of the process. Epistemological reflexivity is the term used to discuss the way researchers consider their decision making during the research (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 19). This way of knowing and thinking about reflexivity in research is particularly useful when one is engaged in the creative process during the research. As discussed in the methods section it was important for participants to trust the artistic process and feel comfortable with the group’s dynamics when moving through the art activities. Smith, along with Buttignol, Jongeward and Thomas (2000)

explain that acknowledging “the difficulties and challenges associated with engaging in alternative, emergent, artistic, holistic, or intuitive forms of inquiry” usually “requires the inquirer to respect and trust the intuitive process,” and add that, “This process emerges within its own time frame, which can be difficult for those of us used to establishing timelines or having our lives governed by time lines created by others” (p. 83). One of my mantras is “trust the process.” I had to remind myself of this as the group progressed through the sessions and the outline had to be tweaked. I am thankful to the support of my professors in also trusting and supporting me with this process.

The “inclusion of voices” is an interesting issue when art is involved. In some ways use of art makes the voice fully present in the research, but then it gets sticky when it comes to interpretation of the art narrative. This is where reciprocity and use of multiple modes of data collection are important. I made it a point throughout the process to let participants know that there would be a point at which they would be able to respond to my art narrative/interpretation and then be able to choose whether they would want to be named as an artist or remain anonymous. All of the women chose to use their names in the study. This issue of anonymity is particularly salient since one of my art activities is entitled self-portrait. As Bulter-Kisber (2010) notes:

some participants do not want their anonymity protected. Rather, they want their stories to be shared and to be identified. It is the careful, respectful, and delicate balancing and negotiating of ongoing relationships that can help to ensure that ethical practice is carried out and no harm is done. (p. 78)

That was my goal—to tell the stories of the participants in a thoughtful and intellectual way that adds to the scholarly knowledge and also respects the narratives of the participants so that they feel honored by being involved in the qualitative inquiry process.

Research Methods

As stated earlier, I wanted to use expressive arts and experiential learning modalities to explore the transformational stories of a small group of women at Green Street United Methodist Church—a church committed to the work of social justice. My research focused on two specific questions: How did each of these women come to develop a social justice identity? And, why do they choose to be members of Green Street UMC with its mission for justice and healing in the world? Because I was interested in using arts-informed social inquiry, I also chose to be reflexive and study myself through this process.

As I designed this study I used my experience as an expressive arts therapist and experiential educator of 15+ years. All of the activities used in this study are part of my professional repertoire. Although I had not used them with a group for research purposes, I believed incorporating various art activities would lend to a fruitful research design because I feel that expressive arts by nature is an inquiry process (Estrella, 2011), and because other scholars had used similar formats in their work (Tatum, 2003; Howard, 2006; Bell, 2010; Lee, Menkart & Okazawa-Rey, 2008; Levine & Levine, 2011; Cole, Neilsen, Knowles & Luciani, 2004).

Sampling

I invited women from the Green Street UMC congregation to participate in the study by making an announcement during Sunday morning worship and by sending out a letter of invitation (See Appendix A) via the church newsletter and email lists. Over sixty women from Green Street UMC showed interest and self-identified as a White, Christian woman interested in working with a group to do arts activities; who is committed to social justice; and who has been an active member of Green Street UMC

for at least two years. I sent out more detailed information about the sessions and options for the session dates to all the potential participants via email, as everyone interested had email access. Based on the responses I was able to put together a group of eight women who could all attend the same two sessions on April and May. The final group came to consist of the eight women solely based upon their availability to attend two expressive arts sessions. I also held a follow up session to get their feedback, but this was not an essential date in the decision making. The participants were: Becky, Clara, Ellen, Margaret, Pat, Sally, Sharee and Sharon.

Expressive Arts Sessions

The first session focused on introducing the concept of social justice identity development and creating a community among the women. I had a clear outline at the beginning of each session but remained open to the group process and tried to adjust to create maximum benefits for participants and for the goals of the research. During the first session I gave out journals and explained their use in our study; we completed a community contract; we wrote “I Am Poems”; we did a story-telling activity; drew mandalas; created a closing prayer; and of course, ate lunch together. I did not record during this session because all of the sharing was done either with partners or through reflective writing.

Between sessions the participants were asked to create a “Social Justice Identity Portrait.” I went over the following instructions during our session. Then I sent them a copy via email and a reminder before the second session. (Instructions for at-home art project can be found in Appendix C.)

The second session focused on sharing their social justice identity portraits (SJIP) and discussing their relationship to Green Street UMC. (One woman in the study

was not able to attend the session due to a death in her family.) The session veered drastically from the outline I had prepared because the women really enjoyed talking as a group and hearing one another's stories. We spent most of our time listening to descriptions of SJIP's. Then we shared stories of coming to Green Street, which led to an impromptu conversation about Green Street church history. We ate lunch together; then ended with human sculptures and a journal reflection. I think it is important to note that while I officially ended the session on time, the women continued to talk as a group and stayed an extra 45 minutes. I recorded this session because I wanted to get the participant's descriptions of their artwork for data analysis. It ended up being mostly group discussion, so I had more data than expected from this session.

A month later I invited the women to my house for a tea to thank them for the work, get some feedback, explain the next steps in the research, and just enjoy each other's company. One woman in the study had not completed her SJIP before the last session, so she was given a chance to share. I showed them the transcription from our session and a slideshow of the pictures I had taken. I had also made copies of the following quote from Marianne Williamson (1992) that had been used in Ellen's self-portrait. It seemed to be a quote that resonated with the group during the discussion and its sentiment spoke to my appreciation for them.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to manifest the glory of God that is within each of us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others. (See Williamson, p. 190-191)

They decided to sign each other's quotes and since two women were not present I told them I would get them all signed and give them out later. I asked the women to do one more journal entry reflecting on the work and sharing any feedback or anything they felt was "still left". Then we just spent time in fellowship. The women were not ready to decide about artistic credit or anonymity, so we decided I would send them a rough draft of the dissertation chapter and any photos used and get their decisions then.

The final research included three primary artworks: an I Am Poem, Human Sculptures and Social Justice Identity Portraits. I also collected various pieces of artistic reflection from each participant, which varied by participant: including, journal reflections, mandalas, community contract, and closing prayer. With a group of eight participants that was over 50 pieces of visual and written data and four hours of audio data. Table 1 shows all the data collected. Copies of original data can be seen in the Appendix E.

Table 1. Description of Data

Created by	Primary	Secondary
Individuals:	I Am Poem	
	Social Justice Identity Self-Portrait	
	Human Sculpture	Journal Writings
		Mandala
Group:		Community Contract
		Prayer Poem
	Transcript from Session 2	

Scholartist—Researcher/Facilitator/Artist

My situation within arts-informed research and social inquiry methods which have an agenda of reflexivity, epistemological equity, and egalitarian methods deemed it necessary to consider myself as an active participant, rather than an objective observer

who holds all the power of interpretation and knowledge construction. Thus, I saw myself as a member of the group who played the role of facilitator and has the responsibility of the research. Since I am also a White, Christian women who has a social justice identity and is a member of Green Street UMC, it would have seemed distrustful to not include my perspective and my art in the project. It was also an important reflexive process given the embeddedness of my positionality within this group of women in particular and the Green Street UMC community at large. As pointed to earlier, it was important for me to be as transparent as possible about my power, relationships, biases, and assumptions throughout the research to make the implications valid and trustworthy.

I did all the same art activities as the participants on my own before each session. I also did a social justice identity self-portrait between sessions and shared it with the group, as a group member. In addition, I did multiple artistic reflections throughout the research, before and after sessions, to assist my work, and to document my research method and theories.

Art as Data

The art of interpretation which creates the art narrative in qualitative research is called hermeneutics. Richardson and Christopher (1993) explain that in contemporary hermeneutics, “we grasp our lives in terms of narratives which give form and direction to them” (p. 147). In the process of this research, the group created meaning from the process of artistic creation, the dialogue of the images represented in the art, and their personal reflection on the meanings of the artistic and group experiences. Together this constructed a community art narrative which is represented in Chapter IV. Yet, as Guillemin and Westall explain (2008), “images and their interpretations are not

necessarily fixed or stable entities” (p. 124). As researcher, it was my job to weave the art, images, and discussion of the art together into a cohesive story of social justice identity development and participation in a spiritual community committed to social justice. I used the art itself, the artistic reflection, and the group discussions to create “new” knowledge expressed in this art narrative. Eisner (2002) says that “Knowledge is less about discovery than it is about construction” (p. 211), which supports my definition of arts-informed social inquiry. Eisner explains that the process of representation “stabilizes ideas and images, makes the editing process possible, [and] provides means for sharing meaning”(p. 239). He goes on to say that “The act of representation is an act of discovery and invention and not merely a means through which an individual’s will is imposed upon a material” (p. 239). Thus the act of representation of images and stories leads to discovery of meaning and then possibly construction of knowledge. As Cole and Knowles (2008) point out this could also include the reader as they engage with the research. Thus the work is never done, the art keeps creating as long as it is being shared, and the “new knowledge” is not fixed in time or space. It is a “beginning” as Shaun McKniff (2011) says, “Art’s unique ability to compassionately embrace uncertainty and difficulties without pre-established and ready-made plans for change. In the process of artistic discovery and transformation, we do not know the end at the beginning” (p. 91). Therefore, any implications made in this dissertation have to be taken into context and reconsidered by the reader through their own reflection and knowledge. The goals of this work were as much about supporting notions of social justice identity development as there were supporting arts-informed social inquiry.

Within the group context we analyzed the art by dialoguing with one another and doing written reflections about the experiences and the art. We also dialogued within the

group to allow for connection to relative images and finding common or disparate experiences that might offer insight and understanding about the social conditions we were examining.

Considering how to explain to participants how to “analyze” the art as data was been a difficult conundrum given the cultural emphasis we place on beauty in art. It was imperative to discuss the aesthetics of art as research with the participants. Cole and McIntyre (2004) wrote an article about aesthetic contemplation in which they discuss emotion and perception as two key qualities of the aesthetic experience. They say, “Provoked by art these qualities do not emerge in a cause and effect relation, but rather exist interdependently while advancing understanding” (p. 2). I wanted the participants to have a chance to engage in the aesthetic experience as a group during both sessions to begin to unpack their experience of the art and the emotions and perceptions it evoked. That is why I allowed time for group discussions and responses to art as well as personal reflections in their journals.

I also wanted to encourage an ongoing reflexive process which could be considered “aesthetic contemplation.” Cole and McIntyre (2005) write that “aesthetic contemplation is the reflexive process that emerges out of the aesthetic experience. Contemplation occurs over time and involves the evolution of meanings as our feelings and intellect mull over perception” (p. 2). To encourage aesthetic contemplation, I incorporated an at-home art project and spaced the sessions over a span of two months, so that there would be time for the “evolution of meaning.” Although contemplation cannot be prescribed or forced, it is helpful to at least allow space and time for the reflexive process in the hope that it will bear some fruit. I also allowed myself as scholar artist the same time and space to contemplate the data through creative expression

and more common theoretical analysis. I speak to my process of data analysis more specifically in Chapter IV.

Conclusion

Hopefully this chapter has explained the methodology of this research, and also shown how the process of the research can impact the outcomes and implications. I also hope the reader, if new to expressive arts, has been given enough information to appreciate the format of data interpretation and representation in the following chapters. Particularly for those readers not as familiar with arts-informed and arts-based research, I wanted to give some background and position myself within the current and ever growing field of arts-informed qualitative inquiries. I also wanted to specifically give focus to my identity as an expressive arts therapist because as Estrella (2011) points out:

Unlike the related disciplines of art therapy, dance therapy, or music therapy, there is still relatively little formal scholarship, research, and literature that can help unify or establish a common language or discourse within the field of expressive arts. In essence, we are a profession of doers. (p. 48)

I experienced this when beginning my research and hope that through my work I can continue to add to the scholarly research and discourse within the field of expressive arts.

CHAPTER IV

STORIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IDENTITY

Introduction

In this chapter the reader is introduced to the art and stories of the participants. Through an arts-informed process of data analysis and theoretical research I have attempted to create a narrative that represents the epistemology and ontology of the group and its individual members as it relates to social justice identity development (SJI). In Chapter II, I discussed my theoretical foundations for SJI and its importance in helping educate people toward a commitment to social justice. In this chapter, the reader can experience how this development happened and is happening in the lives of the women in the group: their personal insights into the importance of faith and family; their struggles with the paradox of what they had been taught about love and then how they saw people being treated in the world; and how they chose to react to and grow from their life experiences. Their stories and the experiences we had together taught me a lot about the struggle to reconcile our beliefs with the realities of the world and the intentional effort that must be taken to break down the myths of meritocracy, power and privilege. Underlying all these stories are the theories of relational learning, critical theories of power and privilege, and transformative identities. My goal is to weave the art and theory together through my data analysis to create a foundation for my understanding of social justice identity development and to draw out the emerging themes which I will focus on in more depth in Chapter V.

Data Analysis

I gathered the data for this dissertation by facilitating two expressive arts sessions that were each four hours in length. As stated in Chapter III, I invited women from the Green Street UMC congregation to participate in the study by invitation (see addendum) via the church newsletter and email lists. Based on the responses and our schedules, I was able to put together a group of eight women. The participants were: Becky, Clara, Ellen, Margaret, Pat, Sally, Sharee and Sharon.

Before we began the first session the participants were given consent forms to read and ask any questions about; everyone signed them we were able to begin. We were able to stay pretty close to the outline session one. (There is a copy of the outline of the sessions in the addendum and a table of the data in Chapter III.) In session one, participants did three journal entries, their "I Am" poem, the community contract, a mandala, and the prayer poem. In session two the descriptions of their self-portraits took longer than expected, so as I had stated in my IRB, I followed the energy of the group and gave them some options for how to restructure the rest of the session. They wanted to stay as a group, so we spent some time together telling our stories about coming to Green Street and other aspects of Green Street history and community. Then we finished with human sculptures. In session two they completed two journal entries, shared self-portraits, and did human sculptures. When they came to the follow up session, which was an afternoon tea at my home, I showed them the pictures from the sessions, asked them to write a final journal entry, Pat brought and shared her self-portrait which she had not finished before the second session, and then we took time to personally debrief the experience and just spend time together. I was not able to include Pat's self-portrait in the data because she did not tell me she was bringing it, and I was

not prepared to tape record her description. I also gave them all the copy of the quote mentioned earlier that Ellen had shared with the group during her self-portrait description because it seemed to resonate with us during the discussion and were words I would want each of them to have. Clara and Sally were not able to come to the tea.

I had also asked the women to consider whether they would like to use a pseudonym or their own name in the dissertation. As part of the arts-informed process, it was important for me to offer the choice to use their name to recognize their contribution or to choose to remain anonymous. We discussed this option at all three sessions and at the tea those in attendance asked if they could see the rough drafts before they decided. I agreed and sent the women copies of my rough drafts with over a month to read and reply as to their preference. Two participants had reservations about using their name because of things they had shared about their family. I tried not to influence their decision and answered their questions as completely and honestly as I could. I told both of them not to rush their decision and to choose what felt right to them. In the end all of the women decided to use their first names.

After the sessions were over I spent three months immersed in the data. The data I collected came in multiple forms: journaling, self-portraits, transcript from group session, digital images of human sculptures, and group art. This multi-faceted compilation of data required a prolonged incubation time. I read and reread, viewed and reviewed the data. I took pictures of the self-portraits. I did my own journaling, concept maps, and collages. I typed the transcript from session two, myself because I wanted to spend that time re-listening to the voices of the women. Through repeated exposure to the data and critical reflection, meditation, and prayer, the stories and art became a part of me in ways that cannot be fully expressed outwardly—they are inward knowings. The

stories became affirmations of previously held inward knowledge and also became catalysts for new research and challenges to assumptions and biases. This repeated and multi-modal exposure allowed for saturation of the data, so that a cognizant form of presentation could emerge.

I want to acknowledge that as in other studies, there was so much data that my focus could have gone in a very different direction. I am sure my own biases and presumptions played a role in determining the importance of some information or expression over another. The subjectivity of arts-informed data analysis is influenced by the researcher's aesthetics, by her beliefs and assumptions, by her ontology and epistemology. This is a one researcher study and therefore is limited by my knowing and being, my hermeneutical perspective and process. I am sure that another researcher using this data would find that other salient themes emerged.

Chapter IV is my re-presentation of the art and stories as data with the research and analysis that developed from my process. I wanted to offer the data—the art and stories—in a way that showed my analytical methods but I also tried to allow the reader to immerse her/himself into the data in a meaningful way. This would hopefully allow readers to critique and question my findings so that further learning can continue on this subject. Chapter V goes on to show how the triangulation of the data brought forth emerging themes that coalesced into what I present as core elements of social justice identity development.

Chapter Layout

The chapter is divided up by the structure of the expressive arts sessions we participated in. To begin, I share from the participants' first journal entries about what they hoped to gain from participating in the study and how they define social justice. I

shared everyone's entries here because it sets the tone for group inclusion and offers introduction to each participant in the study. As I did not add commentary to this section it did not seem necessary to sort them by theme or exclude any for content. I also include the visual image of the community contract we created, again to allow the reader insight into the group process and identity more than for theoretical query.

The next section is a poetic collage I created from the individual "I am" poems that each woman wrote. A poetic collage is similar to a visual collage in that one takes pieces that were separate and brings them together to make a whole. In this case, I took lines from individual poems and placed them together to make a collective poem. This poem introduces the reader to who we are as a group and shows my analytic process for coding the poetry. It highlights some of our similarities and differences between participants in life experience, personality, culture, identification and perspective. The reader should approach the poem as an introduction to the themes and issues that will be focused on more specifically through the next two sections. After the poem, I highlight a few themes that correlate to identity development and cultural competence.

The next section focuses on the social justice identity self-portraits. This was probably the most important piece of art done by the group and also encouraged important verbal sharing by participants. In this section I start with a digital picture of each portrait which is followed by the words of the artist as she described her work and its meaning to the group. In creating the research project, I was intentional in creating the opportunity for each artist to share her description and insight into her art. I wanted to make sure that the data focused on the participant's experiences and ontology, as opposed to a researcher driven analysis of the art. I have only edited the participant's descriptions to make them easier for the reader to follow and to highlight the ideas each

woman presented as she discussed her work. Full and unedited descriptions can be found in the transcript (See Appendix D).

I used note-taking and concept maps to code and sort the portraits and descriptions for themes. The order of the portraits was chosen to create a flow through the themes and theories I identified in relation to each participant's work. The reader will notice that the earlier portraits will be referred back to as one proceeds through the section. There were two participants who were not able to share a portrait: Pat and Becky. Pat was at the session and participated in the discussions and did a human sculpture. Becky was unable to attend the session due to a death in her family.

The final section introduces the human sculptures and addresses the second question of this dissertation: Why do these women choose to be members of Green Street UMC with its mission for justice and healing in the world? First, I will present digital images of the sculptures followed by the artist's description of her sculpture. In analyzing the human sculptures, I focused on descriptions of the sculptures, not visual information in the pictures. Through keen observation and critical reading of the descriptions, I was able to sort the sculptures by concept map and a process of cutting and pasting the documents. I found the sculptures fit into three categories. In the section following the images and participant descriptions, I discuss the three themes that emerged from the human sculpture activity: they are inclusion, importance of intentional relationships, and the difficulty of creating and sustaining a beloved community.

My hope is that by reading this chapter one would get a deep sense of the arts-informed social inquiry process that this group went through. I want to embed the reader in our process as much as possible, so I presented an array of visual representations and used as much of the women's own words as possible. I believe that representing the

group process offers some validation for the insights and implications presented in this dissertation. I want to give value to the work of this group—through their art and stories they created new understandings for themselves, for me, and I hope for the reader. I invite you to get to know Becky, Clara, Ellen, Maragaret, Pat, Sally, Sharee, Sharon, and me, AmyBith, through our art and stories...

Presenting the Art & Stories

Why am I Here?—Setting the Tone of the Work

I set the stage with thoughts from their first journal entry in which I asked them to write about: Why you came to participate in the study; what you hope to get out of it; and how you envision this group working together?

Margaret: I always enjoy digging down and learning more about myself and how I came to be the way I am...One another note, it sometimes bothers me to be the "White woman helping the poor kids" (or whatever)...so maybe looking to find some peace with that.

Ellen: I found the idea of research exciting, just as I found Green Street Church when I first came here. Being part of a church that includes and serves all races, all income levels, all people without exclusion, appeals to me. It makes me feel at home.

I am interested in exploring my own place in all this...my feelings and probably why I am led here.

Becky: Why am I here? Mainly because I know how hard it is to find people willing to commit to research!...But we started at GSUMC and continue to come because I want my children to know people from all socioeconomic levels, races, beliefs and to realize that we are all God's children. No one person or group is better than others.

Sharee: Curiosity—are others experiencing the same things I am? What are their stories? And the need for reflective space—I haven't been incredibly attentive to my spiritual life in an intentional way in recent months and am hungry—but I can't do Bible study.

Clara: I hope to learn more about myself in relation to social justice, but (being from Mississippi and raised in the Deep South mentality) I'm kind of afraid what I would find or "be revealed". Love the art aspect.

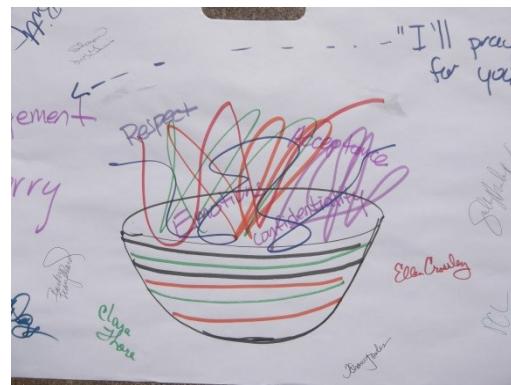
Pat: [Not written in sentence form—see addendum for original copy] Want some reflective space. Love AB [AmyBith]. Want to get to know these women better; love all aspects of diversity—love how it enriches my life; enriches my knowledge/relationship with God.

Sally: I am here partly because I love the idea of exploring what factors of life have been influential in getting me to the seemingly random, yet wonderful, places I have found myself in. I am here to explore why I am here so I can find myself in more places like Green Street.

Sharon: I hope to discover what others think and feel. I hope to get a better understanding of why I think the way I do.

I love being with people. I may be surprised by how others in this group feel.

Figure 1. Community Contract



This is a digital image of our community contract that we used to envision ourselves in this group. We discussed how we wanted to relate to one another and what expectations we had for how we would engage and communicate.

What is Social Justice? From the Women in this Study

I spent a whole chapter breaking down my theories and definitions of social justice and SJID. But the women only spent fifteen minutes discussing and writing about their ideas. Thus, I think it is important to give voice to what they feel and think about the term partly in reverence to the complexity of the concept itself, and partly out of respect for the women in the group allowing me to ground this research in my theories, even though they have their own intellectual and emotional take on social justice, which may or may not be in line with mine. This topic does not appear to be new to them. It is not something they just heard but haven't considered. Social justice has meaning in their lives and a few of them have passionate feelings about the term. I will let them speak for themselves; not all of the participants were able to complete this entry; I have included all that did. This is what they wrote:

Pat: I hate that term—it sounds so PC [politically correct]-I think people use it and never really live it. It means to be being Jesus in my world---plain and simple. As I look at what he did while here, if we all lived that way...would we need this term?

Margaret: My faith and interest in “social justice” are all rolled up together. I put that in quotes because I think it’s such a buzz word these days, when I really just think it’s being a thoughtful, loving human being and, for me, a faithful Christian. I don’t use the term “social justice”. I have an idea of what it means, but I’m just trying to be a good person, to live like Jesus lived, to help others feel as loved and confident and whole as I was raised to feel. Because I don’t believe that should be reserved for a chosen few.

Becky: All people deserve and demand the right of equality in all aspects of life. No one person or group is better than others. Equality for all both governmental and interpersonal. Seeing and acknowledging the individuality of others. Enforcing equal treatment of students.

Ellen: I believe a commitment to social justice should mean that a person lives their life in a way that always makes everyone feel accepted and welcome.

Clara: To act with a commitment to this would be to treat my neighbor as I would be treated, but it requires faith, courage, and love. Also it is not blind.

Sally: a commitment to love and to the idea that everyone deserves that. The actual commitment is the work of transforming your whole life and mindset around it. It involves striving on a daily basis to think more clearly and justly. To constantly be examining your own prejudices.

These opening journal entries and community contract set the tone for the work we would do together. Next we began to dig more deeply into our personal stories of social justice identity development.

Poetic Collage

Writing the “I Am” poem was the first individual art activity done in the first session to begin the exploration of social justice identity development. I believe as Leggo (2004) does that poems are “pedagogic and geographic locations for poiesis and praxis, a way of narrating experience and of learning narratively” (p. 21). Beginning with this activity was a way of locating our personal history in the context of social justice.

We did a brainstorming activity to stir emotional memories of childhood regarding place, people, food, faith, etc., and then the women were asked to write a poem describing themselves starting with “I am.” I adapted this activity from the “I am from” poem activity I have done numerous times since my first experience with it while getting my undergraduate degree. I have adapted it to “I am” because I find it speaks more clearly to the reality that we are not just “from” the people, places, and experiences. It is not a past tense relationship. These things still have meaning and purpose in how we live and are in the current moment; therefore, “I am” these memories. They are a part of me; “I am” still living out the relationships from my childhood, etc. Although I changed the format for these reasons, the reader will notice that some participants wrote “I am from.”

I do not know if that is because they had done the other format before or if it was just preferred language, so I kept whatever form each participant chose.

I created the following poetic collage from each of our individual works because I wanted the reader to get a sense of who we were as a group. I also feel it speaks to the phenomenology of the inquiry to find the commonalities and differences in our experiences to create knowledge and understanding. I became the creator of the poetic collage by choosing the order of the sentences to develop themes and threads of meaning; by spacing the words poetically to create graphic impact; and by adding or omitting a few words to assist with understanding or grammar. These poems were done quickly with no chance for editing—no chance to eliminate the grammatical errors or to edit their thoughts and ideas—I edited the phrases sparingly to try and maintain the voices and styles of the individuals. The reader can read the original copies of the poems in the appendix.

Following the poem I will explore some of the emerging issues of social justice identity development.

“I Am/We Are”

I am...mother, daughter, sister, wife, teacher, friend, and citizen.

I am...the product of the world, the people, the smells, the tastes, the me.

I am...Sunday dinners of fried chicken, corn pone, ham and tomato pudding

I am...from the land of “covered dishes”,
pimento cheese and deviled eggs, twice baked potatoes,
and congealed salad with a dollop of mayonnaise on top

I am...Mama cooking waffles and never having one.

I am...from always having nutri-grain bars in my lunch,
but envying everyone else's fruit roll-ups and gushers

I am...my childhood roaming the neighborhood,
but knowing little White girls did not go "up the hill"

I am...the little White girl who did go "up the hill"
to my best friend, Sante's house,
where her grandmother's cooking permeated the house
with mouth-watering aromas.

I am...Ardee cooking and cleaning for me
with no indoor plumbing of her own

I am...from always eating the crust off my bread
because "the kids in Africa don't have any."

I am...LOVED...by God and my mama, and my family,
and an amazing community of friends
who are spread out all over this world.

I am...a big, strong, happy woman raised in the South

I am...farm with tractor and truck riding, picking strawberries and hog killings

I am...city kids laughing at the country bumpkin.

I am...military, Cherry Point, Hawaii, Vietnam

I am...Eastern NC & VA with tenant farmers and segregation

I am...integrated middle school with rats and rat holes, few White kids in class

I am...from not knowing what it's like to live outside of Winston-Salem

I am...from playing cowboys and Indians in the basement.

I am...from swimming at the pool everyday
and feeling safe enough to ride my bike home.

I am...from always feeling safe and yet never knowing how unique that was.

I am...from the broken sounds of middle schoolers trying to learn
to play trumpet, trombone, and flute
and from not realizing the patience my mom had
to let those sounds ring in her ear.

I am...rain hitting the tin of my bedroom roof.

I am...music

I am...joy

I am...mowing the grass in the summer sun.

I am...sunshine

I am...light

I am...from the comfort of my mom and dad
and the protective love of two older brothers.

I am...sad my parents are dead.

I am...a survivor, a motherless child
who doesn't want to feel responsible for everyone's else's shit anymore

I am...proud of my granddaughters.

I am...teaching them to carry on social justice when I am gone.

I am...Baptist with "Just As I Am". Dad of quiet, unwavering faith in God who
loves us all.

I am...a believer in equality for all because that's how I was raised

I am...from not seeing the cracks or discrepancies in my parent's' beliefs
until my sister started dating a boy from another race

I am...a mother who does not want my children to see the same prejudice in me

I am...a product of all of these...
Does God love us ALL?...
If God loves US ALL...
Why are there—rat holes, private schools, no indoor plumbing,
have/have nots, privilege and not privileged, segregation?

I am...whole and in fragments all at the same time

I am...wrestling and struggling each day
With the joy of being loved and the fear of people knowing who I
really am deep down inside.
With Christian theology and liberal politics
With the God I know and the God I learned about in Sunday School
With love that is pleased and happy and love that is concerned
about my eternal salvation

I am...not sure there is a heaven and hell.

I am...from believing everything I heard at church.

I am...glad Green Street is intentional about race.

I am...so glad I walked through these doors.

I am...living the mystery that is my journey of faith

I am...a product of the 50's and never gave segregation a thought.

I am...sorry I never thought about Blacks sitting in the back of the bus
or sitting in the balcony of the theaters.

I am...my heart hurts today when I think...
the smell of money and “the colored stink.”
ashamed of who I was, and am, and will be.
My salvation says, “That’s silly.”
My mind says, “How perverse.”
My heart says, “Just curse.”

I am...proud of my journey even though it has been crazy

I am...happy that I am here

I am...curious what we will learn

I am...a good student and am the happiest when sitting in a classroom.

I am...other kids resenting what I could be.

I am...strong and wise because I have been LOVED
and because I have been challenged.

I am...a very insecure person.

I am...from worrying, worrying about any and everything

I am...liberated by not knowing

I am, I am, I am—becoming?

I am...mostly a positive person.

I am...not always nice.

I am...not the product of the world, the people, the smells, the tastes—I am me.

I am...me, which is pretty freakin' awesome!

Knowing Self—Identity/Identification

Identity development is not a solitary act. It is an interpersonal act. As Palmer (2007) says, “my sense of self is so deeply dependent on others that I will always suffer a bit when others refuse to relate to me; there is no way around that simple fact” (p. 75).

This is represented in the opening line of the “I Am” poem: “I am...mother, daughter, sister, wife, teacher, friend, and citizen.” All of these senses of self are in relationship to others. And as pointed out earlier in Chapter II, part of how we answer the question “Who I am?” is by considering who others think we are—what they reflect back to us. I find it important to acknowledge this relational aspect of even our most inward

experiences. As Susan Griffith explains, “Identity is less an assertion of independence than an experience of interdependence” (as quoted by Leggo, 2004, p. 21). Thus identity work is always about “Who I am?” in context and in relation. Leggo (2004) explores this context of narrative as “the invented story that accompanies history” which she grounds in Ardent’s work. She goes on to say:

In my writing I am writing “who I am” and engaging in a political endeavor to acknowledge that the personal and the public are not only never separate, but are, in fact, as ecologically and organically connected as the two chambers of the heart. (p. 20)

I believe this personal, political, public connection is evident in the poems we wrote, in lines like:

I am...a product of the 50's and never gave segregation a thought.

I am...my heart hurts today when I think...
the smell of money and “the colored stink.”
ashamed of who I was, and am, and will be.
My salvation says, “That's silly.”
My mind says, “How perverse.”
My heart says, “Just curse.”

I am...a product of all of these...
Does God love us ALL?...
If God loves US ALL...
Why are there—rat holes, private schools, no indoor plumbing,
have/have nots, privilege and not privileged,
segregation?

If we are to write a narrative of our personal history, then we have to acknowledge the other players in the story, and if we want our narrative to be about social justice then we have to also question our relationship to others, to difference, to privilege, and to power. We do this by looking at our reflection through the mirror of society—What do I see in the mirror? Not just a person, but a place, a people, a life.

Who is in the foreground? Who is in the background? If I really have reflective talent, I can see many snapshots of time and place as I reflect.

One of the concepts I find most important in the development of a social justice identity is the process of self-reflection. It is crucial if we are to understand power, privilege and oppression. We can intellectually be taught the constructs of power and oppression, but until we discover our own connection to privilege and see ourselves in the narrative of these constructs then we cannot begin to break it down. Ferguson (1998) makes this point for women, in particular, when she says:

we must acknowledge the nonadditive embeddedness of our particular gender identities. I am not just a woman, but a White, Euro-American, middle-class, academic woman, and reconstituting that contextual identity requires a traitorous relation not merely to the cultural norms of womanhood but also to the assumption of White, U.S. class and academic privilege (p. 106)

Many people go through diversity trainings and the focus is too often on the “other,” making sure we aren’t offending anyone by our actions and words, but to truly breakdown the trouble of power and privilege we have to struggle with who we are, what we believe, what we were taught, and what doesn’t match up. As Johnson (2006) says, “If I don’t see how that makes me part of the problem of privilege, I won’t see myself as part of the solution” (p. 8)

Too often parents teach their children that everyone is equal. God loves us all equally, but what do we teach them about why there is injustice? Too often, we want to preach the ideal, but we don’t live out the commitment to creating justice and working towards social change. This was pointed to by Becky in her poem, “I am...from not seeing the cracks or discrepancies in my parent’s’ beliefs until my sister started dating a boy from another race.” This is an example of how the actions of our parents do not

always sync with the message they taught us of “love everyone equally.” I believe a commitment to social justice has to start with an evaluation of what we believe and what we do about those beliefs. Palmer writes about the quest for understanding ourselves in relation to others by saying, “The inward quest for communion becomes a quest for outward relationship: at home in our own souls, we become more at home with each other” (p. 5). As people of privilege, we have to be honest with ourselves about our shortcomings, our guilt and shame, and our ignorance. If we can struggle with those issues then we can have hope of transformation toward a person acting out justice, at home with others who are also on a quest for justice and knowledge.

Understanding Others

The reality is we are taught to be afraid of other, difference, or alien, whatever the name, the cultural context we grow up in teaches us where we belong and where we do not: Who belongs and who does not. What is right and what is not. As Johnson (2006) points out children “seem to love the unknown” and yet once our children are school age they are already beginning to be socialized into belonging and a sense of otherness. Johnson goes on to say,

For all its popularity, the idea that everyone is naturally frightened by difference is a cultural myth that, more than anything, justifies keeping outsiders on the outside and treating them badly if they happen to get in. The mere fact that something is new or strange isn’t enough to make us afraid. (p. 13)

Watching my five year old child play with other children in public spaces is a perfect example of this, although he is more likely to play with other boys, the racial/ethnic make-up seems irrelevant, so at what point do we become afraid of other? At what point does all the shushing of our children when they point out difference silence them?

Another story I remember is going to a White family's house for piano lessons with Mario. There were three blonde-haired, blue-eyed kids in this family. The youngest was a little girl with whom Mario had a mutual admiration. We had been there to play many times. On this occasion, Mario went running into the yard, and when I got there the mother apologized to me saying something like, "I'm so sorry he said that." I hadn't heard anything, so I asked what was said. She said her oldest son had commented on how much he liked Mario's afro. I said, "What's wrong with that?" She looked at me puzzled. I still remember the look on her face. I tried to explain that of course it was okay for her son to say that, Mario does have an afro, and we should not shush our children when they point out the differences of others because that only makes the "other" person feel that something about them brings about shame or fear. I also remember the look she gave me after I said that. It was a look of wonder and confusion. I think this was an example of the "live encounter with other" that Palmer talks about. I'm not sure if I was the other or if Mario was, but there was fear and confusion all wrapped up in the moment. Palmer (2007) says:

We fear live encounters in which the other is free to be itself, to speak its own truth, to tell us what we may not wish to hear. We want those encounters on our own terms, so that we can control their outcomes, so that they will not threaten our own view of world and self. (p. 37-38)

Many of the women in the study alluded to their learning about other and fear in their poems. Here are some examples:

I am...my childhood roaming the neighborhood,
but knowing little White girls did not go "up the hill"

I am...Ardee cooking and cleaning for me
with no indoor plumbing of her own

I am...the little White girl who did go “up the hill”
to my best friend, Sante’s house,
where her grandmother’s cooking permeated the house
with mouth-watering aromas.

I am...from always eating the crust off my bread
because “the kids in Africa don’t have any.”

I am...city kids laughing at the country bumpkin.

I am...military, Cherry Point, Hawaii, Vietnam

I am...Eastern NC & VA with tenant farmers and segregation

I am...integrated middle school with rats and rat holes, few White kids in class

I am...from not knowing what it’s like to live outside of Winston-Salem

I am...from playing cowboys and Indians in the basement.

I am...from swimming at the pool everyday
and feeling safe enough to ride my bike home.

I am...from always feeling safe and yet never knowing how unique that was.

There are so many ways to learn about others. It is important that we acknowledge the fear we create by setting up boundaries for who belongs and who does not. It is important that we constantly question where our sense of self excludes someone else’s inclusion. One way to do this is to establish what Hasebe-Ludt’s (2004) calls “dialogues of difference” (p. 208). If we can learn to communicate in intentional, meaningful, open, and trusting ways about difference and otherness, then we have the potential for opening the dialogue beyond difference and towards justice. As she goes on to point out, if we can find ourselves in learning communities and lives that honor the complexities of the human condition, then we have great potential for growth, or, as she says, “I am beginning to see how this positioning of self in relation to other cultures and locations can become a generative place” (p. 211). If we begin in a place of wonder and

are open to where the other might take us then the hope for justice and reconciliation is great. Two lines from our poem acknowledge this: “I am...curious what we will learn./ I am...liberated by not knowing.”

Our group began in a place of wonder, curiosity, and admission of the unknown. This led us into self-exploration where we could be honest about our position, our lack of knowing, our “insecurity” as one poem said; not a place of chosen ignorance, rather an acknowledgement of the need to better understand, of continued listening, of constant self-reflection. This does not mean that we are somehow all free of prejudice and privileged behaviors and biases, and that just because privileged people say they are committed to social justice and spend time reflecting and discussing it that they should be held up as the standard for social justice identity development. As Case (2012) points out:

A valid criticism of conducting an all White anti-racist discussion group is that Whites may fail to detect much of the racism that people of color could easily pinpoint. White anti-racists struggling to deconstruct racism face the possibility that they lack the skills necessary to even properly identify racism. (p. 91)

This same issue can be applied to class, sexuality, and other differences we as a group do not possess. I do not think any of us in the group are perfect examples of anti-oppression allies. Some in the group have definitely given more of their time and energy to breaking down oppression and/or dismantling racism, and some I would encourage to do more learning.

I could focus more on the “trouble” in the data and problematize issues like little White girls feeling like their Black maids were part of the family. There is trouble in that and it deserves space to be unpacked. I hope that in my attempt to discover ways to develop a social justice identity, I am not dismissive of issues of privilege and

dominance, even though I know my focus is on the more positive aspects of what these women have come to learn about social justice and how they came to learn it. This reminds me of Hytten & Warren's (2004) "Critical Democrat" as a construct for White people trying to live out anti-racist identities within a racial society. They assert that the Critical Democrat must balance the tensions of understanding their own role in racism while continuing to learn more about racism and questioning others roles. The Critical Democrat they say is, "a vision of self that is essentially liminal in nature, betwixt and between the dangerous shores of...ethical pitfalls of Whiteness, possesses the ability to listen with a new heart" (p. 335). After reading about this concept of the Critical Democrat as one participating in ethical, reflexive action (p. 329), I thought, maybe I am a Critical Optimist: one who participates in reflexive, radical love? I do want to be critical of the issues of privilege and power and how that is played out in our identity development, but I often find myself drawn to listening with my heart, to finding positive progress and possibilities, and to focusing on building bridges where none may have existed before. I am drawn to the symbol of the rainbow, not because it is a childish, naïve notion of us all just getting along despite our differences; rather, because it is a symbol of hope that came in Noah's story at the moment when trust was challenged and faith was tested. I believe this dissertation is an exercise of that belief in hope, built on trust and faith. I want to be critical because I believe in doing so the struggle for knowledge can create solutions and transformation, but I want to do so with an eye toward what worked in the education of the women in the group, despite the "ethical pitfalls." I know my relationships with the women have made me protective of them. I have had moments where I was aware that I was struggling to be critical. I want to name this to be transparent and to encourage readers to challenge my analysis and deepen

the learning and knowing, and I wanted to name my critical optimist perspective to help the reader understand how I focused the analysis.

Social Justice Identity Self-Portraits

The following pages include the self-portraits, descriptions, and theoretical discussions of seven of the participants in the group, including myself. The order of the portraits was chosen to create a flow in the theoretical discussions that follow each. As the reader progresses, one portrait may loop back and refer to one before to show how the stories interact with one another. It was difficult to focus on just a few ideas from each portrait, but I hope that the reader's own thoughts and interpretations will not be limited by what I chose to focus on. I hope these stories are as inspiring and hopeful to the reader as they were to the group and as they are to me. I am grateful for the trust these women placed in me not only to represent their art and stories but to dissect and try and learn from them.

Sally's Self-Portrait and Description

Figure 2. In Process—Slowly Getting my Face



It was good for me to think about,
doing our journals and everything, a lot was about when you were younger
And when we were here I kept drawing a blank—Like, it doesn't apply to me—I
didn't get to know different people until I was in high school or college.
And this morning I was thinking, surely there's some kind of younger things that
happened to motivate me to meet different people, and I did. It was kinda cool to
start to realize that there were some things:
My parents had some exchange students from Ireland during that big conflict,
My brother being really good friends with a couple guys from some country in
Africa, (which is terrible that I don't know the country), they were always around
with our family.
Whenever I do art I just do random stuff and then later I kind of think about it,
I think this time was more.
A lot of the social justice idea—figuring out differences and equality up to this
point has been intellectual,
A lot of it is in my head and trying to figure it out.
I would love to one day get to the point where it's more than that.
I think it is in some ways, but the willingness to speak up or go to things that will
cause waves, which I really don't like causing.
I'm not a naturally passionate person for things, I don't do things 'cause I'm so
passionate about it; so I'd love to get to that point.
Lots of times I draw squiggly lines or do things with squiggly lines cause I feel
there's so much that I don't understand,
But then there's a few pieces.
It's like I slowly get part of my face, or my identity, so it's just in process.
I really enjoy everyone's stories and being with,
It's really unique to have people around me that are liberal minded
or even talking about this stuff.
I didn't grow up in an uber-conservative situation,
but it's, we go with the flow, there are Black people in our neighborhood, we go
with the flow—but we don't need to go meet them.
Not cause we don't like them. Just cause, let's just kinda not dig too deep into it.
I think facing the intense poverty and stuff is what starts the whole intellectual holy
cow! About everything—about God and why would anyone be living in a shack
with nothing to eat?
I think a lot of my thought about social issues here in Winston-Salem or here in
the States, started from going somewhere else and seeing it intensely.
With my family it was Irish kids coming,
It was these kids from Africa and my brother was friends with them.
It's almost like I eased in, 'cause the racial issues with people from the United
States—it's easier to go foreign.

It's easier to face 'em somewhere else, or to think of someone from another country to be friends with them, than a Black person down the street.

I think that's some of the intellectual wanting to figure it out and wanting to put it into action,

But a lot of it has started from seeing poverty in other places.

That was completely my experience—the mission group that I went with to the Dominican Republic, year after year. It is sooo expensive—we stayed in a nice hotel at night and then went to the poor neighborhood. It's \$1200 to go for a week. That's one of those things that's also like, none of this makes sense?

But it's part of who I am.

And it's part of my story of understanding poverty.

It's ridiculous the stuff that we did, and the stuff that they're still there doing. It's like: "Americans are here." Let's be buddies with little kids that love us and then say, "Oh my God it's so amazing their joy."

But they don't have food!

You can say they're joyful, but they don't have food!

And so it's interesting to now feel like, oh my gosh that was ridiculous all of that and my mentality through it all,

But also, accepted as part of what has made me who I am.

Realize that it wasn't necessarily right, but,

I don't have to say that everything that made me who I am is right.

I feel like so often people get offended when people are talking about things that were part of their growing up,

You don't have to get upset that everything growing up wasn't right.

No, I don't like that I didn't approve of gays until college.

It's too bad. I hate it, but that doesn't mean my whole growing up was bad.

There is some hope that God will make something good out of it in the end.

But it is crazy all the stuff that goes on.

It's Part of my Story of Understanding

I began with Sally because her understanding of identity development will set the tone for the other descriptions and commentaries. Sally raises a few important points in her self-portrait and the description that the participants in the group also picked up on and elaborated on in their descriptions and our discussions. Sally was the youngest participant in the group and maybe because she is still really close to her "youth"

experiences she talks about them in an intimate and relevant way that creates a good foundation for this section on self-portraits.

Sally's portrait and her description of it raised three strands of theory: sociological mindfulness—the importance in doing the self-reflective work necessary to develop a social justice identity; experiential learning—the importance of experiences that transform our knowing; and finally, transformative identity—struggling with the privileges and injustices we grew up with and how that is part of the plurality of identity and the necessary work of understanding power, privilege and oppression.

Knowing Self

Self-awareness is a crucial element to my understanding of the development of a social justice identity. I believe it is imperative that we take the time to self-reflect and focus on self-awareness. This does not mean that we have to become egocentric or that our self-study should be done in isolation, therefore leading us to affirm our previously held conclusions about life. I tend to lean toward a social or group approach to self-learning because there is a better chance that one's assumptions and predispositions will be challenged if the group is set up in an egalitarian, heterogeneous, and open format.

Schwalbe (2008) devoted an entire book to the “sociologically examined life.” In it he defines “sociological mindfulness” as “the practice of tuning-in to how the social world works” (p. 3). I think Sally’s story is one of developing “sociological mindfulness”. She describes how through relationships with others and experiences abroad, she became more aware of the world beyond her “safe” suburban life. Although, she alludes to her parents assertions of “Going with the flow” and “let’s just kinda, not dig too deep into it” when it came to Black people living in her neighborhood, her awareness of these

experiences and how they shaped her have drawn her to a place of digging deeper and having relationships with people of difference. As pointed to earlier with the explanation of the “Critical Democrat,” she seems to be trying to balance the tensions of being raised in a privileged, homogenous community with her values of justice and equality (Hytten & Warren, 2004). Sally’s experiences and the transformation they had on her identity seem to have brought her to that point Howard’s (2006) student referred to when she said, “I can never *not* know again” (p. 112). This depth of awareness usually raises more questions than answers, as Sally points out when she says, “There’s so much I don’t understand.” And yet, her willingness to stay on the path towards understanding allows her to continue to grow, to move against the grain, to delve deeper, and as she so eloquently said and can be seen in her portrait, it allows her to “slowly get part of my face, or my identity.”

Throughout the sessions Sally’s art and stories created a portrait of growing up safe and comfortable in her suburban, White world. It was a struggle for her to uncover the memories of relationships of difference and how she came to know about privilege and difference. She says,

And when we were here I kept drawing a blank—Like, it doesn’t apply to me—I didn’t get to know different people until I was in high school or college. And this morning I was thinking, surely there’s some kind of younger things that happened to motivate me to meet different people, and I did.

As Johnson (2006) points out, “in a society that separates and privileges people in various ways, there aren’t many opportunities to get comfortable with people across lines of difference” (p. 81). Yet, even though they might not have ruffled the social hierarchy within their neighborhood, Sally’s parents did instill an important quality that would guide Sally towards social justice. As she says, “That beginning idea that...

that was engrained in me to be open and think.” This encouragement toward intellectual curiousity and openness, I believe, helped Sally to deal with the complex issues of privilege, domination, and oppression that are often debilitating to someone who clings to one way of seeing the world and to their own version of truth as right.

Sally was open to transformation when opportunities arose for her. Her mind was open to the “intellectual Holy Cow!” of intense poverty, as she describes it in her story of a mission trip during her youth. I would argue that much like Gary Howard (2006), this was an important experience for her to break out of her cultural isolation:

How can White Americans, those who have never been touched viscerally by the realities of race, break out of their cultural isolation and ignorance?...It was engagement with real people in a context totally different from my former life in the suburbs. Something powerful has to happen to us and for us, something we cannot dismiss. Yet even the deep changes of this intense time were only the beginning of my personal transformation. (p. 17)

I believe this type of transformative learning, where our paradigms are shifted by the experience of otherness in a personal and profound way, is an imperative part of the work of developing a social justice identity. As Sally says, “going somewhere else and seeing it intensely” was transformative for her. It created the “intellectual Holy Cow!” for her to question, to challenge the status quo of her world. Unlike Howard, I do not believe this was the beginning of her personal transformation. Not everyone who experiences difference and otherness moves in the direction of understanding, compassion, and justice. If this were the case, then colonialism would never have happened. Just encountering difference is not enough to bring about justice. It is important how we are moved and shaped by it. It is important what kind of education we receive from it. As Perumal (2006) points out how it is transformative education that can support coalition buidling :

By acknowledging the ways in which discourses of identity essentialism, social cohesion and consensus mask material, social, and historical differences, we can entertain the possibility of building coalition with these multiple, at times divergent positions and experiences. Thus, coalition building addresses the ways in which identities, affiliations and desires are dynamically produced in the multiple, intersecting, and often competing narratives of the personal, political and social. (p. 238)

I believe Sally's education "to be open and think," her experiences learning from students from other countries must have been contributing factors in allowing her to go deeper into her understanding of poverty, to question why, and to try and find a religious community different from her childhood that could allow for the kind of transformation and coalition building she was seeking.

She also does not seem to cling to the notion of "rightness" that is so prevalent in dominant ideology. It seems this is an important trait in developing a social justice identity, as so many of the other participants also seemed open to other ways of knowing and being. Howard (2006) describes this as the "Thinking" phase of his description of a "Transformationist White Identity":

Transformationist Whites actively seek to understand diverse points of view. They know that the construction of truth is a dynamic process that is continually shifting in the context of diverse cultural perspectives. They are aware that their personal appropriation of truth is merely one of many possibilities, not the only one. (p. 110)

I am not trying to label Sally or any of the other participants under Howard's theory. I bring it up to point out that being open to multiple versions of truth is an important aspect in learning to deal with what Johnson (2008) calls the "matrix of privilege and domination." We cannot learn to deal with our privilege or with the injustice of domination, if we cannot accept that we do not know everything and we do not hold the authority on truth. We must work together to dismantle all privilege and dominance if we

are going to get rid of any one aspect because “the system that produces the one also produces the others and connects them” (p. 53).

It is with this type of complex thinking Sally asserts when she says that we cannot dismiss any one part of who we are because we don’t like it. We cannot dismiss our childhood experiences because we were privileged. We must embrace it all, good and bad, to slowly get more of our face—our identity. I close this section with Sally’s thoughts on rightness. This sets the tone for the complexity of the stories to follow. Our childhood need not be judged on rightness or goodness. It is part of who we are and that is enough.

And so it’s interesting to now feel like, oh my gosh that was ridiculous all of that and my mentality through it all; but also, accepted as part of what has made me who I am. Realize that it wasn’t necessarily right, but, I don’t have to say that everything that made me who I am is right. I feel like so often people get offended when people are talking about things that were part of their growing up, You don’t have to get upset that everything growing up wasn’t right.

Because as Sally says, “There is some hope that God will make something good out of it in the end.” There is always hope, if we believe, which leads to the next portrait and rainbows of hope.

AmyBith's Self-Portrait and Description

This is my story of growing up strong, growing up loved. I was a little girl growing up in a big world filled with hope and love.

Figure 3. Two Worlds



I was a little girl from two worlds. When I was five years old we moved from Massachusetts to North Carolina.

My mother was a Yankee, a child of immigrant families from Italy, Scotland and Ireland, who were still living out those cultures with food, faith and language.

My father was Southern. He was from a farming family that knew no roots any further back than North Carolina farm land. A son of a tobacco farmer who left the farm to find his own way, only to come home again.

These two worlds made me different from my peers. So growing up in Yadkin County, I was the *different* one. I sounded different, ate different food, and went far away to visit family. I loved all my differences, because I loved my family and they loved me.

Figure 4. Belonging in the Church



I was a little girl raised in the church. I was baptized and christened in the Catholic church. When we moved to North Carolina, we started attending my Dad's home church, Flat Rock Baptist Church. When I was 11, I was baptized by Pastor Dave Witt. I remember how cold the water was, how calm and peaceful and right it all felt. I belonged.

Figure 5. A Home Full of Love



I grew up in a home with a welcome sign and a welcome table. Just like at my church now, all were welcome at Marilyn's table. We fed people soul food, maybe not of the Southern variety, but it was born of the same spirit, made with the same kind of love. I learned how important cooking and eating are to the bonds we create with people. I learned about creating family and sustaining family by keeping recipes and by teaching recipes. I was always so proud that I could cook Italian food. Proud that we made things from scratch and ate from our own garden. I hated working in the garden in the hot sun, but I loved all the bounties, and now I cherish those memories.

Figure 6. Different was Special



I was a little girl who felt different. I did not feel alone or isolated. I felt different, and to me that was special. I don't know when I got the message that different was special, but it came across loud and clear and was deeply embedded in my being. I always wanted to be around other people who were different, too. I liked that Landon played tennis in tournaments when no one else did. I liked being in VICA and traveling across the country, often alone. I liked having exchange students stay with us. I liked that Amber, Brad and I had all gone to Germany. I liked that Jason lived with us and had been to so many places and was really good at soccer, when no one else was.

When I went to college I joined an international committee and got to know people from around the world. I signed up to do summer missions to go and explore my faith by exploring the world. I got to explore eastern North Carolina, instead of Eastern Europe, but it was still a world away from how I grew up. Then I got to go to England. I truly felt at home there. I think some of my roots must be in the English countryside.

Figure 7. Travelling the World



I became a big girl who traveled the world on her own. I learned about myself by learning about others. I was an exchange student to Germany in high school and a summer missionary to England in college. Through VICA, I traveled all over the country, often by myself. I remember riding through Oregon and thinking how different the landscape there was. Then at the conference giving my speech I was looking out onto a sea of mostly Asian faces, a sight I had never witnessed. These visions changed not only how I saw the world, but how I saw myself in the world. I was not colorblind, I saw rainbows all around me and I thought they were beautiful.

I also saw suffering and discrimination in all its ugliness. I remember the Turkish friends I met in Germany. They truly taught me what it was to be discriminated against because of the color of your skin. Their stories opened my eyes to my own country and our oppressive ways. Seeing all the rainbows of people and places helped me to see the hope that Martin Luther King, Jr. preached of. I could see God's love at work in the world—at work in me.

Figure 8. God's Love



I was a little girl who believed in God. I felt God's love through people and trees and animals. I became a big girl who believed in the importance of sharing God's love and being part of faith communities who preached love, mercy and compassion. Sometimes they were hard to find, but I found them: Flat Rock Baptist with Dave Witt, Dewey, Gail Brown, Ron and Willa Bell, Reid and Norma Lowder; BSU with Bob Clyde, Chris Copeland, David Harris, so many more; The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America; Green Street UMC with Kelly Carpenter and Willard Bass. I was always different, but never alone.

I was a little girl who was taught the love of God. "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

Figure 9. Love One Another



"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."
John 12:1

That has been enough for me all the days of my life: to try and do good, to love others as I have been loved, and to be willing to lay my life down for my friends because there is no greater love.

I wanted to tell a story. When I was in college I had done a children's book with watercolor and so...I really thought about how when mom passed away she didn't leave us with stuff. I wanted the journal that Neena left Kate. I wanted that stuff. And I didn't get that and I'm pissed so...I thought let me rectify that, and so this is really in a lot of ways for Mario and Akiyah. I wanted to tell my story and for them to understand, as I was understanding it. I did it in watercolor, 'cause I love how they blend together and how the imperfections become beautiful. I wanted it to look like a children's book, so it was cute 'cause Larry came in and look at it and went, "So did your kids do that?"

This is my story...We're all in different places. I wanted to put on this was how much I saw the rainbow coming through...The need to see that. The day of my mom's funeral there was a rainbow in the sky.

Rainbows of Hope

This is my self-portrait. My story is an example of how people of privilege can examine their own life history to learn about identity development in the context of privilege, power, and difference. I will examine three themes that arose from my story that also flow through the other woman's self-portraits. They are: the importance for White people to develop a culture identity other than "the norm"; the rainbow as an image of hope and representation of not being colorblind; and finally, the importance of relationships, of mentors, and of belonging to a community that believes in and works for justice.

If we, as White people, are going to become culturally competent and work and live in diverse settings then we have to take the time to cultivate a racial and a cultural identity. We have to take the time to recognize that, especially for those that grew up in homogenous, isolated communities, being who we are is not just "normal." Tatum (2003) tells the story of a young White woman in her class who when asked what her racial and ethnic background was she seemed stumped and "quickly described herself as middle-class" and then finally just said, "I'm just normal!" Tatum then asks the reader the question: "If she is just normal, are those who are different from her 'just abnormal'?" (p. 93). This idea of normality seeps into the ideology of privilege and domination. If I think I'm normal and normal is good, then anything not like me becomes bad, fearful, negative. Dominant ideology encourages people of privilege to separate themselves to maintain the status quo, to preserve their normality, and to discount and undermine difference. Dominant ideology encourages people of privilege to enjoy and employ the "luxury of ignorance," as Howard (2006) describes it:

For our survival and the carrying on of the day-to-day activities of our lives, most White Americans do not have to engage in any meaningful personal connection with people who are different. This privileged isolation is not a luxury available to people who live outside the dominance and must, for their survival, understand the essential social nuances of those in power. The luxury of ignorance reinforces and perpetuates White isolation. (p. 14-15)

This does not mean that White people do not encounter people of difference. What this means is they have a choice to acknowledge their privilege or choose for it to remain invisible, while others who are marginalized do not have that choice. As Case (2012) says, "Whites have the power to ignore the impact of race when it is beneficial to them because White culture protects them from seeing the power it grants them" (p. 91). White people have to be intentional about creating authentic, open relationships across lines of difference. Howard uses the term "meaningful personal connection" to describe a relationship in which the White person would be engaged in a relationship of depth and understanding where differences were acknowledged and appreciated however uncomfortable and transformative that might be. Sharon's portrait shows this point. I will tell her story in more detail later, but here I will point out how as a White woman in the South prior to the Civil Rights Movement and Laws, she could acknowledge there was segregation and discrimination, but it did not "affect" her, and so she could effectively ignore it. History and progress have changed our interactions and personal connections in America. Since the election of a Black President in 2008, it has become harder for White Americans to ignore the personal connections with people of color. In the recent 2012 election, the White vote was no longer the majority; the male vote was no longer the majority. Things have changed. I would posit that does not mean we live in a post-racial, post-patriarchal society. What it does mean is that more commentary about the experiences of different perspectives has become more "normal" and racism has

become more subversive but just as powerful and potent (Bonilla-Silva, 2010 & 2012; Gardiner, 2006). For some that means there is more opportunity to break free of ignorance and have more meaningful connections across lines of difference; but it also meant there was more hatred and fear of change. Over four hundred students at the University of Mississippi rioted over the president's re-election. An effigy of the President was burned, and White students took to the streets (Hanrahan, 2012). The coded language of racism is prevalent in the daily commentaries by White pundits and politicians alike, i.e. FOX news, Senators McCain and Lyndsey Graham, but it is not ignored or unabashed by other White commentators like Tom Brokaw, Rachel Maddow, Chris Matthews, Chirs Hayes, and Lawrence O'Donnell, to name a few. I do believe the change in demographics will allow more White people to acknowledge that "normal" is no longer, just like them. Maybe more than ever White people need to do the work of racial and cultural identification.

Tatum points out that, (2003) "Cultural identities are not solely determined in response to racial ideologies, but racism increases the need for positive self-defined identity in order to survive psychologically" (p. 165). White people need to understand that they have an identity beyond race—one of culture and ethnicity—and that we also have a racial identity—one that either perpetuates racism or resists it. Howard (2006) discusses this need as well by saying:

Embracing the negative aspects of Whiteness does not suffice as cultural identity. Oppression has been part of my history, but it does not fully define me...I want to provide more than a mere acknowledgement of a legacy of hate. I want to provide more than valuing and appreciating other people's culture—and more than working to overcome the realities of racism and oppression. These are necessary aspects of an emerging White identity, but they do not create a whole and authentic person. (p. 23)

I believe a whole and authentic person also has a story of love, a story of family, and the values instilled from that family history. That is why I began my story with the acknowledgement of the “two worlds” I come from. “My mother was a Yankee...My father was Southern.” I know about the food, music, language and lots of stories of my people. My mother, in particular, made a point to tell stories, and more importantly to build relationships. We spent summer and holiday vacations visiting family—we spent more time visiting people than we did sightseeing, and she made sure it was not just her side of the family. We never missed a family reunion on my dad’s side either. I know my kinfolk, and they know me. I remember being offended in a workshop when we did an activity in which the White people were in one group and the people of color were in another. The facilitators asked us to write on a large piece of paper all the positive aspects of being White or of being a person of color. The people of color shared their list and it was all about culture—food, family, music, etc. Our list was about privilege—land ownership, professional networks, etc. During the discussion I pointed out that I could also say that my “culture” included all the things of the other list—as an Italian descendant I could name those kinds of things too—but being White isn’t my culture, it’s my face, and I get privileges from that, but I would not compare them to the positive aspects of my culture. The facilitator’s response was, “You don’t look Italian. My wife’s family is Italian and I wouldn’t look at you and think you were Italian.” I did not even know how to respond to that. I left there thinking there is something he does not know about racism, and I am going to figure it out. I think I have through the help of Tatum and Howard and my studies at UNCG: White people need to know and understand the difference between their racial and cultural identity—and as Hall (1991) points out, so do people of color.

I believe if we continue to talk about race as a cultural or ethnic identity, we cannot dismantle it. We need to acknowledge that race and ethnicity are not the same category. We need to teach the history of racism from people like Zinn (1980), Spring (2011), and Bonilla-Silva (2010), so that we can agree that race is a social construct not based in biological or scientific fact. We need to think about ethnicity and cultural identity as the parts of who we are that we celebrate and want to pass on. Family make-up can be complicated, as some of the women in our study show, but that does not mean that each child does not need to understand her/his ancestry, both of the family they were born from and the family they live into. This is how we determine our ethnicity and cultural identity. Thus people of all colors can have some of their culture and ethnicity in common without belittling the reality that the darker skinned members of our families and communities will face discrimination in ways that fairer skinned members will not. Like Johnson (2008), I believe to dismantle any form of oppression we have to acknowledge all forms of oppression as connected and inhumane (p. 53). This leads to our groups' use of the image of the rainbow.

I placed my story at this point in the chapter because the image of the rainbow was very prevalent in my SJIP. I want to explore that image and what it means in terms of social justice because it is a recurring theme in other SJIP's. There are two aspects of the rainbow that seem to have meaning for the women in this group. The most prevalent is our desire to see difference and value difference and not be colorblind. The many colors in the rainbow seemed to represent our desire not to be colorblind when it came to issues of race, sexuality, and any form of othering or difference. I will share quotes from different members about this as I discuss them individually and then return to this theme in Chapter V.

As mentioned in Chapter II, in *Racism without Racists*, Bonilla-Silva (2010) makes a compelling argument about how racism has evolved in America since the Civil Rights Movement. He explains that there is a new racial ideology that he terms “colorblind racism.” He makes a detailed case which I cannot expound upon in its fullness here, but which I find to be supportive of the notion in our group that “seeing color” is important and can be a means of resisting the current dominant ideology of racism and the myth of meritocracy and American individualism.

Bonilla-Silva (2010) questions how Whites can claim to be colorblind and/or not see color, or even more so claim that race is no longer relevant, and yet there is still a “tremendous degree of racial inequality” which is color-coded. He argues that through colorblind racism, White people have created justifications for these inequalities that “exculpate them from responsibility.” He goes on to clarify his new racial ideology by saying:

This ideology which acquired cohesiveness and dominance in the late 1960’s, explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics. Whereas Jim Crow racism explained Blacks’ social standing as the result of their biological and moral inferiority, colorblind racism avoids such facile arguments. Instead, Whites rationalize minorities’ contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and Blacks’ imputed cultural limitations. (p. 2)

This type of rhetoric could be heard throughout the recent election cycle with arguments about welfare programs and government handouts. As mentioned before some reporters and pundits called out this language for being racially-coded, yet, to Bonilla-Silva’s point when the politicians who’d made the remarks where called on the use of the language and its racial undertones, they would claim “I’m not a racist.” Newt Gingrich is one case of this point. We no longer think of ourselves as racists because we do not think we

“hate” Black people, and yet if we are not doing anything to end the racial inequality, and we think people of color are to blame for using the welfare system and “being lazy”—then how are we anything but racists? In Case’s (2012) article which studies a group of women who identify as “anti-racist racists”, one of the women explained, “We are all so scared that someone is going to call us racist. I find one of the ways to get over that is to do it yourself first” (p. 84). Another women in the study said, that “without that essential piece, you are living in denial and I don’t think any authentic change can occur without that piece first” (p. 84). The women in my study did not use this language or label, and I do not want to assume that all of them would claim the label of racist, but I think this is an important aspect of White racial identity.

In my story I wrote about travelling to different parts of the country and the world and being introduced to ethnic groups I had never met before. Of these experiences I wrote, “These visions changed not only how I saw the world, but how I saw myself in the world. I was not colorblind, I saw rainbows all around me and I thought they were beautiful.” My idea that “different was special” was carried on in these travels, but as I said in the story, it was not through rose-hued glasses, or should I said, White-colored glasses, that I saw the world. Particularly, my experiences with Turkish youth in Germany opened by eyes to racial discrimination of immigrants, which mirrors much of what is happening today with Latina and Latino immigrants in the U.S. This is similar to Sally’s experiences during her mission trip. We experienced the “trouble” of privilege and oppression, but were not really given any tools to fight against it at the time. It may have been a moment of learning, but for neither of us was it a moment of agency or activism.

I think the image of the rainbow is a powerful one because it is a positive, bright, and cheerful image which can evoke hope and change, but also because rainbows are

“seen” differently by different cultures. Although Americans teach ROYGBIV in school to learn the “colors” of the rainbow, there are many more hues in the spectrum. There are also cultures that teach less distinction by naming color groups, such as in the Zani language in Africa; in Papa New Guinea they teach two groups warm/bright and dark/cool. Martin (2006) discusses this in an article entitled “How Many Colors Should be in the Rainbow?”, which critically questions how we should teach children about the colors of the rainbow. I love that educators are having this discussion because it goes to the heart of how we see color, not just in skin tone, but color in all the natural world. If we can learn to honor different cultural representations of what “we” consider scientific fact, then maybe we can learn to truly “see” and “value” one another as different and equal.

The other aspect of the rainbow is as a religious symbol of hope. As bell hooks (2003) beautifully asserts, “Hopefulness empowers us to continue our work for justice even as the forces of injustice may gain greater power for a time” (p. xiv). The women in this group approached this work from a hopeful place. We did not despair that we could do nothing to change the injustices happening. I want to acknowledge that this may have been because of my influence as facilitator of the group. As mentioned earlier, I’m a critical optimist: I personally approach this work from a place of empowerment and that may have affected the women’s approach to the work. It may have even influenced who signed up to participate in the study. I don’t want to take complete credit for the other women’s positive, optimistic stance; rather I just want to be transparent and acknowledge my biases.

All the women in this group grew up hearing the story of Noah and the Ark in our churches and Sunday schools. Although, in later years these stories can become troubling and complex once we analyze them deeper and begin to question things like

God's revenge, etc., as a child, we are taught the love of God and God's everlasting presence and relationship through the Old Testament stories. That is why the rainbow has become an image of hope and promise in the Christian faith. As it says in the Bible, "Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth" (Genesis 9:16 NIV Bible). We are taught to view the rainbow as God's promise of a loving relationship. To this day that is what I see whenever I see a rainbow, I see a reminder that I am loved; even more, I see a reminder that God exists. This is not scientific or objective, it is personal and faith-based. I feel it and know it to be true for me. When I saw a rainbow in the sky the day of my mother's funeral, it brought me peace. I cannot explain that to anyone else, and I do not expect for anyone else to feel the same or believe the same. The same is true when I see a rainbow of people—a group of people who "look" different, maybe because of the way they dress, their physical characteristics, i.e. body size, hair texture and color, skin color, number of limbs, appearance of age, their facial expressions, etc.—it reminds me of God and brings me joy and peace. It is like the member of our congregation, Sissy, who is often quoted as saying, "Look at God!" It reminds me of my favorite story of my stepson. When he was about eight years old we had a series of conversations about why there were not any Black people at my parent's house when we all got together. Over time we discussed different family gatherings from all sides and how they were not very diverse. At one point I asked him, "Does it make you feel uncomfortable?" He replied, "No, it's just weird." I thought, really? I think it's pretty normal. But I asked out loud, "If that's weird, what is normal?" He replied, "Green Street" Ahhh. I felt I had done something right as a stepmom if he thought that a diverse group of people worshipping together was normal. On most Sundays, Green Street UMC

is a rainbow of people who come to worship and grow together. This is the type of rainbow of hope I think our group was focused on. This is our church family and of whom we speak when we talk about diversity, change, hope, and transformation.

Ellen's Self-Portrait and Description

Figure 10. Different Things, Wings, and Dragonflies



This is all the different religious symbols. I had to look up the gay and lesbian ones, 'cause I didn't know what they were, but I included them. This tells about my father and my high school and how I grew up never understanding exactly what all the fuss was about, because I had relationships, from the beginning. We had a maid, some of my friends had maids, we sat in their laps, we knew their families. It was like part of my family. When I went to school, I loved my Black friends, just like my other friends. My husband's from Canada, and when I was 159oomey159' these out of my yearbook last night, I was showin' him, and I was like, "Was your high school like this?" His eyes got big and he was like, "Ellen in our entire school we had one person." In my school every other picture was a Black person.

This is the Ghandi phrase “We must be the change we want to see in the world.” I think the whole key to all of this is teaching the children. This is my seed of change—my son when he was a baby. I think going back, my parent’s taking me to church when I was little, even though my mom was sick and crazy half the time and all this. I never thought about it until you brought it up and we were writing about that—that it had to come from somewhere. And I think that when you’re in church and we learned the “red and yellow, Black and White, they are precious in His sight”, I took that very literally. I didn’t put it on here, but in my

journal something else came back to me when I was writing: being at the pediatrician's office with my mom one day and the doctor was just talking to me real casually about the patient who had been there before, which oh they are not supposed to do. But he referred to her as a little colored girl. And I remember thinking "colored girl, what is that?" and I started thinking of a girl with all these colors, and I mean literally to this day, so I put the things about "take it literally" and "teach your children well".

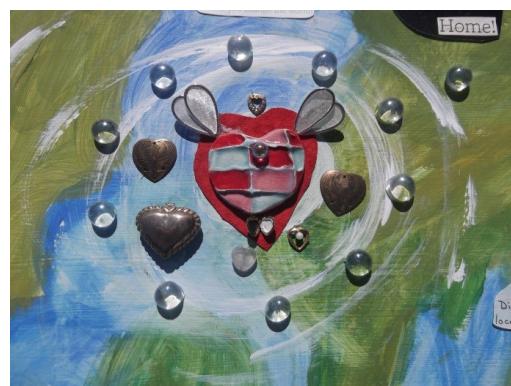
Figure 11. Teach the Children Well



And then this has more to do with yoga and this is a quote that says, "Science has proven that meditation actually restructures your brain and can train it to concentrate and feel greater compassion." I do a lot of yoga and meditation.

Then just different things, the wings and the dragonflies. I have always been attracted to dragonflies and I didn't know anything about it, but I looked it up and it says, "They symbolize change, and the change in the perspective of self realization." Which I thought that was interesting because I never knew that. And then this is Linville Falls, where my mother's ashes are. [Tears up].

Figure 12. Light in Your Heart



That's just the center and the light in your heart. It just seems to me like it should just be so simple. And it upsets me that why, and there again, I understand, but my perspective has always been, "Why can't everybody just get along?" I know that sounds simplistic, but it's just where I come from. I do know that everybody doesn't get it, and so I think it's important to be committed. And this part right here says, "At peace, the love inside" and right here, it's real faint but it says "and that my friend is how you change the world." And so...that's the whole thing.

I really wasn't finished with it, but I have some more stuff to put on there. The biggest thing I got from doing this: I think learning why I feel that way is because I was taught. And all anybody can do is be an example and teach others. I mean, you come in contact with people every day and have a relationship. If you haven't ever had one—make one. I mean it's easy, it's fun you know. I...I guess people are scared...actually I should read this. I'm sure y'all have all probably heard it, it's just a quote—I'm not even sure where it came from: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves—Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, fabulous or talented? Actually, Who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine as children do. We were all born to manifest the glory of God that is in us. It's not just in some of us. It is in everyone and as we let our own light shine we unconsciously give, excuse me, we unconsciously give other people the permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presences automatically liberates others."

Just one more thing that occurred to me, another reason why I feel different: I've always felt this way, it's like my dad's wife, her brother is gay and married. Sorry, they're not married. They've moved here from California to Winston-Salem actually. They had my father's birthday recently and they were there and we were celebrating. They've been together 50 years—50 years! So I grew up with—this is okay. It's all fine and you know it's just...I mean it's a good thing, I'm glad. But it does help me to keep being reminded that everyone doesn't...it's not like that, and you need to keep sharing and being an example and being in relationship, so that other people will find it more natural.

Dragonflies and Self-Transformation

One of the things I loved about Ellen's art process is that it was inquiry. She included images and quotes on her art and then searched for their meaning. As she added pictures from her childhood, she asked her husband about his and compared her experiences, if she did not know the religious symbol she needed, she did research to

uncover it. Ellen's process reiterates the point that self-reflection helps us to uncover the truths about our own experiences and how they shaped us and continue to shape us if we stay engaged in learning. She is also very positive in her belief that we can make a difference—using multiple quotes that support that point. But she says one thing twice which I think is the motto of her piece—"Being an example and being in relationship." From this idea, I have brought three points to the surface: the image of the dragonfly as transformative; teach the children well; and relationships that go beyond the boundaries of ignorance.

Figure 13. Dragonflies



*Our deepest fear is
inadequate. Our deep
are powerful beyond
our light, not our da
frightens us. We ask o
l to be brilliant. w*

The image of the dragonfly was visually prominent in Ellen's self-portrait. She explains this by saying:

I have always been attracted to dragonflies and I didn't know anything about it, but I looked it up and it says, "They symbolize change, and the change in the perspective of self-realization." Which I thought that was interesting because I never knew that.

I find it interesting because Ellen seems to embody the desire to learn and become. This was evident in her first journal entry when she wrote the following in response to being asked "Why are you here?":

I found the idea of research exciting, just as I found Green Street Church when I first came here. Being part of a church that includes and serves all races, all income levels, all people without exclusion, appeals to me. It makes me feel at home....I am interested in exploring my own place in all this...my feelings and probably why I am led here.

Ellen's curiosity and willingness to question and learn about justice and equity are a great example of a characteristic necessary for a person of privilege to develop a social justice identity. She is willing to be the dragonfly that adopts "changes in perspective"—that can be transformed by new experiences and information. Ellen is an example of what Tatum (1997) encourages when she says, "our ongoing examination of who we are in our full humanity, embracing all of our identities, creates the possibilities of building alliances that may ultimately free us all" (p. 27-28). Ellen is on that journey. She is honest about her struggles and wanting to simplify the process and have everyone just "get along," but she does not allow that desire or confusion to stop her from being in and learning from relationships that will challenge her. Even coming to participate in this research shows a willingness to grow. Unfortunately, from her sharing in the discussions it seems there is a lack of "critical consciousness" or an education of critical issues of privilege and difference. As Shotwell and Perry (2009) point out, sociologists, in the area of White studies, are "revealing how White people's feelings, attitudes, and behaviors consistently reproduce the laws and structures that privilege them, even when they conscientiously espouse principles of equality" (p. 33). In their research on "White antiracist praxis" they espouse that:

We use the term “relational understanding” to name the implicit or explicit recognition of the dialogical co-constitution of a historically situated self, “other,” and society...The social construction of race, class, gender, and sexual identities fundamentally happen through this relational process between the individual and “society”. Understanding these social-institutional processes of subject formation and the ways power is implicated in them can lead to critical self- and group-reflection and deconstruction, and greater awareness of where one is situated within the complex matrix of power and hierarchy. (pp. 34-35)

Although Ellen’s story includes relationships across many lines of differences, she does not tell stories of activism or education that may have resulted in her self-reflection or critical understanding of power. Throughout the research sessions Ellen’s stories included relationships with people of varying race, sexuality, religion, class, mental health, and nationality. Ellen was taught to have relationships of difference through her family acceptance of her homosexual uncles, her school integration, and even her church teaching her that “every child is precious in his sight.” Ellen was not taught to “fear” difference. She exemplifies Johnson’s (2010) point:

For all its popularity, the idea that everyone is naturally frightened by difference is a cultural myth that, more than anything, justifies keeping outsiders on the outside and treating them badly if they happen to get in...If we take difference and diversity as reasons for fear and occasions for trouble, it’s because we’ve learned to think about them in ways that *make* for fear and trouble. (p. 13)

Ellen’s points about memories of otherness and values learned in church, school and home and about how relationships really shaped her ability to be open and loving speak to the importance of what Louise Derman-Sparks (2008) calls an anti-bias education starting at a very young age. This also relates back to Sally’s point about her parents “going with the flow” and not inviting the Black neighbors into their home. The relationships we are exposed to and encouraged to have as a child are part of how we

develop notions of social justice. As Howard (2008) points out, to become a person working to fight against the status quo of social domination:

We must become aware of both our differentness from, and our relatedness to, other people and other cultural realities. Whether we deepen in our awareness and continue to grow through such experiences, or merely shrink back into the safety of isolation, is determined by our reaction to the inevitable fear of stepping outside the boundary of ignorance. (p. 15)

Although, like Johnson, I do not believe fear is inevitable when it comes to learning, I do agree that Sally and Ellen are both examples of how stepping out of or remaining outside the boundaries of privileged isolation is a crucial element to working towards justice for all and continuing to allow one's self to be transformed by the knowledge of other people's experiences (Case, 2012; Hytten & Warren, 2004), but it should also be done in concert with a critical education and examination of power and privilege (Shotwell & Perry, 2009; Darder, 2002; Friere, 2003).

"Teaching the children well" ought to be of primary importance in our desire to raise our children to believe that "God loves everyone." To truly live out that belief we must invite relationships of difference into our homes and family life, and I would argue that we should also invite history into our children's lives in ways that teach them about the struggle for justice and allow them to have relationships with difference that open up their understandings of otherness. This seemed to be the piece of our education that was missing early on in childhood, for most of us in the group. Weir (2008) points out that to truly learn about someone else we must find ways to identify with them:

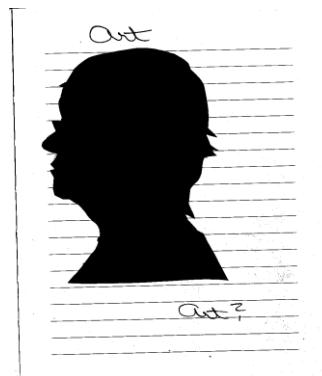
As I understand it, this model of identification includes a cognitive-epistemic component: to identify with another is to recognize her experience and her meanings, and, importantly, to recognize her resistant agency; and it includes also an affective component: to identify with another is to love her; to "welcome her world," to value her. (p. 123)

As Howard points out, “If our examination and understanding of the root causes of social inequality are too shallow, then our approach to corrective action will necessarily be superficial and ineffective” (p. 30). If we are to raise our children to have a commitment to social justice then we have to allow them to learn about injustice in deep and meaningful ways and to invite the worlds of others into their ontological and epistemological selves, so that their responses to injustice are also deep and meaningful.

Sharon’s Self-Portrait and Description

I really struggled with art.

Figure 14. Who is this Woman?



(She started reading from her journal, but added a few things, so I am including here what she said and read. You can see an excerpt of the journal writing in the appendix).

The silhouette on the previous page is my one try at “art”. It took a long time and I did not enjoy making it.

“Who is this old woman?”

Social justice is equality, freedom, human rights, opportunity, fairness and inclusion. Growing up in Charleston, WV, I was in a White world. I grew up in a White neighborhood and went to White schools. Until integration my last two years of high school, I never knew a person of color. Oh yes, my church was White too.

The 50's were great for me. Quiet and peaceful. I remember the terms separate but equal and Brown vs. the Board of Education, but it didn't affect me.

I hated the protests and the fires I saw on TV. I understood the fight for civil rights and wished them well. Did I get involved? No.

I loved JFK and Martin Luther King, Jr. and was sickened by their deaths.

I believed in equal pay for equal work by women, but I was a stay-at-home mother.

I guess I was never on a quest for social justice.

I signed the petitions and gave money. Job done.

Then in 1994 a gay friend I worked with said her ex-husband and his new wife were taking her to court to get full custody of her two daughters. Sherry was a wonderful mother and her partner was too. I said, "yes" and Rod did too. I knew it was the right thing to do, but I was scared. What would my friends say? I was new at this going against the grain thing. The first day in court the ex was shocked at the support Sherry had with her. After days of testimony the judge announced there was no proof of unfit mothering, and after talking with the daughters believed the split custody arrangement was fine. So we celebrated. I saw how cruel someone can be.

Years later I've had the opportunity to see the ex and his wife at weddings, baby showers for their daughters. They have apologized time and time again for what they did. It's wonderful when people can grow and admit their fears and ignorance.

This same friend asked me to attend a PFLAG meeting with her. When I arrived there were TV cameras everywhere, but I just barged right in, you know me, [laughter], and I couldn't find her anywhere. And when I finally did she said, "you know, my job might be at stake here". She was not out to everyone. And that's when I realized her fear of being gay. I mean, it didn't bother me. That was just such a shock to me that she still was worried about this. She was just afraid someone at her workplace would see her and she would lose her job.

I was the stand in, you know her whole family rejected her, so I was the surrogate grandmother at their weddings and everything. Of course we still have a great relationship today.

What a way to live.

I have always known the right thing to do, but did I always do it? No.

I can honestly say it was joining Green Street that I started to grow in all ways. I took the IDR class [Institute for Dismantling Racism's 2 ½ Day Training] and it changed my life. In all my church life I have never been given the chance to grow like I have here. There is always someone to talk to when you have doubts. And believe me I have lots of questions about the Bible. I have learned so much and I hope I never stop learning. I have learned patience and respect of others, even when they're wrong [laughter] and I'm right. That comes with age.

After Amendment One passed I was down, but not for long. Working the polls and phone banks with young men and women, my faith is even more that the youth is OK.

I tell my granddaughters to carry on the fight for social justice—and they will. They are already involved.

I guess the biggest plus in my social justice life is my relationships with others. There is no other way to know how people feel but through personal relationships: In church, in each other's homes, at work and play.

I am so blessed.

I guess I better say something about art [laughter].

I have no talent to create paintings or music, but I have a love of both. I could not live without music. I am a wonderful audience.

My life would not be complete without my faith and relationships. God is Good. [All the time.] Life is art just look.

Neena didn't live long enough. She wanted to do something with Randall and I 'cause she thought we were the odd couple. Well that's my story.

I think something does come with age, you know. The young people—to me—get it. And they got it a lot sooner than I got it and I am so encouraged. I just...I am. I am not down about our youth at all.

I think you have to surround yourself with, I don't want to say like people, but that are on that same quest with you. Because I think it would be easy to get off track. I live in a diverse neighborhood and I absolutely love it. Would I have said that 50 years ago? No way. I remember Blacks in the back of the bus and the balcony of the movie theater. Didn't affect me. I like growing. I really do.

I think that also comes from parents. I do not ever remember my parents saying derogatory things. I know my father worked with Black men. He was a mechanic, and they never owned their own home. They always rented. But I remember being taught, you know...

A Social Justice Life

Sharon's SJIP takes us even further into the impact of relationships in developing a "social justice life" as she calls it and in staying committed to that life or "staying on track." In her experience she did not grow up with relationships of difference. Her world was clearly separated along racial lines and she followed that structure and did not get involved in its demise even though she had positive feelings toward some of the civil rights leaders, and it was the same way with the feminist movement. Then she made a lesbian friend and it changed her life. Through this personal relationship she became involved in the civil rights movement. Her love of a friend opened her heart and mind to issues of justice and her engagement in those issues. As Maria Lugones (1987) puts it, she became a world-traveler. As she says:

We are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated; we are lacking. So travelling to each other's "worlds" would enable us to be through loving each other. (p. 8)

That travelling, that learning opened her up to participating in a church like Green Street UMC, continuing to learn about issues of justice, and working to dismantle power, privilege, and oppression. Sharon's story speaks to what I have mentioned before in my dissertation about White people of privilege breaking out of an isolationist childhood to become adults committed to social justice. The question is what made her open to a "social justice life" in adulthood when that was not the emphasis of her childhood or early adulthood? Another perspective would be: what held her back from working for social justice, even though she had "positive feelings" towards those public figures working for social justice?

Knowing Self/Understanding Others

Sharon's story is a perfect example of what Bonilla-Silva (2010) discussed in *Racism Without Racists*. She is a White woman who grew up in a racially segregated life, devoid of personal relationships with people of color—or much difference for that matter—and economically comfortable. Sharon's story is relevant to almost all the other women's experiences of growing up and through this ideology of colorblind racism. Through Sharon's story we can learn that isolation and segregation have consequences for social justice; facing the realities of injustice and oppression are harder than ignorance; and finally, meaningful personal relationships can open the door to understanding and working for social justice.

Sharon grew up in what Bonilla-Silva (2010) would call a "White *habitus*, a racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that *conditions* and *creates* Whites' racial

taste, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters" (p. 104). This type of normalization, where one feels a "sense of belonging" to their own group—in this case a racial group—and a sense of negative "otherness" towards people not in your group is promoted by dominant ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, Johnson, 2006, Howard, 2006, hooks, 2003). Although dominance is not only a factor in racial identity, in Sharon's story it is a significant identity category because she has lived through the Jim Crow Era into the Colorblind Era. She has seen firsthand the changes in racial dynamics and has experienced what it is like to live in ignorance and isolation and then to move toward transformation and awareness in a more diverse community. As she says, "I live in a diverse neighborhood, and I absolutely love it. Would I have said that fifty years ago? No way. I remember Blacks in the back of the bus and the balcony of the movie theater. Didn't affect me. I like growing. I really do." Sharon has developed a transformative identity, where she allows injustice of others to affect her, so what has helped her get to this place of "growing" and being affected by the injustice of others? I would argue as she does that it is through meaningful personal relationships with people who are different from her.

I agree with Bonilla-Silva (2010) that White habitus and a belief in colorblind notions of race does not allow for people to develop meaningful personal relationships with people of color or to go even further to challenge their notions of status quo in any category even if they are raised to respect everyone or to believe that God loves everyone equally (p.108). One of the impediments for becoming aware and developing meaningful relationships is that this new knowledge will change everything and require one to be intentional and possibly different from all those in your current habitus, or as Sharon calls it, "this going against the grain thing"—where one would have to stand out

and speak against the normative culture—or as Sally called it, “Going with the flow.” Johnson (2006) points out that “People don’t want to look because they don’t want to know what it has to do with them and how knowing something about it might change not only the world but themselves” (p. 9). “Looking” or seeing injustice will change our perspective—it will transform us—we can never be completely ignorant again. It creates discomfort. As in Sharon’s story, sometimes we don’t mean to look, but someone else opens our eyes.

Sometimes someone comes along and getting to know that person seems natural and comfortable just like any other “normal” relationship, and then something happens to them that is not fair—and now I care about them—so the unfairness, the injustice, the discrimination has crept into my world view. I am no longer blind. I have traveled to someone else’s world. Weir (2008) speaks of Lugones’ concept of world traveling and says, “traveling to the other’s world’ might be interpreted as a form of transformative identification: an identification based not on presumed sameness, but on recognition of the other, and an openness to transformation of the self” (p.112). This transformation means I now have to “do something” about this injustice. People respond to this situation in different ways. Some people continue to create narratives that support their world view as status quo, but some, like Sharon, get involved and it changes them forever.

Sharon tells the story of her co-worker who comes out to her and asks for support in a custody hearing. Sharon says “yes” and it changes her life. Participating in trying to achieve social justice for her lesbian friend helps Sharon finally “go against the grain.” After all those years of choosing to remain on the sidelines, this relationship took her into the playing field. Then there was no turning back for her. Sharon’s relationship

building continued and as she says, “I guess the biggest plus in my social justice life is my relationships with others. There is no other way to know how people feel but through personal relationships: In church, in each other’s homes, at work and play.”

It is important to tell these stories of change, of world travelings, and of breaking out of isolation and ignorance into what Sharon calls a “social justice life,” because as Bonilla-Silva points out:

although the White habitus conditions Whites’ lives, Whites can, as Marx said, “make their own history.” I found a number of respondents who lived interracial lives, understood the significance of contemporary discrimination, and did not rely on colorblindness to articulate their racial views. (p. 125)

I found the same to be true in my study participants, yet one might ask, “Sharon’s relationship was with a person whose discrimination came because of her sexuality and her gender. How does that make Sharon not colorblind?” I think the answer lies in her journey. Sharon did not just choose to participate in PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, which is a support and advocacy group for those connected to homosexuality), she also found her way to Green Street UMC and as she says:

I can honestly say it was joining Green Street that I started to grow in all ways. I took the IDR class and it changed my life. In all my church life I have never been given the chance to grow like I have here. There is always someone to talk to when you have doubts. And believe me I have lots of questions about the Bible. I have learned so much and I hope I never stop learning. I have learned patience and respect of others, even when they’re wrong and I’m right [laughter].

Sharon came to Green Street UMC long before Green Street UMC became a reconciling congregation and openly addressed issues of injustice within the LBGTQ community. She came to Green Street looking for a place to serve—which she has—but she also found a place to learn and grow. She chose to participate in the anti-racism training of

the Institute for Dismantling Racism in its earliest days to learn about racism and ways in which our institution could work against it. She was close friends with Neena Mabe who propelled our congregation into our current status as a reconciling ministry. She has also opened herself to learning about issues of addiction and recovery. Sharon has chosen to “do something” as Johnson (2008) says. She has uncloaked her veil of privilege and is facing what Johnson calls the “simple truth”: “The simple truth is that the trouble we’re in can’t be solved unless people who have privilege feel obligated to make the problem of privilege *their* problem and to do something about it” (p. 8). Sharon is obligated and committed. She has chosen not only to change her life but to teach her child and grandchildren. Sharon also opens her family to those outside her identity categories. She is the surrogate grandmother to her lesbian friend’s children and also to my multi-racial child. As the mother of a child of color, I absolutely trust her to be open to the knowledge my child’s identity will bring to her and that she will not force an ideology of privilege or assimilation onto him. She will learn with him, as she so loves to do.

Margaret's Self-Portrait and Description

Figure 15. Seeing Difference



I started out when I was reading the prompt. The image that I kept getting was the big head with the two kinds of hair. That goes back to my earliest memory of knowing people different from me was the first grade. I had met other children of other races. Those little Black girls loved my long blonde hair and I loved their little Black pigtails. I think that was the first time I knew about difference and I did not see it as a bad thing. So I sort of incorporated that as I am myself, but I am you and we all have common ground here.

Then there was something in the prompt about how others see you, so I tried to do some reflection on things I've heard other people say or things I perceived from others. One was my mom, I remember I heard her tell another mother that "I didn't see color." And I was thinking about that and I thought, but I do see color—I just don't see it as a problem. So that is why I made the eyes all different colors. Another friend of mine told me I was a Black woman trapped in a White woman's body. And from now on I think I'll always be seen as the White mom with the Black baby. Soooo, I put my Black baby in there.

And the mouth, I'm not sure I did a good job of conveying, but I'm really a lot more chicken about this than I let on—facebook has been great because it lets me put stuff out there in a safe environment—but this is supposed to be a teeth-chattering, sacred mouth.

Then I did some thinking about “how did all this happen to me?” because I’m the youngest of four kids and I’m the freak. I’m the only one that feels the way I feel about things. The only thing that I can figure is that I just always tried to be open to what’s in front of me. So I gave myself an open heart, but then I was like it’s an open mind as well, so I put some open hearts in my mind as well. Then I just needed some pink tennis shoes.

Figure 16. Becoming the White Mother with the Black Baby



(The discussion continued after Margaret’s description. I decided to include this excerpt because it was relevant to her portrait and description. The entire discussion is in the transcript addendum.)

Margaret is responding to being asked about telling/asking her family about adopting a child of color...

When we were in the adoption process that was the first question we were asked at the agency was/ And then everybody was pretty much on board/ but my mom kept saying, “Well, maybe you’ll get a Chinese baby.” Most people go to China to get those babies. Although she was saying she was open to whatever, I was definitely getting the message that there were some races that were more

preferable than getting a Black baby. And I specifically said to my dad, because I consider him the most racist in my family, I said to him “You know, Daddy, this baby could be Black.” And he said, “Well they need love to.” (Pause). And to see him now...Anthony says, “Mahalia is the best thing that’s ever happened to him.” He is just in love with this child, and I don’t think that that’s done a whole lot to open his mind to the Black population in general, but you know, baby steps.

I don’t think that my whole family really sees that Mahalia’s a Black person. She’s one of “us”. We all love her, we adore her, she’s one of us. So...I think as she gets older and she struggles with her own identity in that place, some of that may come out. That’s just something that we’ll have to deal with.

Choosing to be Colorful not Colorblind

Margaret’s portrait brings up a lot of the issues that are covered when a White person goes through an anti-racist training or when we look at the spectrum of White racial identity. White folks want to find the commonality with the Other and focus on that. That connection or commonality is easier to deal with than the realities of privilege and oppression and with our own feelings of guilt and shame about being part of the group that creates that kind of pain and suffering (Bonilla-Silva 2010, Howard, 2006, Johnson, 2006, Tatum, 2003; Hytten & Warren, 2004). If one is willing to transform and grow then we must face these uncomfortable moments of tension—we have to open our mouth even though our “teeth are chattering with fear.” We have to see color—not be proud that we don’t see color. We have to grow past the place where what we were taught about what is right and good no longer makes sense, and most importantly we have to be open to the places where our relationships with people of color and difference will take us.

Knowing Self/Understanding Others

At some point in early childhood, Margaret realized she was different from her family in how they interpreted the world. Maybe her world view was impacted by those

relationships she had with Black children in elementary school; maybe it is because Margaret was so much younger than her other siblings and grew up in a different era. I do not have enough information here to determine what the difference between Margaret and her family is. All I know is that she calls herself, “The freak” in the family. She is not “normal” like the others. This is significant in terms of transformative identity development because it means that Margaret has at least broken out of the normative structure of privilege. The question is has she been able to think critically about the values she was taught and has she learned to question the “rightness” or “normativity” of her dominant culture? When Margaret’s mother asserts in a positive manner that she is proud of Margaret because she doesn’t see color, Margaret thinks, “I do see color, I just don’t see it as a problem.” This hints at the idea that she felt her family and others did see it as a problem and somehow she was in disagreement with the prevalent or dominant thinking. At this early age she was beginning to question the authority of rightness and truth. Howard (2006) writes about the “assumption of rightness” by saying:

As Whites, we usually don’t even think of ourselves as having culture; we’re simply “right”. Dominant groups don’t hold “perspectives,” they hold “Truth.” This assumption of rightness has been a powerful force in the establishment of White dominance. (p. 54)

This idea relates to the example I gave during my self-portrait discussion about the anti-racism training and the activity where we were asked to think about the benefits of being White, and of course, we did not think about culture, we thought about race privilege. The dominant paradigm does not want people of privilege to think of their culture as one of many, rather it is the one to be obtained. As Howard (2006) points out:

Colorblindness grows from a dominance-oriented perspective. Difference threatens dominance, because it upsets the belief in one's own rightness. 'We are all the same' translates as 'We are all like me,' which is comforting for those who are accustomed to dominance. (p. 57)

Margaret felt this discomfort in her culture and represented it in her image of a "teeth-chattering scared mouth." Margaret does not talk a lot about what this means for her in her description, but this is one of those points in the writing where I need to disclose how well I know her. She is one of my best friends and has been for going on five years. Our children are very close—they both tell us they are going to get married when they grow up—and we share the struggle and joy of being a White mother to a child of color. My journey is different because Mario is multi-racial, and Mahalia is adopted—I could write another dissertation on all that—the point being, I know that Margaret does not like verbal confrontation. She is an optimist and a pacifist who looks for light and love wherever she can find it. She struggles to find the words to resist the racial and derogatory dialogue that goes on around her in the moment but spends time writing, thinking, and discussing these issues when she feels she is in a safe space. I think she is an amazing mother and advocate for her little girl, but I know this aspect of dealing with public confrontation bothers her. She has often called me to talk through something that has happened to her and processes how she did or should have handled it. To me, this also shows how Margaret is open to transformation, she lives with the tension of loving her family and her faith even though she struggles with the oppression their beliefs promote. This goes back to the metaphor of the bridge by Hytten & Warren (2004), in which they discuss the liminal space the Critical Democrat must sustain between the tension of benefiting from the status quo while struggling to resist it.

Margaret's upbringing in a Southern Baptist Church is an example of the "backdrop of dominance" Howard (2008) discusses when he points out how the Christian church has been an arbiter of dominance through, the rule of the Divine Right of Kings; having a savior who is the gatekeeper to Heaven; the churches participation in land distribution and colonization; the patriarchal hierarchy that excludes women from authority and power; etc. (p. 59). Having also been raised within this same religious paradigm, I know how difficult it can be to reconcile the belief in a loving God and the rules and structures of a religion that are so exclusive and oppressive. Margaret also addressed this in her "I am Poem" when she wrote:

I am...wrestling and struggling each day
With the joy of being loved and the fear of people knowing who I
really am deep down inside.
With Christian theology and liberal politics
With the God I know and the God I learned about in Sunday
School
With love that is pleased and happy and love that is concerned
about my eternal salvation.

I believe Margaret, myself, the women in the group, and many other Christian progressives struggle with this tension every day. Our spiritual journey encourages us to resist dominant theology and find a liberating force within our faith. Palmer (2007) writes about the tension of opposites and it speaks to my hope for how we deal with our Christian legacy, "the tension will not break my heart—it will make my heart larger" (p. 87).

This idea of paradox and opposites goes back to Sally's point about "everything in our childhood doesn't have to be right". We have to learn to deal with guilt and embrace agency. Hytten & Warren (2004) say "People negotiating the tension or

liminal space between guilt and agency balance their own need for understanding the effects of their past actions with the belief that change begins with themselves as individuals" (p. 332). White folks and people of other privileges have to learn to acknowledge when things went wrong, when the lessons our parents were teaching us about loving all God's children didn't match the language they used to describe God's children or a specific group of God's children as less than, inferior, lazy, etc.: "They need love too." We do have to find a way past the "us and them" mentality, but it can't be at the expense of "not seeing" the fullness of another person. We do need to see color. We need to see racism, too. We need to value who the person is and yet at the same time acknowledge that because of our differences we have different experiences of the world. Clara made this point well in response to Margaret's SJIP:

That's one of the things I've really learned here at Green Street It's exactly what you're saying, that's it's not a matter of not seeing color, or like Mahalia of, she's not Black she's part of a family. But it's a matter of we all have a heritage and to be faithful to who we are you can't not see the color because then you are not seeing the person. And that's huge. That's huge. That's the biggest thing that I've learned because the place that I came from...I grew up in a very conservative state in a very conservative family, I never saw...I was like Margaret, what I saw it I didn't matter, it wasn't important, they weren't others. We were all together. But now I'm learning that it is important, you do value the difference, you value the culture, you value everything about the person. Whether they are Black, female, gay, whatever, it's a part of who we all are.

As people of privilege, particularly as White people, we need to not run away from what we see. We need to stop being afraid of children pointing out the physical differences in our hair and skin and facial features, and we need to be willing to learn about our cultural differences as well. We need to listen to people of color and other groups when they say they are being discriminated against, and not find some excuse to discount their experiences. We need to find a balance that allows us to celebrate the beauty in each of

us and our communities, while also fighting to end the pain and suffering caused by people in power using those differences to oppress. Injustice affects us all negatively, and we need to admit that so we can change that (Johnson, 2006, p. 8). It is difficult work because it requires being in relationship across lines of differences and doing the work of critical education in beloved communities. People of privilege cannot do the work alone—they need their frames of references challenged—and yet, they cannot rely on marginalized people to be their teachers.

Participants in this work, in these beloved communities, need to claim the open heart and open mind that Margaret included in her self-portrait. I again refer to Palmer and his writing about the need to create community that encourages heartful and mindful acts of knowing:

The mind motivated by compassion reaches out to know as the heart reaches out to love. Here, the act of knowing is an act of love, the act of entering and embracing the reality of other, of allowing the other to enter and embrace our own. In such knowing, we know and are known as members of one community. (as quoted in hooks, 2003, p. 132)

This leads to Clara's exploration of her many stories of knowing and becoming.

Clara's Self-Portrait and Description

Figure 17. The Circle of my Life



I continued the one I had started when I was here.

Let me see there is an upside down side to this thing.

What I had done here was just some memories we had talked about—the collard greens were: let's eat collard greens and there's a Black hand and a White hand. That has more to it—I grew up on a farm and we were pretty poor like most farm people were, and one of the things my mother did to raise money was she would pick vegetables from the garden and she would go around to all the Black communities, all the Black houses and sell them out of the back of the car...so it was our turnip greens and their turnip greens, we were all eating turnip greens. We had a dairy farm, and this is an interesting—and I didn't put this on here—that the feed for the cows in those days came from the feed sacks calico, and that is where the term feed sacks came from. She would take those designs some beautiful, some the ugliest you had ever seen and some really nice. But they were good sturdy cotton and she would open them, or no she didn't even do that, she would just empty them out and we would pile them in my car. Each sack was about a yard of material. And about once every two or three months, we would go around the all the houses and sell these things for like a quarter a piece and that was fabric...and that was were this whole idea came from...cause that was my first interaction.

In Mississippi girls are very protected. I'll give an example of that. We lived on a dairy farm and there was a point in the year when they castrated all the male calves and I asked mom—they were all back in the barn and I couldn't go down there...I could here them talk about cutting them. I asked momma, "What are they doing?" 'Cause I thought cutting their throats, I had no idea. It was like, "They're just cutting their neck." I forget even what she said, but it wasn't what they were doing. So as a girl in the South, I was extremely protected. So I grew up in books.

We had a guy that were in the dairy that lived across the street and had two children. I think about them periodically, Pearlie Mae and I wanna say Lonnie, but it's not...anyway, I had a tricycle and I would take the tricycle across the street and her mother would watch me and I'd ride the tricycle and they would stand on the back with their hands on my shoulders and we had the best time riding... But there's another side to it—they never drove.

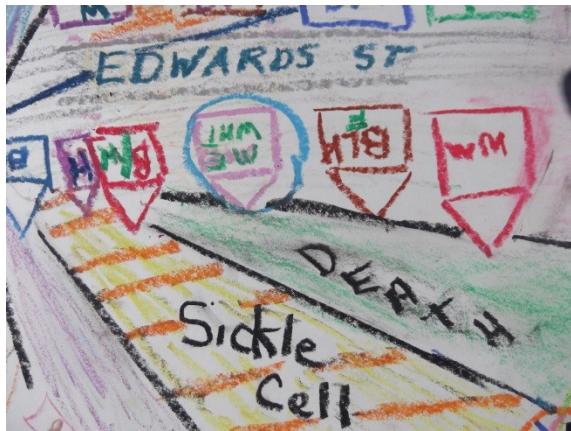
Figure 18. They Never Drove



This is the really big thing that happened; in '66/'67 our high school was integrated. The way they did that was not everybody. They opened it, and there was a couple of brave...there was a brother and sister that came to the school. It must've been '66 'cause he was a Senior and she was a Junior I think. She was in my classes, and she would sit in front of me in a desk and I'd sit in the back of the room and they would shoot spit balls at her. So what I drew there was her sitting there and me looking, crying inside but my mouth was shut, and it was a very, very...I look back on her now and...I put a crown on her about how brave she was and for them—how much courage it took for them to do that. That's a way that I think law can be really damaging; 'cause this was the Mississippi way of giving "nod to the law"—we're following what you wanted us to do, we've opened our schools, and in doing that they made the lives of these two individuals absolutely miserable.

The DNA around the thing, comes from me being a scientist. This is the circle of life that, you know we all different, you know there that things they say in the South about "I don't care whether you're Black or White or purple or that kind of stuff". And that's kinda where this came from, but in order to incorporate more than just races I made the different little parts of life...there's polka dots and there's stripes and all these different things as kind of a background here. We are all different, but we are all part of the same.

Figure 19. The Work I Do, The Street Where I Live



The disease states is because of what I work on. The first job I ever had was working on sickle cell. I was KeeCee's mentor, and so for me this has a big, big place in my heart. But no matter who we are or what our DNA projected we all suffer from the same problems and we need help. The last thing that came to me either yesterday or the day before was, oh my God, I live on a totally integrated street...and I wasn't even aware of it, 'cause I'm just friends with the people. And this is what this is like here's my little house, that's me and I'm a White female and next door is Black male and a White female couple and next to that is a Hispanic family and that is a Black female widow. This is a Black female divorcee. He was a White male who recently died and he just absolutely took care of the whole neighborhood. I'm not sure who lives here. This is a Black male divorced and this is another mixed couple. And this is a White male widower, and like our whole street and it keeps going till the end of the street. And this is, these are the people that I see, I love, I speak too. I'm not real, real close friends except to the couple here across the street who are like brother and sister, and that's my street. That's where I live, and it's just awesome.

This was an accident, it was totally random, 'cause some of the stuff was here before. In the HIV here this was a Christmas tree with a package underneath behind bars. The first interaction I ever had with a gay person was the first year of my post-doc. I spent 6 months in psychiatric lock-up, two different three month periods. And in one of those periods I was in the hospital over Christmas and had a little Christmas tree, with a guy that was gay, and at Christmas he gave me two little clothespin reindeer. They continue to be two of my most precious Christmas ornaments because he was absolutely the most sweetest, caring person I've ever known. We talked a lot, but we didn't have a real close relationship, but we did. When you're behind bars, especially over the holidays you really do, it's like

this group, but you're in a psychiatric setting, and so you really do become close to people. It was down in Chapel Hill, I couldn't tell you his name today, but I've never forgotten him and the struggle he was going through. I'd forgotten that I wanted to add that picture and I was looking for an empty spot and that was the only empty spot...so God kinda helped me.

One of the things that I couldn't put on there that I wanted to, is I have a sponsee that goes to Green Street who's Black, and she has like 4 or 5 sponsees, so there my grandsponees. One of hers is White and the others are Black and they invited me to this wonderful little group that meets down here at that little Zumba center once a month on Friday night. The first time I went there, two of us were White, me and one of her sponsees, everybody else was Black. It was just a real, not uncomfortable, but different, eye-opening kind of thing. I felt so a part of...I'm like you, sometimes I think I have a Black person in a White body. I don't know but, I love these women, and I wanted to put their pictures on there because we went to the theater, but I couldn't because it's an anonymity thing. I didn't get to put that on there, but you're exactly right. I've been in church a lot, but I've never been in relationship until the last three months. We get together once a month and we're talking about the things that matter to us. Our jobs, our families, this and that and I truly feel—especially with my sponsee—I truly feel in relationship. We're learning a lot about each other, but that's not even the point. The point is we're just in relationship.

That's really when you become aware of it—of culture—the importance of it, but also of identity. That's one of the things I tried to portray, we all are different in culture and stuff, but then we are all human and alike too.

Becoming...Becoming Aware of It

Clara's portrait and description are so rich. There are so many stories and examples to pull from. I chose to put this one towards the end because of its richness.

Clara's story is one of becoming aware. She starts in her earliest years and brings us to the present. The thread linking it all together for me is relationship and learning. Clara points out that she loved to read—but I think it was more than just an escape—Clara loves to learn. Like so many of the other women in the group, she does not feel she

knows enough. She is on a quest to know more, and I think that is a crucial piece of developing a social justice identity.

Knowing Self/Understanding Other

Clara starts her description by talking about the experiences of her childhood growing up in Mississippi, in the Deep South, before and during the Civil Rights Movement. As a child she did not challenge the status quo, but she was aware of it. She held on to moments that shaped her sense of being and knowing in the world until she was able to wrestle with them. Even throughout the writing of this dissertation she is learning, let me give an example.

Clara shared with us about her experience of the “integration” of her school. The treatment of the young, Black woman in her class had a profound impact on her as did Clara’s own lack of resistance to the abusive treatment. During the discussion of this Sharee shared something she had learned about the perspectives on integration vs. desegregation:

I didn’t fully understand it until coming into relationship with people with CHANGE and having a chance to have a conversation about the difference between desegregation and integration and how folks use that language...you know Whites often will talk about integration. At least in the conversations that I’ve had with some Black members of this community they have never used that language of integration. Desegregation happened. But integration never happened. And I think that’s a pretty powerful thing to sit with.

Clara did sit with that use of the language because a few months after the dissertation session, I took a group of youth over to Clara’s house for a service project. One of the kids asked about her childhood and she told them the same story of the young Black girl. This time she said, “They called it integration, but it wasn’t really. It was desegregation, which is different.” I was so struck by that because I remembered that exchange from

typing the transcript and doing the data analysis. I came home and immediately wrote down what she said. This is an example of how our identity is not static when we have a transformative perspective of ontology and epistemology. We are constantly in process and therefore are open minded and open hearted as Margaret represented. Clara's story is an example of what Weir (2008) means when she says identity can bind us together. She says, when we talk about identity in this way, "We're talking about an experience of belonging, of connectedness, of being *held together*. By the values, ideals, commitments, attachments, and relationships that matter to us" (p. 117). Clara was connected to what Sharee had said, it settled in her, it mattered to her and shaped her thinking and her story.

There is one part of Clara's and Margaret's description that is difficult to address because I think in so many ways these women are aware, but yet, to be honest about the tensions of paradox, I feel compelled to struggle with the issue to continue to breakdown the White hegemonic thinking.

There is a recurring phrase: "being a Black woman in a White woman's body". I think this use of language needs to be problematized. Why are some White women told this by some Black women? Why do White women feel such a need to embrace that—even co-opt someone else's Blackness? I've been told this too, and I took it as a compliment, as an acceptance into the Black woman's world who told me this. Why? Why do all those wonderful qualities of a Big Mama or a soulful singer or a good cook or whatever, have to make us a Black woman inside?

Why is it that when a White woman is told this it is such a compliment, and yet Black women are some of the most oppressed in our society? So often they are stereotyped as the "angry Black women" and the "welfare mom," and are too often the

sexual victim of misogynistic pop culture (Cooper & McCoy, 2009). They are feared and denigrated without shame by the abuser—as if somehow these or any Black women deserve our generalized venom. It's such a powerful conundrum: the desire to embrace the Black woman inside us and the constant victimization of the Black woman as the problem. I think it relates to Lugones' (1987) discussion of a “failure to love”—that both the Black women telling us this and the White women taking it as a compliment have failed to truly travel to each other’s worlds and understand the power and oppression at play. There is a desire to connect and yet what is the requirement of the White women to fully embrace the Black women’s world. The compliment does not require the White women to take on the problems of Blackness. Just think about it visually—I’m a Black woman trapped in a White women’s body. So I get the privileges of my White skin and what? What makes me a Black woman inside? My pain? My joy? My resistance? And then what about that word “trapped”? One more way to imprison a Black person? Does it mean that the Black woman feels society requires White women to hold something back—to keep something in—that if White women were Black they would be set free somehow? I have more questions about this than answers. I could not find any research that struggled with this particular concept. Lugones’ arrogant perception and failure to love speak more to White women wanting to ignore or “not see” women of color (1987). This issue seems to be the other way around. That we want to connect—we just really don’t know how. I looked to feminist theology and spirituality and I learned from Cynthia Eller (2011) that in White feminist spirituality there is a desire to claim the “Dark Mother” and the other dark Goddesses. Although this is not an exact connection, it seems to correlate. She writes:

In the early days of the feminist spirituality movement, white spiritual feminists embraced black and brown goddesses enthusiastically. They were viewed as proof that people in all cultures recognised the sacred female and that all women were women under the skin—in other words, that shared femaleness was all women's most important identity. But women of colour told white spiritual feminists that their worship of black goddesses was an unacceptable appropriation of religious resources not their own, and furthermore, that racial identities were not just so many delightfully different flavours skimming the surface of an underlying femaleness. (p. 368)

She goes on to discuss how White feminists were more likely to make the argument that if we all originated in Africa then in the beginning humans all worshipped the “dark mother” and that all goddesses are just an extension of the original deity (p.369). Some White spiritual feminists also speak against the concept of “enlightenment” as a proponent of racist, sexist, patriarchal religion, and they call for seeking:

‘endarkenment’: descending to the goddess down in the dark earth, rather than ascending to god in the bright sky. With this self-conscious turn towards worship of a Dark Mother goddess, white spiritual feminists announce their anti-racist agenda, setting themselves squarely against what they consider to be racism’s most fundamental and insidious form: religion. (p. 371)

This is all relative to the same struggle mentioned in Chapter II between White feminists and feminists of color struggling to decenter White privilege while working for women's rights (Weir, 2008; Ferguson, 1998). Eller (2011) goes on to point out that the desire of some White women to claim the “Dark Mother” is a way to ameliorate the guilt they feel from their race privilege, and yet she says “as morally reprehensible” as that is on the surface, if there is a sincere intention against racist religion then “I think we can only celebrate this determination to undo the racist and sexist theologies of Western religions by insisting on the sacrality of black femaleness” (p. 374). She concludes that:

the revolutionary potential of this worship will be undercut as long as white spiritual feminists collapse all black and brown goddesses into a single archetype and as long as they remain skittish about admitting their race privilege. But the revolutionary potential is definitely there. What remains to be seen is where white spiritual feminists will take it. (p. 374)

I wonder if the same revolutionary potential is there when women find themselves in each other, when they “travel to each other’s worlds” and find common human experience and a deeper understanding of privilege and power and then return to challenge and disrupt the privilege as they know it. Based on this data and this study, I cannot speak to the issues of why a Black woman says this to a White woman, but I can speak to the need for White women to question their complicity in this idea of being Black on the inside. The challenge for White women is to “insist on the sacrality of Black femaleness” without trying to co-opt or essentialize Black or Brown femaleness.

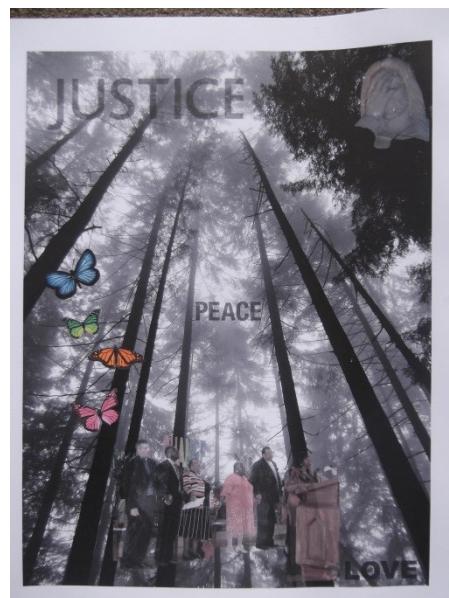
I think Clara is trying to make the point that she is trying to stand up against these racism by being in relationship and learning about difference, by participating in a group where she is one of the only White people, and continuing to grow in that process. By struggling with her memories of a divided childhood, she is in process. I have to celebrate that—and also like I mentioned earlier—we have to find the balance between celebrating what is good about each of us and also acknowledging the tension that privilege and oppression create, or as mentioned earlier in Sharon’s story, we have to acknowledge the simple truth of privilege as Johnson (2006) puts it, we have to deal with the trouble we are in:

The simple truth is that the trouble we’re in can’t be solved unless people who have privilege feel obligated to make the problem of privilege *their* problem and to do something about it...I have to think the unthinkable, speak the unspeakable, break the silence, acknowledge the elephant, and take my share of responsibility for what comes next. (p. 8-9)

I think this is the simple and honest truth; White people have to “do” something about power, privilege and oppression. We can’t just celebrate difference and talk about how much we are alike or relate to Black women, our gay friends, immigrant families, Muslim women, etc. We have to get out of our own way and break down this barrier of doing nothing, so change can happen. We have to vote with our values. We have to ask hard questions. We have to overcome the silence and the “teeth-chattering” fear and confront people about issues of privilege and oppression. We have to create what Parker Palmer (2007) calls a “community of truth” that is “capacious enough to carry the educational mission of knowing, teaching and learning,” even when that knowing is painful and disruptive (p. 102). We, people in the dominant groups, have to stand up for justice when we can, not just when it feels good and affirms our belief in loving all people, but also when it is hard and painful and requires some sacrifice on our part—especially then.

Sharee’s Self-Portrait and Description

Figure 20. Stories in the Trees



All of these, with the exception of the butterflies, are all pictures that I've taken. I was just thinking about...where I've lived along the way, the source of my understanding at this point in my life of the essence of social justice.

This picture was actually taken in North Vancouver 2 years ago. It wasn't done in Black and White, it had actually rained that morning and it was just a really powerful place to be. I was thinking about it—the stories are in the trees and I sit with that and the light breaks through. Someone of you have heard my story.

When I was 6 years old my grandmother slapping me when my sister's friend who was this beautiful boy named...his name has just escaped my brain, why is that? Anyway he dropped her off from school and I went running out to meet him and he kissed me on the cheek and gave me a flower. I was just smitten with him. I came in and my grandmother was just—she was so angry—and she hit me and she yelled, "never let a Black man touch you again". A pretty pivotal moment of being 6 years old and knowing that I loved her and that she was wrong. And spending my life negotiating that; I just remember a deep sense of it was wrong.

You could probably count on your hands the number of children who were different in this little small town that I grew up in. This little fella named Mark, who actually married me under the slide in kindergarten, to my friend Jason, who was the preacher. Mark was Black and I can remember sitting on the playground, with us holding our palms up together and saying, "You look just like me" and kind of exploring our bodies and going "wait, but you're darker." Just having this deep sense; Yeah we're different, but we're alike.

Becoming older in that setting and realizing...wow, the darkness that inhabits. I love that town and there are people that love me, but wow, there's a lot of stuff there.

Down here in these trees having the argument with my 6th grade teacher when he said, in the mid 80's and we were just talking about HIV, and he was saying that all gays should be put on an island and be left to die; and saying to him that he was a modern day Hitler. Having an argument with him in class, and now I look back and think, how messed up this was that 'cause I was twelve years old? I'm trying to think if there were any Black children in this class, 'cause I just cringe to think about this. Him saying, well you would marry a Black man? And I was like...Yeah, well if I loved him. I remember this conversation of—even if your family would disown you? And I was like, you can't help who you love. I remember having these arguments with this teacher. And now looking back and thinking that is just troubling on so many levels. But also figuring out what was happening for me that I had this deep...

I love my family but they, just particularly my grandmother and my dad, I was told I'd be disowned if I dated a Black man. Interestingly enough, we haven't really ever talked about sexuality. God bless my father, who has totally chilled out in old age, I so connect with what you were saying about your family's experience with Mahalia, cause my dad would be in relationship with individual people, but then

he would make sweeping statements and would use just really offensive—he never said nigger, but he used terms like jungle bunny and that sort of stuff—and just reacting to that and also coming to a point. I remember saying to him, “Dad do you identify as a racist?” ‘Cause I just wanted to see what he’d say, and recognizing later that he was a Depression Era baby, and in recent years watching him transform in a number of ways.

These stories in these trees. This picture is from the statue that’s outside the Oklahoma City Memorial. It’s a really powerful picture. I don’t know if you’ve been there, but it’s an astounding memorial. It’s a statue of Jesus with his back to the bombing site with his head in his hands. There has been a great deal of grief that comes with all this and I felt like that really captures that (she got choked up and was hard to understand).

This is a picture of some of our CHANGE leaders. I think this has really been the space for me. With the community organizing work, I connect with the people of faith in this community who really helped me reconnect to a faith journey, whatever it is at this point in my life...a deep sense that there’s more, and that there are people that really believe that Jesus was a prophetic voice about people loving everybody and inclusion and courage and all of that. That’s been a grounding space for me and my sense of growth and then just some foundational pieces of love.

In the midst of all of this, trying to find some sense of peace and reconciliation with my own story, with whatever guilt I might carry, and anger and whatever, but always there this overarching sense of justice: What does that really mean? And what does that look like? And how does that break through? Personally right now, I think it’s the part of me that does think strategically and what’s the end game, and being very connected to Ghandi’s call to us that “every step toward liberation, must have liberation in it.” I guess that’s what I’m sitting with right now.

It’s really interesting, particularly with the evangelical Christian communities that work around trafficking and Kony. I know my reaction to that and some of my students, some of my Black students in particular, their reaction to that, which is just intense anger. I really understand ‘cause that’s my first reaction to: All those poor people and all those horrible things and how’s this heartless stuff happening in the world? And my deep sense is like there are women and children being trafficked and raped and all sorts of horrible things right here in front of you! Racism is happening right here in front of you! It’s where I really struggle with the church.

My sister’s at one of the downtown churches and I have to really...it’s been a really important space for her, but there is a depth of bad stuff that I feel because of boutique mission trips. It’s like, “Oh let’s go help the poor people in Costa Rica” and I’m like—I’m gonna cuss cause this is how I feel—I’m like, “You’ve fucking never been over 52!” Y’all know what I mean by that, ‘cause I don’t want that to sound like everybody lives across 52. It’s just to hear them talk about it,

and to spend the amount of money to go do this stuff and then to not even come back and debrief it. I remember talking to the rector as St Paul's when I was working with CHANGE and saying, "You know when the youth present, is it a teachable moment? Do you ask why is it necessary for us to do this? Do you talk about poverty? Do you talk about trade policies?" He was a progressively minded guy and he just had this blank look on his face: We've never done that. We've never thought about that. It's just so frustrating to me. I don't want to be pissed all the time and I don't want to be dismissive.

I really hear what you're saying about that, particularly about the Kony stuff recently, I've just felt angry about it. And it's not to say it isn't horrible, but seriously, within the more conservative Christian communities, it is co-opting. It is using the language of social justice and being able to attach to the trafficking issues or Kony, so we can say "Oh we care about these people."

Stories in the Trees

I love Sharee's image of the stories in the trees and how impacting it can be for someone to hear our story; in the hearing of our story, the truly difficult parts of our story, light can break through. I think this brings us full circle back to Sally's point about "all" of our experiences making us who we are, the good, the bad, the right, the wrong, it's the total sum and we can't dismiss any part of it or any whole person because it was bad or wrong, because then we aren't really dealing with the "trouble" that Johnson (2006) spoke of.

Sharee uses the term "foundational pieces of love" to describe what she had learned from her work with the folks at CHANGE. I know Sharee is a fan of bell hooks, so this might not be a coincidence, but bell hooks uses a similar term as well in *Teaching Community*. hooks says, "I defined love as a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust. All these factors work interdependently. They are a core foundation of love irrespective of the relational context" (p. 131). This definition offers support for the kind of love discussed in this dissertation and also of Sharee's portrait. Sharee makes two good points about the "foundational pieces of love":

the importance of dealing with the deep sense that we are different and we are alike and what that means for people of privilege working through or toward a social justice identity.

Knowing Self/Understanding Others

Sharee's stories seem to resonate around the idea that she always had a "deep sense" of justice: From her experience with her grandmother slapping her and thinking "I loved her and that she was wrong," to arguing with her middle school teacher about justice and equality for others. Sharee reminds me of bell hooks' (2003) friend Ann that she discusses in *Teaching Community*. What hooks writes about Ann could be written of Sharee, "She says that she made her choice as a child. To Ann, it was a moral choice stemming from all that she had learned about right and wrong. It was a choice for justice" (p. 54). Again, I have to disclose how close I am to Sharee. She is an authentic friend and colleague. She has also graduated from the same program I am in at UNCG, and we have struggled side by side with issues of justice in our lives and community for years. I know Sharee, and she knows me; therefore, I feel I can say, Sharee isn't perfect and wouldn't want us to congratulate her on her justice work, cause really for her it comes from a place of "being pissed off all the time" and that is not anything to celebrate. I think her life is an example of the reality of making a commitment to justice. Once committed—we are passionate, discomfited, unsure and unsafe in our knowing and being. We do speak out and cause anger and make blundering errors in our statements. We can no longer "go with the flow". We are constantly "going against the grain". We yell at the radio and the TV commentators as if they can hear us. We have intense conversations about race and gender in grocery store aisles. I say we, because I

am in this with her, and also to include all the women in this group, and the readers of this page who are on this journey too.

Fortunately for Sharee she found a community of co-journeymen through her work with CHANGE. Through those relationships she was able to cling to feeling:

a deep sense that there's more, and that there are people that really believe that Jesus was a prophetic voice about people loving everybody and inclusion and courage and all of that. That's been a grounding space for me and my sense of growth and then just some foundational pieces of love.

Sharee found a community to support her struggle and open her to the love needed to live within the tension. As discussed earlier the “tension of opposites,” as Palmer calls it:

Resolving the tension requires a supply of love that comes from beyond ourselves, provoked by the tension itself. If we are to hold paradoxes together, our own love is absolutely necessary—and yet our own love is never enough. In a time of tension, we must endure with whatever love we can muster until that very tension draws a larger love into the scene. There is a name for that endurance we must practice until a larger love arrives: it is called suffering. (p. 88)

Sharee's story is one of suffering with a deep sense that she knew something that she could not name. She knew something others around her did not know or could not express. She made a choice for justice though, and eventually found the larger love she needed to continue on.

Conclusion to Self-Portraits

All of our stories in this study, all of our portraits, are about reconciliation with the privilege and oppression we experienced that brought us to this place—this place of struggling toward social change. We have to deal with the “deep sense” that Sharee talks about. We cannot ignore those deep feelings of right and wrong. Sharee has amazing stories of being a voice for the silenced and the weak. If you knew more of her

story, like I do, you would know how committed she is to justice and how hard she works toward living out what she believes and struggling with the difficult enigma of being an educated, White woman in the middle class. She has come to some reconciliation with what Johnson (2006) calls the “difficult legacy” we are born into. She doesn’t shy away from the difficult language of the isms and of hate speech. Like other women in this group, she has taken the time to learn about power, privilege and oppression, and she struggles with how “pissed off” she is all the time because of it. And she knows that it has to be that way, she has to be angry or she would stop feeling that “deep sense that there’s more.” If we are working towards justice, we have to keep believing that we can find peace and reconciliation or we will only feel hate, anger, guilt and shame. As Johnson (2006) says, we have to find ways to be part of the solution:

If I’m going to be part of the solution to that difficult legacy, I must step back from the defensive sensitivity to such language and look at the reality it points to. Then I can understand what it names and what it has to do with me and, most important, what I can do about it. (p. 11)

These social justice identity self-portraits were a way of naming what we know and don’t know about justice. This experience opened doors and bubbled questions to the surface. This experience also bound these women in a journey toward self-discovery and allowed, at least for a brief moment, a community of truth in which we could struggle with the issues presented here.

Human Sculptures

Figure 21. Welcome to Green Street—Ellen’s Sculpture



Ellen: When someone comes they are greeted and the music is glorious. And then everyone is always welcome and then there's always someone here for the first time that's going "What is going on?"

Figure 22. Passing the Peace—Clara’s Sculpture



Clara: It's not all of Green Street I think there are so many facets. But to me, that is Green Street when we "pass the peace" and we all love each other. We "pass the peace" in our own ways and on Sundays I see people that will not hug, so that's a huge part of what I see.

Inclusion not Isolation

Inclusion is one of the aspects of Green Street that people most often hold in high regard. As discussed in chapter 1, Green Street has a history of becoming intentionally inclusive. It took work, suffering, and love to create what people now see and know as the diverse congregation of Green Street. The pictures below are of the evolution of our congregation. The first is a picture that was found of an adult male Sunday School class. In the last 10 years we have taken the picture multiple times as a congregation on Easter morning, as a ritual to remind us of who we are. See for yourself...

Figure 23. Men's Sunday School Class 1922



Figure 24. Green Street Family Photo 2012



These pictures remind me of the one question I kept asking that finally drew me into this study: Why do White, middle class families seek out Green Street? Throughout my studies at UNCG I had been learning about the phenomena of White isolation and its role in perpetuating what hooks (2003) calls the “dominator culture.” I knew that I had sought out a place like Green Street because I wanted to belong to a church where everyone in my family felt included and where a multiracial family like mine would not be the exception, but why were these White, middle class families coming? Why does someone like Becky Beamguard drive 45 minutes to bring her family to this church? And not only come on a Sunday morning, but participate in all levels of leadership and interaction? Did she and others know they were breaking out of White isolation? Was it a conscious choice? And what sacrifices would they be willing to make to continue to be part of this community?

Isolation has an impact on the identity development of individuals within a group and on the development of a group identity. Bonilla-Silva (2004) points out, “The social

and spatial isolation of one group from others leads to differentiation of those groups as well as the development of group cohesion and identity in the segregated group" (p. 104). If we are going to address issues of justice, then we must break out of isolation and participate in inclusion. As Weir (2008) says, "We develop our collective identities rather through our associations, our relations to each other, and to meanings, worlds, ideals that might be shared. Through identifications that hold us together" (p.119).

On a personal level, I have come to learn through my relationships with all kinds of people at Green Street UMC that people come seeking a diverse life because of deeply held spiritual values and a desire to live out their faith. This study has proven to support that personal knowledge. I will explore this in more depth in Chapter V, but for now I want to honor what Clara and Ellen are pointing out in their human sculptures. Green Street is a welcoming place, and the ritual of "passing the peace" is one way that the congregation tries to live out the idea of inclusion, not isolation. Weir (2008) also discusses inclusion and how creating a communicative "we" offers possibilities for strength in community:

The communicative we "stresses the possibility of an inclusive understanding of 'we' whereby the strength of the bond connecting us stems from our mutual recognition of each other instead of from our exclusion of someone else." This "we" is not founded on opposition to a "them." (p. 127)

But as we explore who we are as a community, we still find "them", people left out, not connected, marginalized. We have to honor the reality that this is only the first step towards community. Although we may attempt to be or hope that we are welcoming everyone in, not everyone is willing to do the work of creating and sustaining a beloved community that is working for justice. Not every attempt at welcome is

successful. Not every welcome that is received is sustained. The following sculptures begin to address these issues of sustaining relationships and creating a trusting and loving community.

Figure 25. Each in our own Place—Sally's Sculpture



Sally: There's people that are sitting and not ready to do something. There's people that are completely confident and speaking up. There's everyone kind of in between. There's some totally comfortable with what goes on at Green Street; some people not as comfortable but really enjoy it; and then there's some people that are like "What's goin' on?" or not even sure where they want to be in it.

Figure 26. Longing to connect—Sharee's Sculpture



Sharee: There are different levels of connectedness in the congregation, but there is a shared longing. There is something, even if maybe we haven't quite figured it out yet, that Margaret was symbolizing, that there's something that holds us here, and keeps us together. We just don't all know what it is or know how to name it. There is a longing, even if we haven't quite connected yet. I think by virtue of coming here, people are expressing a longing to be connected in a deeply spiritual way. And I think that's both our strength and our challenge.

Figure 27. Finding our Place in the History—AmyBith's Sculpture



AmyBith: Mine was a vignette of sorts. I imagined Margaret being that person who needs somebody to keep her here. A lot of us came, we were invited and that relationship kinda keeps us here, even though we struggle sometimes—that tension for all kinds of reasons, but still wanting to be connected. Sally was like that bridge. Sally was connected to Sharon and willing to be that person who is holding, who is willing to be in relationship with that that struggle. Then I think there are people, that Ellen represents, that long to be more connected. You (pointing to Clara) were the Remnant, you were the symbol of the Remnant and the core of what brought us here; and what keeps us here; and that we keep telling that story is so important. I love that we tell that story over and over again. That was the symbolism there and so you (Ellen) were longing to want to be part of that. I think for a lot of us who weren't here wish we were part of that. I wish I could say, I was here and I stayed. Then the children, the innocence in all of us, sitting at the feet of that. And the love for that, you (Sharon) were my love for that. Sharon clinging to that and being so happy that we have that story and we have elders; that we're not just a new church that sprung out of somewhere, but that we have a story and that we're clinging to that. That nurtures my social justice, because I'm a product of survivors and a product of people standing up for the right thing.

Clara responded, "That's amazing. Cause so many years I wanted to be a part of, seriously I didn't feel a part of, you know just all the strides and stuff, it happened and I didn't do it. Am I making sense? I wanted to be one of the people who was a part of Green Street and I wasn't."

AmyBith replied, "But I think of you now as, you know they often call them the secret keeper, often in the stories of the people, of the survivors and you, but you're the historian and you tell that story and you keep in going, when we've lost so many people."

Clara, "That's a message for all of us because you know, we're all secret keepers."

Sharon said, "I think the Remnant makes me feel like I have to keep it going."

Shared Longing to Connect

These three human sculptures are bound together by their focus on relationships and on space in the community. Each sculpture represents the different spaces people in our congregation hold and they honor the multiple ways people feel connected or long to feel connected with the church. Sharee says, "There are different levels of connectedness in the congregation, but there is a shared longing." Maybe it is a longing to break out of isolation, maybe it is a longing to find a sense of acceptance, maybe it is a search for love; we cannot know without deep exploration about what the longing might be for each person, or even if there is a longing from everyone. Sally points out the varied states of connectedness that could occur on any given Sunday in our pews. She says:

There's people that are sitting and not ready to do something. There's people that are completely confident and speaking up. There's everyone kind of in between. There's some totally comfortable with what goes on at Green Street; some people not as comfortable but really enjoy it; and then there's some people that are like "What's goin' on?" or not even sure where they want to be in it.

It is important to acknowledge that we are all in different places in our spiritual lives and in our identity development. This past Sunday we had two people join the church, one of whom has been coming for four years on a consistent basis. This happens all the time. People can take years to truly make the commitment to what Green Street UMC is working for, and some people never make the commitment. They may join the church, but they do not do the work. They do not build relationships, join study and learning groups, participate in IDR or CHANGE, or other justice-oriented work. They just show up on Sunday mornings and fill a pew. I cannot know how that impacts them or if it impacts them, the point is to be honest we need to acknowledge what we know and what we don't know. We know people have different levels of commitment, we don't know why. Sharee makes this point when she says:

there's something that holds us here, and keeps us together. We just don't all know what it is or know how to name it. There is a longing, even if we haven't quite connected yet. I think by virtue of coming here, people are expressing a longing to be connected in a deeply spiritual way. And I think that's both our strength and our challenge.

These three sculptures point to the fact that there are people within our congregation, that includes members and non-members, who are seeking more than "shallow notions of inclusion," and people who are not. In *Teaching Community*, hooks (2003) has a conversation with Ron Scapps in which he says,

Honest, just, and passionate engagement with difference, otherness, gives me the opportunity to live justly with love. Difference enhances life. This is not to be confused with shallow notions of inclusiveness or experiencing diversity where ones stands in the space of privilege, taking in and from those who are other. (p. 115)

Our congregation's history of engaging with justice work and continuing to struggle with issues of justice in our congregation and in our community shows that we do have "the opportunity to live justly with love" if we so choose, but the reality is there are also opportunities for people to stand "in the space of privilege, taking in and from those who are other" because we are an institution full of people still working under dominant structures and still working through issues of dominant ideology both personally and institutionally.

I pointed out in my sculpture that we have a history of fighting against that dominant ideology, and we need to cling to that story. Then Clara reminded us that we all need to be the story-tellers, we shouldn't be keeping a secret, we should be creating a legacy of justice and resistance to counteract the "difficult legacy" of privilege and dominance (Johnson, 2006).

The next three sculptures point to the ongoing work that needs to be done within our congregation and community for us to continue to move in a direction of transformation and justice.

Figure 28. We're All in This Together—Sharon's Sculpture



Sharon: We're all here for a reason and, and so we're all really here together. But we're not there yet, we think we're accepting and we think we're doing everything we can; but, the reason I turned some people is—we're just not there yet. We still have work to be done. But we're *all* in this together.

Figure 29. Reaching out/Reaching In—Margaret's Sculpture



Sharee: We're really good at the outreach and the getting' to the community and making sure everybody's fed and has clothes and that stuff. When somebody new comes, particularly, if they're from one of those groups, we're really happy to see them and we welcome them and we love them in that moment; but, I don't think we're really good at the relationship part. We all come on Sunday morning and we sit beside each other and we sing and then we go home.

I think we're good at getting into the community and getting to know folks that way, but we haven't gotten all the way to the point of, once we reach those people let's have a real relationship with them and they're not just people that we help.

Figure 30. Is There a Place for me Here?—Pat's Sculpture



Pat: Sometimes I feel like, I'm not in the group. I come with different experiences. But because I don't fit, and a lot of this is probably because of my history lately, I don't feel like I'm valued or like I'm welcomed. I'm really struggling with that and like do I have a place here? So for me, sometimes I don't feel Green St, is necessarily about social justice or about—I don't like that word social justice. For me, sometimes it feels like I'm not welcome 'cause I come with a different perspective and because I don't fit in the group I'm not valued. I don't know if that makes any sense or not.

Margaret replied, "That's exactly what I was talking about earlier."

We're All in this Together: Beloved Community

Becoming a member of a community like Green Street asks a lot of a person. It asks you to "invite, transform, and serve." It seems to be a constant struggle for each woman in this group to maintain her connection and hope for what Green Street means to her. I think that tension and paradox is explained well by Palmer (2007):

In the human psyche, apparent opposites chase each other around in circles all the time; love and hate, laughter and tears, fear and desire. Our intense fear of connectedness, and the challenges it brings, is pursued by an equally intense desire for connectedness, and the comfort it offers. (p. 60)

Pat's honesty in naming that she's not sure "I have a place here" and the reality that she continues to come and be present shows this chasing of opposites of which Palmer speaks. As humans our desire does not erase our fear, nor does love erase hate, but we can choose to honor one more than the other. We can silence our fear long enough to give in to the desire for connectedness and the comfort it brings. And in so doing we can begin to build relationships that cross lines of difference and fear of otherness. We can, as hooks (2003) says, "build a bridge to walk across" to the other (p. 62). We can be honest enough with ourselves to know our own struggles and allow that to create enough compassion and empathy to reach someone else in their struggle.

These three sculptures all honor the work we still need to do in order to continue to be transformed as a community and build more just and honest relationships. As Palmer says, we have to continue to “face the fear that the live encounter with otherness will challenge or even compel us to change our lives” (p. 39). Each member of our community has to choose to be changed by these relationships. We will each choose differently, but we must continue to challenge one another to reach out of our comfort zone. If we are “all in this together” then we have to all do that we can to encourage more connectedness and less fear. I close with a quote from bell hooks about this type of community building that this chapter has been about. It is about the storytelling that creates narratives that encourage us to face our difference, challenge our ignorance and become more than we were. These portraits and sculptures speak to the work yet to be done, the need to continue to confront tensions and deal more honestly with our failings and shortcomings. Yet, if we were not encouraged by this community, then would these women have participated in this study? Their presence and their stories speak to the hope that Green Street does want to do the work of justice and the dismantling of oppression, and to the “yearnings’ hooks speaks of:

We become more sane as we face reality and drop sentimental notions like “we are all just human, just the same” and learn both to engage our differences, celebrating them when we can, and also rigorously confronting tensions when they arise. And it will always be vital, necessary for us to know that we are more than our differences, that it is not just what we organically share that can connect us but what we come to have in common because we have done the work of creating community, the unity within diversity, that requires solidarity within a structure of values, beliefs, yearnings that are beyond the body, yearnings that have to do with universal spirit. (p. 109-110)

CHAPTER V

CORE ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Developing a social justice identity is an ongoing process. There is not a formula or curriculum that one can create to ensure someone will mature into making a commitment to work for social justice. It is an individual choice, just like participating in a religion or engaging in a hobby. A commitment to social justice cannot be “expected” of a person. People like me can hope for it in others, but that should be all. By the nature of justice and liberty, educators should offer an education, not enforce one. What we can do as parents, educators, and community leaders is to consider the different aspects that seem imperative to developing a knowledge of social justice, a belief in social justice, and opportunities to work for social justice. Once we establish these core elements of an education towards social justice identity development, we could create opportunities for engagement and growth.

This study is a consideration of an education towards a commitment to social justice, specifically from a stance of privilege, due to race, education, and religion. In this chapter, I share what I have found to be the core elements to developing a social justice identity from my learning experiences and the shared knowledge of the group. By examining the participant’s stories, art and discussion; re-examining the scholarly debates about transformative identities, critical pedagogy, and relational learning; and considering my own life experiences and knowledge, I conclude that there are three areas of social justice identity development that seem to be crucial in the overall growth

of social justice identity. In each of the three areas I elaborate on three specific learning experiences or educational philosophies that appeared to be crucial for the women in the study in developing a social justice identity.

In this chapter, I will draw from the content of Chapter I and II and my theoretical framework and summarize the key themes from Chapter IV that led to the focus on these core elements. Chapter IV discussions were organized under the headings of: knowing self, understanding others, and making a commitment. The three core areas for development are divided into intellectual, emotional, and spiritual categories, more specifically intellectual as individual process, emotional as relational process, and spiritual as communal process. Not surprisingly, these three headings from Chapter IV coincide with the core element categories: knowing self is an intellectual/individual process, understanding others can be emotional relational and making a commitment to social justice could be done in a spiritual/communal way. Although I find correlation in these categories, I do not mean to essentialize these experiences as only being intellectual, emotional or spiritual. I would argue that it is a holistic process that cannot be so easily separated and yet sometimes in trying to explain ourselves to others we do find it helpful to use categories for analyzing and making distinctions. At this point in the explanation I feel the new categories offer more clarity for the discussion in Chapter V and so I will utilize them in this chapter, but I hope the reader can see how they are not fixed categories or completely separate notions. Instead this is a foundation for a holistic approach to social justice education.

First in this chapter, I draw from my discussion in Chapter I and argue that an education towards a social justice identity should incorporate intellectual understandings of social justice. This education should offer learners the chance to think critically about

power, privilege, and oppression and then allowing for an open mind capable of transforming oneself and the world in relation to that knowledge. Secondly, I espouse that one cannot develop an understanding of injustice and oppression if one does not have relational experiences that offer knowledge about one's own identities and the identities of others. These relational experiences must on some level include (but not be limited to or reliant upon) significant meaningful relationships across lines of difference that offer disruptive or transformative knowledge that can help one to open their perspective or world-view. Finally, I contend that since social justice is not imperative to most people's survival, especially privileged people, one needs an incentive to make this commitment. In this study that incentive to act morally in the support of justice for all came from a spiritual belief system developed through family participation in organized religion, as well as, personal experiences and relationships that enhanced the experiences and learning from organized religion. I am not arguing that religion itself, or Christianity in particular, is the only or even the best way to develop a set of beliefs about love and justice. It would be disingenuous of me to make assumptions about any other perspective than the one this study focused on. This study has a particular Christian perspective about developing a set of beliefs about love and justice. I would hope that someone coming from a different perspective or worldview about spirituality/morality/religion could compare my insights to their perspective and find useful linkages or offer critics. Ultimately, whatever the perspective or worldview, the point I am trying to make is that to foster a commitment to social justice one's family or community needs to offer the chance to work for justice, thereby having transformative learning experiences, building relationships, and establishing a set of beliefs that will create a foundation for a social justice identity.

It is important to understand the core elements as a collective process and not to break them apart as individual steps. Theoretically, it is helpful to view them separately and work through each element on its own to analyze and critique it, but in practice, we should consider the elements of emotional, intellectual and spiritual as ingredients in a recipe. They must come together and blend into one another to reach their full potential.

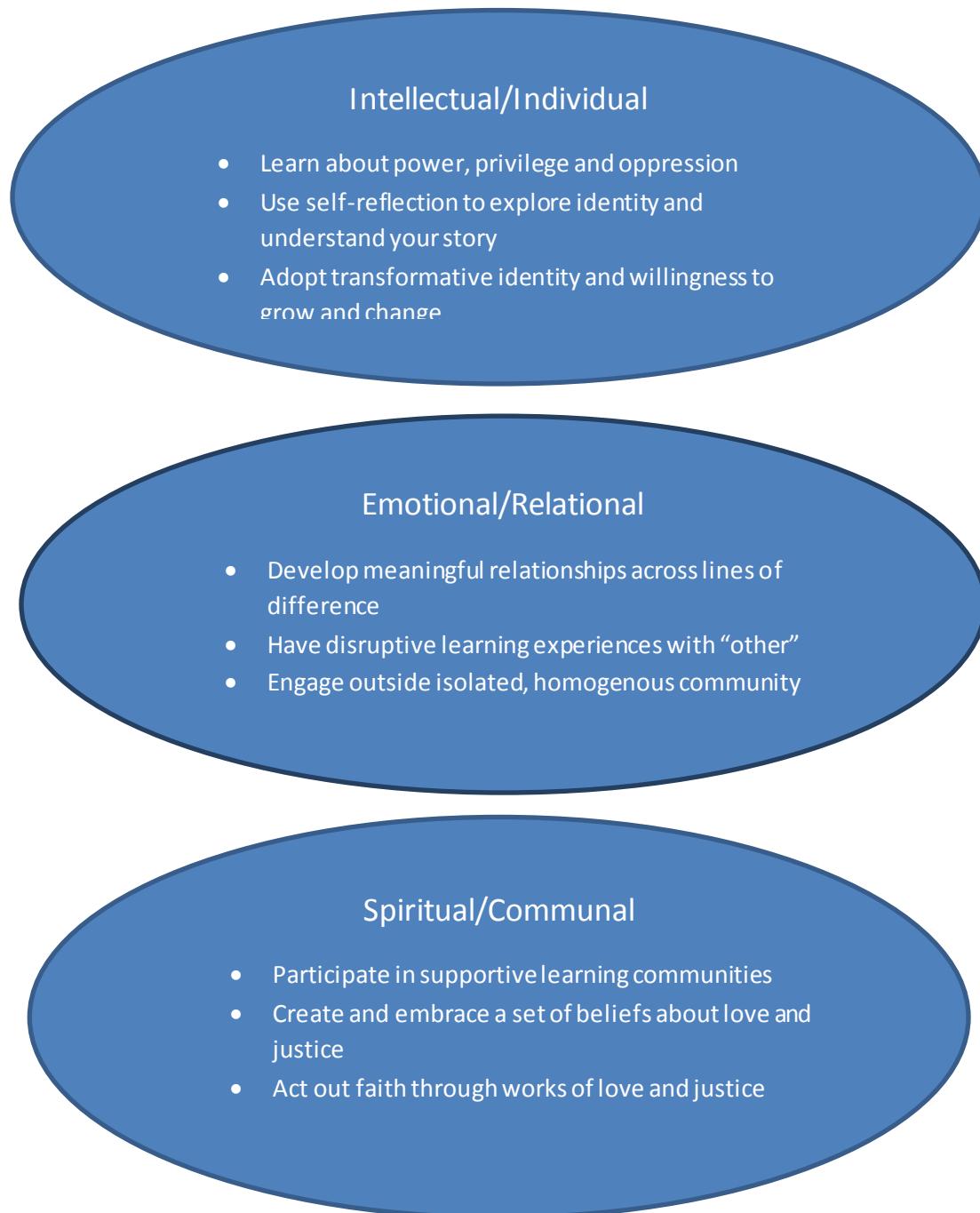
What I learned from this research and my studies at UNCG is that an education towards a commitment to social justice or the development of a social justice identity will require a holistic education with intellectual, emotional, and spiritual components (Shapiro, 2006; Friere, 2003; Darder, 2002). This type of education will be a lifelong pursuit. It can happen in different stages and at many life stages. Although it is an individual process for each person, I have found some key learning experiences that we as parents, educators and community leaders can and maybe should offer if we are committed to the social justice identity development of the young people in our lives.

Core Elements to Developing a Social Justice Identity

Below is a figure of the core elements that I will break down, discuss, and support throughout the chapter. I hope this helps the reader to get an overall perspective of this developmental process. I find this type of chart is helpful when discussing education that overlaps and spirals around. I am not arguing for a linear curriculum plan that would use these elements as consecutive steps in this process. I am positing that these core elements should be remembered when creating learning opportunities. They should be discussed and revisited as children grow into teenagers and young adults. Parents, educators, and community leaders should try and incorporate these elements throughout the educational life of a child, not just as one-time events but as part of an ongoing way of life. I encourage readers to view this chart as a catalyst for debate with

parents, educators and community leaders, not a definitive list. My hope would be that the knowledge of the adults educating the children would offer insight into their own approaches and would add to these core elements in ways that I cannot even imagine.

Figure 31. Core Elements of SJID



Intellectual/Individual

Learn about Power, Privilege, and Oppression

I start with this section on learning about power, privilege, dominance, and oppression because I believe that knowledge is power. If we do not understand on an intellectual level that forces are acting together in a certain way to make things happen in our world, then we cannot think critically about ways in which we can respond to or change those forces.

On the topic of intellect, I would first like to make a point about individual learning before I begin addressing the theoretical issues of learning about power, privilege, dominance, and oppression. I have worked as an educator for a little over 20 years. I have worked in a variety of settings teaching a wide range of subjects. I have taught in classrooms, therapeutic groups, churches, camps, and with individuals in their homes. All of this experience has ingrained in me that everyone learns differently and all people are endowed with a unique intellectual capacity for understanding the world. As Shor and Friere (1987) discussed, part of the work of social transformation is recognizing each person's unique contribution to the world and the right each person has to pursue an education, share their gifts and live out their talents. Thus, I am not espousing that a certain level of intellectual capacity is necessary for an intellectual endeavor into social justice and critical studies. Like the format of my arts-informed research, I want to think differently about how we offer academic work to communities (Cole & Knowles, 2008). This dissertation has not focused on the curriculum about power, privilege, and oppression or a specific theoretical approach to social dominance theory, but that does not mean that when educators start creating a social justice education that all information is equal. What I do want to encourage or espouse is that each child has the

right to question the ways of the world and they deserve to have adults who are willing to engage honestly with them in their questioning and inquiry. As Shor and Friere (1987) discuss the critical theory of knowing includes “action, critical reflection, curiosuty, demanding inquiry, uneasiness, uncertainty—all of these virutes are indeispensable to the cognitive subject” (p. 8). To create this kind of transformative education Perumal (2006) suggests that one must be personally and relationally engaged in critiques of oppression and power and work toward building coalition:

The project of coalition must promote ‘the active creation of oppositional analytic and cultural spaces’, while bearing in mind that, despite the common goal of equality and justice, community members continue to occupy diverse locations within the institution, locations that arise from and give rise to asymmetrical relationships of power. However, because it frames identity construction as dialogical (not just oppositional), it opens the possibility for alternative critical spaces and relationships, by casting the self as a subject-in-process. (p. 740)

Hopefully, with a focus like coalition building from a critical, feminist perspective a transformative education towards a commitment to social justice would offer the intellectual space for each learner to become a critical inquirer and an agent of change.

The women in this study reaffirmed what Johnson (2008) argued: people are not by nature afraid of difference, but they also reaffirmed that adults did not talk to them openly, honestly, and critically about difference, and thus, power, privilege and oppression. He says, “Children—probably the most vulnerable form that people come in—seem to *love* the unknown...There is nothing inherently frightening about what we don’t know. If we feel afraid, it isn’t what we *don’t* know that frightens us, it’s what we *think we do know*” (p. 13). Therefore, we should always listen to children when they have questions and talk to them honestly about their fears and their curiosuty about others. And maybe more importantly, we should be careful of what fears we instill in them. As

parents, educators, and community leaders, we have to face our own fears as Palmer (2007) encourages in *The Courage to Teach*. Palmer says that the “fear of a live encounter with other” actually includes a series of fears: fear of diversity, fear of conflict and fearing of losing identity (p. 38). I believe all those fears were represented in different ways in Chapter IV, Sally’s and Sharon’s homogenous neighborhoods, Margaret’s “teeth-chattering mouth,” and Sharee’s arguments with her grandmother and teacher. As Palmer says, as long as we attempt to avoid fear and refuse relation with or acknowledgement of otherness “we maintain the illusion that we possess the truth about ourselves and the world—after all, there is no ‘other’ to challenge us! But as soon as we admit pluralism, we are forced to admit that ours is not the only standpoint” (p. 38). Although there is a lot of fear in that acknowledgement, there can also be freedom in letting go of the illusion. As Sharee says in her I am poem, “I am liberated by not knowing.” It is this type of liberated sense of self that I believe can truly engage young people’s questions and challenges.

Children are curious and inquisitive by nature of their coming into the world, some more outwardly than others. They will ask questions about why people look different, and how we answer their questions at the youngest of ages will begin shaping what they see as normal, acceptable, and also what is shameful, or what are “things we don’t talk about.” Ellen, Sharee, and Margaret all gave examples of this in their self-portraits. Ellen told the story of the doctor talking about a “colored girl” which made Ellen imagine a little rainbow colored child. Without reference for the term, her creativity took over. Children, at young ages, are very literal in their thinking. Margaret told us how her mother was so proud that she didn’t “see color.” This was a pivotal moment for Margaret because she felt she disagreed with her mother. She did see color, but as she says,

“She didn’t see it as a problem,” implying that she felt her mother or others did see it as a problem. Even more pivotal was Sharee’s experience with her grandmother slapping her and telling her to never let a Black boy kiss you, and Sharee’s response that she had a “deep sense that she was wrong.” As a six year old little girl she was already forming her social justice identity and choosing to affirm loving everyone even if that meant disagreeing with her grandmother. These examples show that children are thinking about what they hear and see about interacting with others and about the importance of difference and the power of othering. If we want to raise our children (by “our children” I mean not just our family, but our village, our community) to develop a social justice identity, we have to be aware of how we engage with others, as well as, what we teach and expect from our children and ourselves.

An example of this comes from my own parenting. I’ve noticed over the years that my little boy stares, dare I say ogles, at things that are new and interesting to him. This is socially awkward for me. I have had to learn as a parent how to teach him to be respectful in those moments, while balancing his desire to learn and grow with my fear of being embarrassed or hurting someone else’s feelings—my fears of conflict and the live encounter with other. At some point I started saying, “Mario it’s not polite to stare at people. If someone is interesting to you, you should introduce yourself and get to know them.” I try to say this to Mario, but I also say it loud enough so the person he is staring at can hear. I’m sure some people would not like being called “interesting,” but a four year old’s vocabulary is limited. My goal has been to always make people approachable to him and to encourage his interest and curiosity in getting to know others. As Johnson says, “If we take difference and diversity as reasons for fear and occasions for trouble, it’s because we’ve learned to think about them in ways that *make* for fear and trouble”

(p. 13). I had to learn to get over my fear of being embarrassed at how someone might respond to him. Those were my fears and I had to learn to not let them discourage his engagement with others. I believe this is the lifelong work of what Sharon calls a “social justice life,” parents, educators, and community leaders need to constantly address their own fears.

Kelly, the pastor at Green Street UMC told me recently about his own fears. During the first few years at Green Street, Kelly had a ministry intern who was a lesbian. She wanted to come out to the church, but he discouraged her, and she did not. He said he struggled with that decision and it continues to plague him, but he decided at the time that the congregation could not “handle it.” A few years later, Neena Mabe moved the church to become a Reconciling Ministry, avowing to be openly welcoming to the LGBTQ community. Kelly wondered with me what might have happened if the intern had come out? Was it his fear of conflict and identity, or was it about the congregation? He cannot go back and replay that experience, but he can allow it to inform him moving forward. It can help him question his own fears of the conflicts justice work brings in future decisions.

I tell that story to point out that learning about power, privilege, and oppression starts at a young age and does not end. We will all meet different kinds of “other.” We are all different kinds of “other.” As children age, the questions change and their development requires different types of information and opportunities. The point of this study is what would happen if a child’s questions and curiosity about difference, diversity, and justice were met with a social justice education? What if they did not have to wait until adulthood to engage in critical studies of power, privilege, and oppression? As I will point out in the next sections, we need to be engaged in supportive learning

communities and we need to have relationships across lines of difference at all ages to honor the knowledge that other people can bring to social justice identity development. Learning to honestly respond, “I don’t know,” may be the most important skill I learned as a parent, and that has, in turn, made me a better educator. Teaching is not about having all the answers: it is about listening to questions and encouraging inquiry.

As stated in Chapter IV, in Ellen’s self-portrait she said, “Teaching the children well” ought to be of primary importance in our desire to raise our children to believe that “God loves everyone.” For those who espouse that belief, to truly live it out we must invite relationships of difference into our homes and family life, and I would argue that we should also invite history into our children’s lives in ways that teach them about the struggle for justice. For many in the group this seemed to be the piece of our education that was missing early on in childhood. Sharon, Clara, Ellen, Sally, and I all mentioned that our parents taught us *to* love and respect everyone, but they did not teach us *how* to love and respect everyone. No one in the group told a story about learning about justice, power, and privilege until young adulthood. As Howard (2005) points out, “If our examination and understanding of the root causes of social inequality are too shallow, then our approach to corrective action will necessarily be superficial and ineffective” (p. 30).

If a community is committed to offering children an education towards a commitment to social justice then how will they learn about injustice in deep and meaningful ways so that their responses to injustice are also deep and meaningful? As Stephen Levine (2011) points out, “Social change is only possible when people in a community have a sense of their own capacity to act, when they become aware of their resources and see themselves as able to re-make the world in which they live” (p. 28).

He goes on to say, “We have made this world together; this means that we can make it differently” (p. 29). If those of us who choose to live and work in communities committed to social justice can teach children to critically understand that people have made this world the way it is—our decisions good and bad have created injustice—then together we can embrace the idea that we can also solve the problems we created together. We can undo injustice if we can think critically about power and approach a problem with an understanding of our capacity to affect change. I believe children and youth deserve this capacity to know, think and act, as much as adults do. It was a consistent theme with the women in the study to teach the children about social justice: Ellen used the phrase, “Teach the children well” in her self-portrait; Sharon said her granddaughters would carry on her work; Becky wanted to teach her children about justice, so that the “wouldn’t see the cracks and discrepancies, she’d seen in her own parents teaching”; Margaret and Pat both talked about honoring their child’s identity development; my story was written for my children, to help them understand their own stories better; and finally Sally said that her parents taught her “To be open and think”—and that is a first step. If we are to complete the journey, encourage the education towards a commitment to social justice, then our community needs to develop and enact a pedagogy for social justice education.

Use Self-reflection to Explore Identity

When asked why they came to participate in the study all of the women mentioned something about reflection, getting to know themselves better, trying to understand how they came to be the way they are. Sally’s answer is a nice example of this:

I am here partly because I love the idea of exploring what factors of life have been influential in getting me to the seemingly random, yet wonderful, places I have found myself in. I am here to explore why I am here so I can find myself in more places like Green Street.

This is why I believe self-reflection is so important. It should be used as a tool to try and understand how we became who we are so that we can find more spaces to grow and heal, and try and avoid the pain and suffering where we can. Self-reflection as a tool in social justice identity development can help us understand how we fit into the picture of creating justice and bringing about social change. As Hytten & Warren (2004) suggest in their discussion of the how White people engage in studies of Whiteness, they say “Critical Democrats temper the need for action with the necessity of consistent and thoughtful self-reflection.” They go on to refer to Freire’s (1981) notion of praxis as “the simultaneous ‘action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it’”(p. 331). All of these theorists point to the fact that the better we know ourselves, the better chance we have of understanding our own power to affect change, or as Palmer (2007) describes it, self-reflection should include an education that is guided by our “inward teacher”:

In a classical understanding, education is the attempt to “lead out” from within the self a core of wisdom that has the power to resist falsehood and live in the light of truth, not by external norms, but by reasoned and reflective self-determination. The inward teacher is the living core of our lives that is addressed and evoked by an education worthy of the name. (p. 32)

Honoring the “inward teacher” and learning to listen to the intuition we all have about right and wrong is at the heart of social justice education. In a democracy it should be the right of the individual to determine one’s position on issues of justice. If we want our

children to make informed decisions they deserve an education that supports their “reasoned and reflective self-determination.”

Adopt a Transformative Identity

If a person learns about power, privilege, and oppression and has the opportunity to self-reflect about their own identity and how thinking critically about power and justice shapes who we are, how we identify ourselves and how others identify us, then at the least this person has been given a social justice education that could support transformation and an attitude of lifelong learning and growth. Sharon exuded that attitude and even said, “I love learning, I really do.” She was so grateful to have found a church like Green Street that encouraged her to take a training on anti-racism and to continue to learn about social justice.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, Ellen’s process reiterates the point that self-reflection helps us to uncover the truths about our own experiences and how they shaped us and continue to shape us if we stay engaged in learning. Ellen offered us the image of the dragonfly in her self-portrait. She looked up its meaning and found that, “They symbolize change, and the change in the perspective of self-realization.” Ellen’s entire portrait and description where focused on education and transformation, being open to the world and what it has to offer. Even in her first journal entry she was “excited” about research. She said,

I found the idea of research exciting, just as I found Green Street Church when I first came here. Being part of a church that includes and serves all races, all income levels, all people without exclusion, appeals to me. It makes me feel at home....I am interested in exploring my own place in all this...my feelings and probably why I am led here.

Ellen's curiosity and willingness to question and learn about justice and equity are a great example of a characteristic of a transformative identity. She is willing to be the dragonfly that adopts "changes in perspective"—that can be transformed by new experiences and information. In Chapter II, I defined a transformative identity as one in which a person views the world through multiple lenses, sees that perception and judgment are socially constructed and individually interpreted, understands how power is at play in all relationships, and works to build relationships that will offer the opportunity to dismantle privilege and create justice and liberty. A person with a transformative identity acknowledges that identity representation and power are critical concepts to consider. This person is not limited by one notion of truth. This person is not static in their world-view or their own identity. This person is constantly seeking experiences to alter perspective and add to an ever expanding notion of the human experience. As Weir (2008) points out in her theory of transformative identity politics:

Transformative identification involves a recognition of the other that transforms our relation to each other, that shifts our relation from indifference to a recognition of interdependence. Thus identification with the other becomes not an act of recognizing that we are the same, or feeling the same as the other, or sharing the same experiences. Identification becomes a process of remaking meaning. (p. 125)

I went on to point out Ferguson's (1998) concept of "negative identity politics," and that Howard (2006) uses a similar terminology of "transformationist White identity," in which he asserts that in adopting this identity one has been challenged by multiple theories and perspectives on race and Whiteness—difference is no longer something to fear, one understands that construction of truth is a dynamic process, and one seeks to participate in the process of social justice (pp. 110-111). I would use these theories to support the idea that someone who identifies as transformative never feels done in terms of learning

about relationships of power and social constructions of knowledge and identity. The women in this study affirmed this notion of a transformative identity as an ongoing learning process of openness, learning, and change. To conclude, Weir (2008) says that “transformative identity politics involves identifications across power divides, it needs to be grounded in a complex, relational model of identity that can incorporate recognition of *relations of power*, as well as *relations of identification*” (original emphasis, p. 125), which leads into the emotional/relational section of the core elements.

Emotional/Relational

Meaningful Relationships across Lines of Difference

I believe the most important thing one can do to work for social justice is to have meaningful relationships across lines of differences that are open and challenging, and engage one in learning about someone else’s pain and suffering in ways that move toward compassion and justice without relying on marginalized others to carry the weight and burden of social justice education and activism. I believe as parents, educators, and community leaders, we have to be intentional about offering opportunities for relationship building and in teaching young people how to “dialogue about differences,” as Hasebe-Ludts (2004) terms it (p. 208). As mentioned in Chapter IV, if we can learn to communicate in intentional, meaningful, open, and trusting ways about difference and otherness, then we have the potential for opening the dialogue beyond difference and towards justice. Hasebe-Ludts’ argues that if we can find ourselves in learning communities and lives that honor the complexities of the human condition, then we have great potential for growth and expansion of our self, or as she says, “I am beginning to see how this positioning of self in relation to other cultures and locations can become a

generative place” (p. 211). This is an argument for the possibilities of growth that can come from intentional, authentic communication and relation with difference.

Howard (2004) uses the term “meaningful personal connection” to describe a relationship in which the White person would be engaged in a relationship of depth and understanding where differences were acknowledged and appreciated however uncomfortable and transformative that might be. Bonilla-Silva (2010) also discusses the importance of building relationships across lines of difference to break down racism and other socially-constructed “isms” of domination (p. 147). Sharon’s portrait elaborates on this idea. Sharon tells the story of her co-worker, who comes out to her, and asks for support in a custody hearing, saying “yes” changed her life. This meaningful relationship across lines of difference is what finally helped Sharon break out of her privileged stance of not engaging in social justice to finally “go against the grain.” Sharon’s relationship building continued and as she says, “I guess the biggest plus in my social justice life is my relationships with others. There is no other way to know how people feel but through personal relationships: In church, in each other’s’ homes, at work and play.” This correlates to Ferguson’s (1998) notion of “bridge building” to create opportunities to break down identities built upon dominant notions of power and privilege and work to dismantle and affirm new ways of working towards justice. She argues that “We must alter our segregated friendship, economic networks, loving and living patterns that keep our privileges hidden from us. This means establishing affinity networks with friends and co-workers engaged in similar pro-justice sorts of bridge identity building” (p.107).

This theme of the importance of relationship or bridge building also arose in our human sculptures. As discussed in Chapter IV, three of the sculptures pointed out that there are people within our congregation, that includes members and non-members,

who are seeking more than “shallow notions of inclusion”, and people who are not. In *Teaching Community*, hooks (2003) has a conversation with Ron Scapps in which he says,

Honest, just, and passionate engagement with difference, otherness, gives me the opportunity to live justly with love. Difference enhances life. This is not to be confused with shallow notions of inclusiveness or experiencing diversity where ones stands in the space of privilege, taking in and from those who are other. (p. 115)

Our congregation offers people the “the opportunity to live justly with love” if they so choose. But, as I pointed out earlier, the reality is there are also opportunities for people to stand “in the space of privilege, taking in and from those who are other” because we are an institution full of people still working under dominant structures and still working through issues of dominant ideology both personally and institutionally. To reiterate, one must be intentional about not only putting oneself in the “generative space” for relationships of difference, but also in making sure that those relationships encourage “dialogues of differences” and offer the opportunity to “live justly with love.” If we are not intentional about our own social justice identity development, then it makes it harder and less likely that our relationships will offer much insight or opportunity for growth and change.

Escape Isolated, Homogenous Community

One of the realities we (read White/privileged) must face when working towards social justice is that we live in segregated societies. The fact of our current school segregation was a topic of the women in the study on at least one occasion. It can be difficult to acknowledge that we make choices, whether conscious or unconscious to live in isolated, homogenous communities. In discussing White privilege and anti-racism, Case

(2012) points out that “The socialization process renders Whiteness and White privilege invisible to Whites (Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1988), including those who genuinely aim to confront their own racism” (p. 91). It can be seen throughout American history that people create homogenous communities with people of common ethnic, racial, religious and economic identities. One of the reasons for this study is to question why people make conscious choices to break out of that isolation, particularly people with privileged identities. I agree with Bonilla-Silva (2010) that White habitus and a belief in colorblind notions of race does not allow for people to develop meaningful personal relationships with people of color or to go even further to challenge their notions of status quo in any category even if they are raised to respect everyone or to believe that God loves everyone equally (p.108). This is one of the impediments for becoming aware and developing meaningful relationships across lines of difference that was discussed in the last section. Challenging the status quo offers new knowledge that can be disruptive and require one to be intentional and possibly different from all those in your current habitus. Sharon called it, “This going against the grain thing”; where one would have to stand out and speak against the normative culture which Sally called, “Going with the flow.” Both of these women acknowledged that they were taught a resistance to an integrated life, as did other women in the study: Clara talked about how girls in Mississippi were “protected”; Becky was told “little White girls don’t go up the hill”; Margaret alluded to her parent’s racism and how disruptive integrating her family through a transracial adoption was; Pat also acknowledged her extended family’s struggle with understanding her Black child’s experiences; and Sharee gave clear examples of her family’s and community’s expectation that some relationships would not be tolerated and would or should be punished. These examples all seem to support Johnson’s (2006) argument

that “People don’t want to look because they don’t want to know what it has to do with them and how knowing something about it might change not only the world but themselves” (p. 9), and Palmer’s (2007) point about the fear of live encounters with other. “Looking” or seeing injustice will change our perspective—it will transform us—we can never be completely ignorant again. It creates discomfort, and yet, the isolation also created discomfort for the women in our story. The afore mentioned examples were all stories of pain. Many of them brought tears as the participants shared them. They make me wonder—what is the cost of isolation and maintaining homogeneity?

In my own life story, there was a cost. My parents took two years to accept the relationship to and the man who would become my husband. After reconciling and coming to a place of acceptance, my mother told me, “At first I prayed he would just go away. Then, I prayed that the two of you would understand the pain you were causing and let it go. Finally, I prayed that I would learn to accept your love, and that was the first prayer I should have prayed.” What has always been most interesting to me in my story is how shocked I was at my parents’ response to my relationship. I had grown up with relationships of difference. In high school, there was a man who I believed became part of my family. He called my mom, “Mom.” He came to Thanksgiving, and he videoed my basketball games, and he was Black. My parents were not being intentional about this relationship. They had no idea it would lead to my believing that a Black person would be welcome to marry into our family. Parents should be aware that the relationships we are exposed to and encouraged to have as a child are part of how we develop notions of social justice. Whether unintentional in my parent’s case, or intentional as I am encouraging, how we relate to difference and otherness within our families and our communities of choice matters. As Hytten & Warren (2004) discuss becoming aware of

Whiteness and then working toward critical democracy place the White person in a liminal space between their family or community in isolation and the possibility of a more just world and democratic society. They say, “we believe that in order to work against the dominating reproductive problematics of Whiteness, we need to move people toward a new space, a liminal location where the ability to hear others is created” (p. 335).

All of the women in the study are glad they stepped outside the boundaries of isolation. From reading Chapter IV, one can see the examples of this: Sharon and Clara are both enamored with their integrated neighborhoods; Sally came to this study because she wants more relationships like she’s found at Green Street UMC; Ellen talked about her love of diversity in her portrait and in her sculpture; and what Pat wrote in her journal seems to speak to the group’s approach to breaking out of isolation: I “love all aspects of diversity—love how it enriches my life...enriches my knowledge/relationship with God.”

Have Disruptive Learning Experiences with “Other”

In Chapter II, I discussed transformative learning theory and tried to show how it can be interpreted through many academic lenses. As I pointed out, the concept of “disruptive learning experiences” comes from experiential education philosophy. Dewey (1938) wrote, “every experience is a moving force: Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into” (p. 38). Oakes, Rogers, and Lipton (2006) used this philosophy and espouse that experiences and stories in our social group can create “disruptive knowledge” which “challenges the facts that people hold...and makes it more likely that the listener will be moved to moral action” (p. 41). Furthermore, Gosselin (2003) uses a metaphor of two roads to explain Dewey’s understanding of how a “habit of mind” can change. Some experiences and knowledge do not challenge one’s

daily experiences, but when knowledge is “disruptive” one has the choice to take the first road and be acted upon by the environment or take the alternative road which is “one of inquiry in which meanings are reevaluated and re-created to guide a transforming self who strives to live a richer, more empowered, and more worthwhile life” (p. 104). I posit here that had a “disruptive learning experience” with a person of difference is a necessary learning experience in understanding power, privilege and oppression.

Sometimes we avoid these disruptive learning experiences with the other because we have been taught to be fearful. As pointed out earlier and supported by Johnson (2006) and Bonilla-Silva (2011), living in an isolated, homogenous community and being taught to fear difference means we are conditioned to avoid encounters with otherness. As pointed out earlier, Palmer (2007) says:

We fear live encounters in which the other is free to be itself, to speak its own truth, to tell us what we may not wish to hear. We want those encounters on our own terms, so that we can control their outcomes, so that they will not threaten our own view of world and self. (p. 37-38)

And yet, in my experience, they do not “happen on our own terms.” That they happen is a gift, and if we can see these learning moments in that way they can move us in the direction of personal transformation and social change. Sally was open to transformation when opportunities arose for her. Her mind was open to the “intellectual Holy Cow!” of intense poverty, as she describes it in her story of a mission trip during her youth.

I would argue that much like Gary Howard (2006) this was an important experience for her to break out of her cultural isolation and have a disruptive learning experience with other. Howard (2006) wrote:

How can White Americans, those who have never been touched viscerally by the realities of race, break out of their cultural isolation and ignorance?...It was engagement with real people in a context totally different from my former life in the suburbs. Something powerful has to happen to us and for us, something we cannot dismiss. Yet even the deep changes of this intense time were only the beginning of my personal transformation. (p. 17)

I also wrote about a similar experience of going to another country and being shaped by my relationships there. In my story I wrote:

I learned about myself by learning about others. I was an exchange student to Germany in high school and a summer missionary to England in college. Through VICA, I travelled all over the country, often by myself. I remember riding through Oregon and thinking how different the landscape there was. Then at the conference giving my speech I was looking out onto a sea of mostly Asian faces, a sight I had never witnessed. These visions changed not only how I saw the world, but how I saw myself in the world. I was not colorblind, I saw rainbows all around me and I thought they were beautiful.

I also saw suffering and discrimination in all its ugliness. I remember the Turkish friends I met in Germany. They truly taught me what it was to be discriminated against because of the color of your skin.

I believe this type of transformative learning, where our paradigms are shifted by the experience of otherness in a personal and profound way, is an imperative part of the work of developing a social justice identity. As Sally says, “going somewhere else and seeing it intensely” was transformative for her. It created the “intellectual Holy Cow!” for her to question, to challenge the status quo of her world. Unlike Howard, I do not believe this was the beginning of her or my personal transformation. We must be careful to not assume that encountering difference is enough to bring about justice or personal transformation. It is important what kind of education we receive from it and what kind of education we receive about justice and power. As pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, this is not a linear education—developing a social justice identity requires

intellectual and relational aspects to be incorporated into an overall social justice education.

Spiritual/Communal

Participate in Supportive Learning Communities

I discussed in my theoretical framework, the importance of beloved community in the development of a social justice identity. I rely heavily on bell hooks and her use of this term, although I extend it into other feminist perspectives (Ferguson, 1998; Weir, 2008; Lugones, 1987; Dean, 1995) and critical perspectives (Freire, 1993; Kincheloe, 2008; Darder, 2002). As I pointed out in Chapter II, I believe it is through the process of relationships and being in community that humans learn about love. In *All About Love*, hooks (2000) argues that we are all raised in community and there is no better place to learn about love, and thus, we are all seeking a loving community. She also makes it clear to point out that all communities, relationships, and families are not loving, and all love is not the same (p. 129-133). If parents, educators and community leaders are focused on creating a social justice education that embraces intellectual, emotional, and spiritual elements then I would encourage an understanding of love as an act of justice as part of that education.

Kincheloe (2008) discusses “radical love” as a crucial aspect of critical pedagogy by saying, “Love is the basis of an education that seeks justice, equality, and genius. If critical pedagogy is not injected with a healthy dose of what Friere called ‘radical love,’ then it will operate only as a shadow of what it could be” (p. 242). That is why I believe it is so important to focus on love, what it is, what it means, and how it informs our commitment to the justice. As hooks (2000) says “without justice there can be no love” (p. 30). I would ask: without love can there be justice? Are they so intertwined that they

cannot exist separately? Is there a certain type of love—maybe Friere's radical love—that stimulates a commitment to the well-being of all people and a life lived for justice for all people? Is it this type of thinking about and dwelling on love and justice that can create beloved communities? As stated in Chapter II, Freire (1993) states:

Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is a commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation. (p. 89)

In Sharee's portrait she gives us an example of finding a beloved community that could connect her feelings of love and her "commitment to others" through her work for justice. Sharee's community of co-journeyers in CHANGE helped her know that:

there are people that really believe that Jesus was a prophetic voice about people loving everybody and inclusion and courage and all of that. That's been a grounding space for me and my sense of growth and then just some foundational pieces of love.

Sharee found a community to support her struggle and open her to the love needed to live within the tension of knowing suffering because we know love. As quoted earlier, Palmer (2007) discusses the practice of love needed to work within a beloved community for justice:

If we are to hold paradoxes together, our own love is absolutely necessary—and yet our own love is never enough. In a time of tension, we must endure with whatever love we can muster until that very tension draws a larger love into the scene. There is a name for that endurance we must practice until a larger love arrives: it is called suffering. (p. 88)

Sharee's story is an example of the practice and commitment to a beloved community that can help us live out our beliefs about love and justice. Kincheloe (2008) supports this idea of using criticality and radical love to create a global community "dedicated to

supporting one another and the larger epistemological and socio-political goals of criticality” (p. 2907). It is this kind of critical foundation that can support the work of love as justice in a beloved community.

Develop a Set of Beliefs about Love and Justice

As discussed in Chapter II, when love is defined as an act of justice, then it becomes more than just the relationships we have with friends and family and people who are like us. The women in the study all talk about the beliefs they had as children. Margaret, Pat, and Ellen talk or write specifically about what they were taught in church about how “God loves everyone” or “God loves all the little children”. Sharon and Sally mentioned how the relationship with their parents taught them about how to treat others equally and with respect. I have mentioned my own learning about God and loving everyone and feeling that it was always part of my life, and yet, we all seemed to question these teachings, because as Pat said in her “I Am” poem, “If God Loves US ALL...why are there...rat holes, private schools, no indoor plumbing, have/have not's, privileged and not privileged, segregation?” This expresses the importance of learning about love *and* justice.

Becky’s poem also had an example of this tension between our parent’s beliefs and their actions: “I am...from not seeing the cracks or discrepancies in my parent’s beliefs until my sister started dating a boy from another race.” I believe a commitment to social justice as parents, educators, and community leaders has to start with an evaluation of the beliefs we hope to instill and how we are or are not living out those beliefs in our own lives. It will require not only the joy of finding out what we have in common, but also the tensions of how our differences distinguish us from one another and the world. While discussing Friere’s concept of dialogical educational practice

Darder writes that “this process requires engaging not only with shared values and beliefs but also with the ways students differ and even find themselves experiencing conflict and tension” (p.103). Beloved communities must be open to working through the tension and conflict toward solidarity.

As discussed in Chapter IV, Sharee uses the term “foundational pieces of love” to describe what she had learned from her work with her colleagues at CHANGE. bell hooks (2003) uses a similar term as well in *Teaching Community*, she says, “I defined love as a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust. All these factors work interdependently. They are a core foundation of love irrespective of the relational context” (p. 131). This definition offers support for the kind of love I am exploring in this section and in the dissertation overall. It is love that reaches beyond the boundaries of our understanding and yet connects us to that larger love we need to do the work of creating acts of justice as yet unseen. Kincheloe (2008) says that through the diversity of our experiences we are freed to cross the critical pedagogical bridge where “new inquiries slap us in the face” and then we travel back to “the constructed matrix of ‘what is’. In many ways our descriptions and narratives derived from our vision of ‘what could be’ help make these visions a reality—our critical theorizing spins a new society into being” (p. 2397). The metaphor of the bridge continues to surface as scholars try to explain the liminal space we must exist in between knowing and being, between seeing the love that is possible and the suffering that exists.

The bridge also speaks to the dichotomy of what parents and educators say and do, what they profess to believe compared to how they live, and what we are taught in church about love and how our church lives out love. It is important to explore this space in between. The women’s stories offer examples of the tensions, ambivalence, and

confusion that can be created if parents, educators, and community leaders are not reflective and intentional about issues of love as justice. If one is not on this inward quest and does not have the opportunity to explore critical perspectives of justice issues , then how do people rationalize that God loves everyone? Without a critical education about power, privilege, and oppression, does one's need to understand the tension of suffering and love require one to create blame and justification for the suffering of others that relinquishes one from any responsibility, even though one proclaims a belief that "God loves everyone"? Would that be a bridge to a different place? I continue to believe that a holistic approach to an intellectual, emotional, and spiritual education with a critical and transformative lens can offer support for the work of love and justice and of building that bridge to the yet unseen, or as the Green Street UMC bulletin says, to the place "where the kingdom of God is break through."

Active Commitment of Faith in Love and Justice

Opportunities to work for justice and to learn about justice need to be offered to young people if we want them to grow up feeling a sense of commitment to social justice and the knowledge of how to create justice. The lived experiences of service, civil engagement, political action, etc., can offer a young person the tools they need to be active in their commitment to social justice. As discussed in the previous section, it is not enough to teach children to love everyone equally. Instilling a belief without giving a young person the chance to act out their faith, is just a shallow gesture; in the same vein, giving young people the opportunity to "serve others" without having the intellectual space to explore issues of poverty, power, and oppression can lead to a perpetuation of the problems that created the need for service in the first place. As Sally's story pointed out, working for justice is not always the same thing as going on a service trip. Having an

experience with “others” without developing the critical intellect to dissect the issues at hand only creates a sense of power over, not power with and power for. As quoted earlier, young people need to be given “the opportunity to live justly with love” through acts of service, compassion, and empathy (hooks, 2003, p.115). Participation in a community like Green Street UMC can offer these kinds of opportunities, but we must remember to be intentional about the reality that there are also opportunities for people to stand “in the space of privilege, taking in and from those who are other” because we are an institution full of people still working under dominant structures and still working through issues of dominant ideology both personally and institutionally. Again, this points to the core elements as a collective body to be incorporated into a holistic education that spans time and is open to the developmental process of each individual.

Conclusion

I hope that in this chapter, I have been able to clearly make my argument for the importance of a holistic education towards a commitment to social justice that includes intellectual, emotional, and spiritual components. The core elements I focused on come specifically from the work with the women and my own learning experiences and are not meant to be a final or comprehensive list for developing a social justice identity or an education towards a commitment to social justice. As stated in the introduction, I hope that readers will use my work as a catalyst for deepening their own engagement with these issues in whatever learning communities one might work in.

I believe the work of social justice and thus of dismantling oppression requires that educational leaders within beloved communities appreciate the complexity of the human experience and the human identity. Don’t people have the right to process justice and oppression in pluralistic ways? Shouldn’t they have the opportunity to build trust and

work in a beloved community to truly develop the capacity to commit to social justice? One of the reasons I engaged in this study is to explore these individual processes of developing a commitment to social justice. I wanted to consider the different ways this type of social justice education happens to try and find some common knowledge that could offer insight for those of us trying to generate an education towards social justice identity development.

As I stated in Chapter II, I believe it is in the beloved community where people truly explore who they are in the world and who others are in the world and are transformed by that knowing. I have attempted to show that there are beloved communities that embody a spiritual, emotional, and intellectual commitment to justice for all. These women and I, our stories and art are my evidence that an education towards a social justice identity can happen for people of privilege and it is an education worthy of our understanding. My hope is that these core elements are insightful and useful for theory and practice in social justice education.

CHAPTER VI

PEDAGOGY AND PRAXIS—CONTINUING THE INQUIRY

Reflections on the Purpose of this Study

In Chapter I, I stated that “this dissertation is an elaborate professional development plan for educational practice and youth development that focuses on how to create an education towards social justice identity development.” My goal in doing this dissertation was to try and situate the work I do within the current academic work of feminist theory and critical pedagogy and to further my understandings of identity development and an education towards a commitment to social justice. I used my professional knowledge of expressive arts and experiential learning modalities to create an inquiry of the transformational stories of small group of White, privileged women at Green Street UMC to explore how they came to develop a social justice identity. Our expressive arts sessions focused on two specific questions: 1) How did each of these women come to develop a social justice identity? and 2) Why do they choose to be members of Green Street UMC with its mission for justice and healing in the world?

I have consistently had to explain throughout my research process how a study with women as the participants relates to working with children, youth, and families as an expressive arts and experiential educator. As pointed out in Chapter I, while researching best practices for social justice education with youth, I found no qualitative studies that supported the use of any particular pedagogy or curriculum to use in developing a social justice education. There are pedagogies, curriculums, and models, but none really

offered evidence or stories that could support my practice (Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey, 2008; Ginwright & James, 2002; Oakes, Rogers & Lipton, 2006). Since I could not do a longitudinal study for my dissertation to inquire into the current practices we employ with children and youth at Green Street UMC, I decided I to work backwards and use a phenomenological approach to see if I could find some evidence to support a pedagogy of social justice education. I gathered the stories and art of a small group of women who self-identified as committed to social justice and attempted to show through my data analysis that there were core elements of social justice identity development that could be supported by their stories and academic theory. I believe exploring the childhood experiences of these women as they related to social justice, enhanced my professional knowledge of social justice identity development. I also believe that the women's stories about how they were educated to develop a social justice identity, our work together as a community, and my analysis did allow me to attain my goals. In the concluding sections I offer my professional insights of the work as it relates to my identity as a social justice-oriented activist/educator, my pedagogy for social justice identity development, strengths and limitations of the study, and ideas for further inquiry on SJID.

An Elaborate Professional Development Plan

Being a social-justice oriented activist who works with youth not only means having an understanding and commitment to social justice, it means being an educator that is committed to a lifelong process of searching and discovering ways in which one can constantly create new learning opportunities and relationships through which one can do the work of social justice education and collective action (Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006). I consider myself a social justice-oriented activist/educator who works with youth. As I have pointed out, I work in a religious setting leading a Christian youth group,

and through that work I also engaged with anti-bias leadership training and interfaith community organizing projects with youth. Over the years, I have felt isolated in my purpose and passion, that there was not enough support in the community or in the academic world for the work we (the other adult leaders and the youth leaders) were doing, and yet, the more I studied the more I found other programs doing similar work or with similar theoretical foundations, such as Michelle Fine (2004), Eboo Patel (2007), Shawn Ginwright (2002), Jeff Duncan-Andrade (2004), Teresa Montano & Rosemary Gonzalez (2008), Louise Derman-Sparks (2008), Gary Howard (2006), Jeannie Oakes, John Rogers & Mark Lipton (2006), and many others. I came to appreciate the importance of doing scholarly research as a part of social justice work, and also how building bridges within professional organizations can make smaller communities feel larger. Oakes, Rogers, and Lipton (2006) make this point in *Learning Power* when they discussed what they learned about their role as researchers within activist youth work:

Engaging with young people and parents who experience educational inequality on a daily basis has made us less tolerant of reform methods that promise little difference and of research strategies that distance scholars from those who live the problems they study. (p. 6)

Working with youth and their families makes the work of reform less about new models for curriculum development or classroom management and more about the aspirations and goals of those being raised in our community. That is what led me to this dissertation in the first place. I wanted to question the validity of our goals and aspirations within our church community about how to create an education towards a commitment to social justice. I realized my first step was not an evaluation of our program, but rather an analysis of social justice identity development itself, so that I could have support for the work I do as a social justice-oriented activist/educator.

Educational scholars are clear that to be a social justice-oriented activist one needs to be critically conscious of the power of personal development and the importance of social arrangements of power. According to McCarthy & Crichlow (1993), “Issues of identity and representation directly raise questions about who has the power to define whom, and when, and how” (p. xvi). To work for justice one needs to understand injustice and how it works in our society. The data and findings support a focus on using transformative education and identity development from a critical/feminist perspective to offer learners knowledge about power, privilege, and oppression while simultaneously engaging in acts of justice—a combination of reflection, inquiry, and action.

As I discussed in Chapter I, I believe it is imperative that social justice-oriented activists/educators understand the many aspects of identity that can contribute to one’s reality of power, privilege, and oppression; they also need to be able to acknowledge and breakdown their privileged identities. I stated how Johnson (2006) writes about the paradox of privilege and how even though we may “be” privileged we do not always “feel” privileged. I hope I have made clear in my study that understanding privilege and positionality gives the educator/activist knowledge necessary to work for justice and knowledge necessary to help youth understand themselves within social systems, categories, and constructs.

Unfortunately, as many authors suggest, educators are rarely exposed to social dominance theory, critical pedagogy, transformative learning, and concepts of privilege (Shapiro, 2006; Purpel, 1989; hooks, 2003; Howard, 2006; Vavrus, 2002). Thus to change how we educate and work with youth, we must also change how we educate educators and activists.

In the next section, I summarize my findings from the data and clarify my pedagogy for social justice identity development. I believe clarifying one's pedagogical stance helps create a professional identity that ensures one is addressing issues of systemic social change and collective action. It helps one set goals for how to create the possibility of a more democratic society capable of equitable education. Oakes, Rogers, and Lipton (2006) describe this as a "transformative goal," which through its development would:

Foster a sense of collective identity as people discover shared interests around which they might act jointly. Inquiry and dialogue allow groups to construct a story of who they are, what they do, and why they do it. That "story" motivates the group to strategize about ways to realize the more hopeful possibilities they have framed. (p. 41)

To me, this is how all youth communities should work, in some ways it even informs how I structured this study: Naming problems, creating a shared story, and working toward a hopeful future in a beloved community.

I believe that the core elements the data analysis revealed can be useful in creating a framework for social justice education for Green Street UMC and can also support my work outside of the church. In the following section I offer my current perspective on a pedagogy of social justice identity development as it has been informed by this inquiry.

Pedagogy of Social Justice Identity Development

As stated in Chapter I, part of the purpose of the study was to consider the current children and youth ministry practices at Green Street UMC, so that as the youth director, I could reconsider my social justice pedagogy and praxis. In this study I framed an education towards a commitment to social justice as one that encourages Freire's

(2000) notion of praxis that incorporates thoughtful reflection and action. This type of education would incorporate reflexivity and allow the student to consider their personal role and identity as it relates to social justice while also incorporating active engagement in justice issues. Thus, the student would simultaneously engage in the work of social change and reflect on the impact of that work on her/his life. This pedagogy embodies intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the self. It is inquiry-based and is grounded in the theories of transformative identities and identifications, relational learning, and beloved community. Finally, the student would consider how this knowledge and work impacts her/his beliefs about social justice and what kind of commitment these beliefs require. I am not trying to imply that these would be linear steps in an educational journey—notice that I did not label them 1, 2, and 3. I believe this type of education would have a cyclical process that would flow back and forth between theory, practice, and belief. This critical, reflective, and transformative learning would encourage the student to develop and name a social justice identity. Kincheloe (2008) speaks to this type of education when he says, “Education in such a society studies ways of making connections between self and other, becoming more adept at radical love, and acting in, concrete, courageous, down-and-dirty ways to end human suffering” (p. 2947). An education towards a commitment to social justice would focus on creating the opportunity for social justice identity development with the aim of ending unnecessary human suffering.

Through my data analysis of the stories and art of the participants in this study, I uncovered a set of emerging themes which I titled the “Core Elements to Social Justice Identity Development.” In Chapter V, I discussed the core elements and showed how the data related to and supported the elements as crucial to the development of a social

justice identity. These core elements offer support for my pedagogy for social justice identity development. In Table 2, I have sorted these themes/elements into the categories of individual, relational, and communal and show how that relates to the human capacities or aspects of self: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. In Chapter I, I included “moral,” as a capacity for developing a commitment to social justice, but I did not include moral here because in this analysis I felt it belonged within spiritual as the “shared beliefs and values.” The table also shows how these categories, of core elements and aspects of self, correlate to my theoretical framework topics of transformative identity, relational learning, and beloved community.

Table 2. Pedagogy of SJID

Theory	Aspects of Self	Core Elements of SJID
Transformative Identities	Intellectual	Individual
Relational Learning	Emotional	Relational
Beloved Community	Spiritual	Communal

Although I have divided up these elements into what appears to be neat, ordered, separate categories, the reality is that a pedagogy for SJID is not that simple. The purpose of the table is to show that there were obvious correlations between theory, analysis, and findings, but when one digs deeper it gets more complicated. For example, having “disruptive learning experiences with others,” which falls under the emotional and relational, is supported not only by relational learning theory, but also by transformative identity and beloved community. Therefore, maybe the table would be better created with the theories on the bottom, supporting all the core elements above which incorporate all the aspects of self, to ultimately reach the goal of social justice identity development. Thus, I created the following table:

Table 3. Another Version of a Pedagogy for SJID

Goal—Development of Social Justice Identity
Holistic Approach —Incorporates multiple aspects of the self, including: Individual, Emotional, and Spiritual
Modes of Experiential Learning —to incorporate all aspects of self it would include: Individual, Relational, and Communal learning experiences
Critical Theories —Foundation to support the modes of experiences are: Transformative Identity, Relational Learning, and Beloved Community

This table shows how the critical theories can offer academic support for the kinds of educational experiences one would offer to incorporate individual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of learning. I am not espousing that there is one way, or a right way, to create an education towards a commitment to social justice, but I do believe that the thoughtful practice by the educator of grounding beliefs about how to approach students and their learning experiences in academic theories is a more sound practice than just following intuition or personal inclinations because these can be embedded in the injustice we are trying to overcome. This is probably not the only theoretical framework that would support SJID, but this is mine.

My epistemological and ontological stances supported by this research are that a pedagogy of SJID would include: a) learning about the self which would be grounded in transformative identities and identification theories, b) learning with and from others through meaningful relationships which would be grounded in relational learning from a feminist/critical perspective, and c) learning that would happen in a supportive community that is sustained by a commitment to shared beliefs about love and justice

and by a solidarity that encourages working for social transformation that is grounded in critical/feminist/spiritual notions of beloved community.

I am not alone in this quest for creating a holistic pedagogy focused on social justice. I have found other scholars, like Ginwright and James (2002), who work with youth and take a similar stance on encouraging individual, emotional, and communal work. Ginwright and James define their work of social justice youth development as work that teaches youth to:

negotiate the use and misuse of power in their lives. Social justice youth development is strengthened by youth and adult allies working together with a common vision of social justice. This requires that adults take seriously their own development and that youth workers shift how they conceptualize youth development. Reaching healthy adulthood is not the only goal of social justice youth development; rather, it is to build a more equitable society through the engagement of critically conscious citizens. (p. 35)

This framework is grounded in a pedagogy that takes seriously the relationships between youth and the adults who choose to engage with them in justice work, yet, as much as I agree with what they are saying and the work they are doing, my framework is a little different. I think that is the purpose of a dissertation like this—an elaborate professional development plan—it requires the student (i.e. me) to become the scholar. It begs the student/scholar to define, support, and argue, not just tell stories about what we have learned and preach about what we believe, but to offer new knowledge and critique to the field—to become part of the academic debate. This process helped me clarify and amalgamate the years of disciplined study and passionate practice into documentation of pedagogy and praxis.

Strengths (and Limitations) of the Study

I need to start by saying that I find it difficult to analyze the strengths and limitations of this study without having input from others. As this work shows, I focus on learning in community. I do, however, believe in critical self-reflection, so I will highlight three areas that I believe were the strongest aspects of the study. Interestingly, I also think these three areas had limitations and I believe offered significant room for growth or for more inquiry. I will discuss: (a) similar category identity of participants, (b) prior relationships within group and with facilitator, and (c) professional skills of scholarartist and use of arts-informed social inquiry as methodology. I finish this section by acknowledging two areas of analysis that felt unfinished and therefore limit the findings of the study: reconciliation and religion/spirituality.

Focus on Privileged Identities

Since this study focused on privileged identities I believe it was useful in the data collection and analysis that all of them women in the study have multiple, similar privileged identities that set the collective identity of the group as one of privilege. Even though we were all women and in that way can be admitted into a marginalized group, that did not seem to impact the group's focus on their privileged identities. Unlike Case's (2012) study, none of the women in the group mentioned coming to develop a social justice identity because of oppressive experiences of being a woman. I am not assuming that the women in the group do not experience oppression as women, rather I am pointing out that that was not a focus of their stories. Two participants noted being treated differently because they were "girls": Clara, in her discussion of life on the farm and the castration of the bulls, and Becky, in her "I Am" poem when she wrote "little, White girls don't go up the hill." Therefore, I would say that although the women were

able to critically discuss issues from a privileged stance, the lack of exploration of issues of gender and other aspects of femininity is a limitation of the study.

Most of the identity focus in the data was on racial identity. There could be multiple reasons for this, I cannot assume without further exploration, and further exploration is definitely called for. I think a major limitation of the study was how ideas were presented through the art or discussion, but never followed up on to allow for deeper critique on issues of Whiteness. I think doing follow-up one-on-one interviews or focused journaling would have allowed these themes of White identities to be explored in more depth, which would offer more knowledge about White identities and connection to participation in a diverse, spiritual community committed to social transformation.

Another strength of the study group being focused on privileged identities is that it allowed time for these women to critically reflect on their privilege, on issues of social justice without the participants from marginalized groups having to hold their hand through the learning process, or expecting marginalized people to represent generalized notions of a collective identity from a solitary stance. I do believe privileged groups—Whites, able-bodied, etc.—need to have honest, critical conversations about their privilege among themselves. They need to struggle with issues of representation, resistance, and identity politics from their unique perspective. As Case (2012) suggests, “Many Whites may perceive their own anti-racist views as deviant from the norm and therefore keep their struggles hidden because they do not feel comfortable sharing them in everyday interactions”; therefore, the more studies offering research about anti-racist White identity are needed to understand more fully how to engage White people in anti-racist/anti-oppressive work (p. 92).

And yet, two limitations come to mind in this scenario: essentializing categories of privilege and separation from the oppressed groups does not allow them to challenge the assumptions and assertions of the privileged group. As discussed throughout the dissertation, I find approaching identity from feminist perspective with an understanding of intersectionality is more conducive to 21st century notions of self and society (Hall, 1987; Levine-Rasky, 2011; Case, 2012). That is why in the section on continuing the work I propose doing similar work with more diverse groups and on a more ongoing basis. It is also why I support the notion of beloved communities where building bridges and creating transformative identities would allow the participants to continue to challenge ideas of oppression without remaining static in their collective identity (Ferguson, 1998; Hytten & Warren, 2004; Weir, 2008).

Meaningful Relationships

This leads to the second strength of the study: relationships. As mentioned earlier, I knew the women in the group before they even signed up. They did not all know each other, but they all knew me, and since I was the facilitator this allowed for trust to be established before the group even met. That is not to say that I did not employ group building techniques, rather it points to how quickly the group was able to come together and share deeply personal and potentially painful stories. I consider this a strength because the goal of the inquiry was to gather stories about social justice which by its nature is a painful topic.

I believe my prior relationships with the women allowed them to share conflicts with their families, their friends, our church, and society at large, because they have been witness to my story and my pain even before the study began either through our friendship or through my roles as youth director and vocalist. These roles at Green

Street UMC have positioned me as a public figure within our community for over ten years. This position offers congregants a chance to witness my story in a public way that most of the members do not experience. When my child was born and when my mother died people I did not know reached out to me in intimate ways that surprised and supported me. I believe this level of embeddedness within the community was part of my desire to do my research within the church. This was not my original intent when I started exploring dissertation topics, but it became clear that I wanted to know more about this community, and I wanted to offer them something in return for all the support they have offered me.

It is not something I can prove, but I do not think the stories and art would have been as personally revealing if the women did not know me as well as they did before they signed up. At the same time, I wonder if their desire to help me and their knowledge of my beliefs created bias in the experience. Only more data collection within different communities could offer insight into that question.

Another aspect of being able to quickly establish a trusting and safe place of sharing would be in dealing with the topic of privilege and oppression within a group. Since I allowed them to self-identify as committed to social justice I do not know the level of knowledge each of them holds about theories of oppression. This would be an important aspect to consider if working in a community where trusting relationships were not already formed with the facilitator and needed to be established in the process of the work because, as Case (2012) points out, sensitivity, defensiveness and silence are all too common when White people try to deal with issues of race (p. 92).

Conflict and differing opinions arose in our discussions, but did not seem to shut participants down or exclude ideas presented from being explored. Two such examples

both involved Sharee challenging other participant's experiences. One was with Clara, which I mentioned earlier, about her use of the term integration, as opposed to, desegregation. As I explained, Sharee's challenge to her use of the term became a learning moment for Clara. The other was when Sally was sharing her self-portrait and talking about her experience on foreign mission trips, Sharee raised the issue of tension with these trips as "boutique mission trips" and vented about her feelings about the participants and what they learn, which led to another discussion of foreign adoption by White parents, but in the end Sally jumped back in and said, "it's not that I'm offended by that at all, but that was completely my experience... it's that's one of those things that's also like, none of this makes sense, but it's part of who I am. And it's part of my story of understanding poverty." She went on to talk about how important it is to have these conversations and to challenge our thinking and question our experiences we had growing up without feeling like we have to erase our past and act like we do not have privilege and were never complicit in someone else's suffering. This exchange was really powerful to me—emotions were very heated—and yet, Sally's comments show the conversation as one of solidarity, of understanding one another, and appreciating the emotions, not dismissing them or needing to avoid them. I am glad our group was able to deal with powerful emotions and painful stories in a caring, respectful way. This was a strength of our group that I cannot assume would be easily replicated but is something I would like to learn more about because I think we all appreciated the level of exchange.

Use of Arts-Informed Inquiry

This leads to a focus on the arts and my professional skills in facilitating arts-informed social inquiry. I believe this was a strength of the study, most importantly

because I believe in the use of the arts to self-reflect. I also think it was a strength because I think professionals should do what they know, find their talent, and use it. I believe this is my talent and I am grateful I had the opportunity to share it.

Use of the arts can also be a limitation because some people, like Sharon, do not consider themselves artists, and therefore, they may choose not to participate at all, or if they do participate may have a level of resistance to the work that hinders the group and the inquiry (McNiff, 2011). I was fortunate to not have these issues, but I am aware that if I continue this work it is likely I will face them in the future, just as I have faced them in previous professional experiences in classrooms and therapy groups.

Reconciliation

One of the struggles of living a “social justice life” from a privileged standpoint is that one needs to address the incongruences of our world and our lives. The women in the study showed how the love of God they were taught as children did not match the injustice they saw in the world. That is the point at which one has to choose to either begin the process of reconciliation or rationalization. Will that person choose to struggle with the tensions of the world or try and justify privilege by assuming racist, sexist, etc. beliefs that allow space for inconsistent messages of equality and fairness? The women in this study seem to move in the direction of reconciliation, but that was left unexplored.

What might have been added to the data if I had asked about fear and guilt? Throughout the work I point to authors who acknowledge the importance of facing guilt and fear in the process of transformation (Palmer, 2004; Johnson, 2006). What insights would we have gleaned about troubling privilege if the women had explored their own process of reconciliation? To reconcile we must struggle with conflict set forth by discrimination and oppression and work toward harmony with those who are wronged by

the imbalance of power in our world. In the Christian tradition, Jesus is our example of reaching out to the marginalized: the poor, the sick, the hungry, the sex workers, the abused, etc. The parables of Jesus are filled with examples of people on a journey toward reconciliation: the rich man inviting all the poor to his banquet comes to mind. Yet these parables, as our pastor often reminds us, are not easy morality tales with simple messages of good and bad, right and wrong. The parables are meant to be wrestled with, questioned in the rabbinical tradition, and always troubled by new understandings of God and humanity.

This study could have explored these issues of reconciliation in a more specific and intentional way. I could have troubled the concepts that were mentioned in our discussion, such as mission trips and transracial adoption that can lend themselves to privileged people assuming a position of generosity toward the marginalized; a position that encourages the privileged to see themselves as the benefactors of goodness, without the honest self-exploration that implicates our privilege in the injustice. Reconciliation would require people of privilege to do the self-work of decentering their privilege in ways that work toward equity and justice, not just reaching out to the marginalized “others” in ways we can accommodate without challenge to our positionality.

I would argue that Green Street UMC, as a whole, needs to struggle with reconciliation, especially given our status as a Reconciling Ministry. Reconciliation is not just about welcome and inclusion; it is about redistribution and balance of power. Our current stance on marriage equality is a step towards reconciliation (See Public Statement in Chapter I). I would challenge all of us not just to acknowledge our privilege

and work for justice for others, but to challenge our privilege and work toward our own restoration as human beings struggling for an end to unnecessary human suffering.

More about Faith

I would argue that although spirituality and religion play a prominent role in this study, my exploration of issues of faith and spirituality could be explored in more depth. I think because this dissertation is focused in Educational Studies I hesitated to include more specific focus on the theory of religion and spirituality. Maybe that is because of my own scholarly interest and comfort with critical studies, maybe it is because there is not enough focus with critical studies on faith and spirituality from a Christian perspective. Maybe it is because I have not done all the work I need to do to reconcile my own struggles with being a Christian, and therefore, being implicated in the many atrocities wrought by the Christian church at large. The point here is that it was left undone, unexplored.

For future research I would like to go deeper into the issues of faith and justice within critical studies. I could have asked the participants to consider how their faith informs their beliefs about justice. Many of them mentioned that Jesus was their example for justice, but that was left unexplored. It would be interesting to focus more on the aspects considered under the theory of beloved community and question how beliefs about justice are or are not taught or encouraged in the church. Even though one of my main questions was about participation at Green Street UMC and its impact on the participants SJI, that question did not receive as much time during the sessions due to the time constraints. I could also look to other areas of theory such as feminist theology for how it might inform this work. This all leads into in the next section on how the inquiry never ends.

Further Research—Inquiry Never Ends

I hope that this study continues to be an extension of my life's passion. I have been working toward this dissertation throughout my professional career, and I look forward to continuing with arts-informed inquiry focused on social justice identity and education. In this section I will explain three specific ways I would like to expand this research.

I would like to continue the work with this group of women by creating an interactive art exhibit that would allow the congregation and community to participate in our learning by viewing and responding to our art and stories. I was inspired by Cole & McIntyre's (2004) article about doing an interactive art exhibit on the "complexities of caregiving" in Canada. Their inquiry offered the community a chance to experience art and information about Alzheimer's and then reflect and respond in a communal journal. They used the aesthetic experience to encourage "aesthetic contemplation." They say that "In research, as in art, representations express and invite engagement with individual characteristics and elements of experience but at the same time reflect some more universal themes or qualities" (p. 2-3). I believe offering this type of aesthetic experience and aesthetic contemplation would enhance the dialogue within our community around issues of identity and social justice. In this next phase of the research I would hope it could be more participatory inquiry which would position the participants as co-researchers and allow them to make decisions about how we would structure the interactive art exhibit and what we would do with the data gathered. As I told the ladies in our last session, "My formal role as head of the research group is over, now it is up to us as a collective group to decide how and if we want to move forward."

I am also interested in offering similar expressive arts sessions to Green Street UMC, members without the limitation of category identities to have the potential for more diverse groups and more difference in the stories and art. I think this would offer more depth of analysis and the ability to generalize the findings in broader terms. It could also offer the church information to support our ongoing ministries. This could also be extended to our partner institutions IDR and CHANGE. Like other arts-informed inquiry in communities the sessions could be extended to include knowledge creation within communities that could enhance broader knowledge about social justice education, as well as self-reflection for data collection. As Cole and Knowles (2008) point out, "Arts-informed research, with one of its main goals of accessibility (and breadth of audience), is an attempt to acknowledge individuals in societies as knowledge makers engaged in the act of knowledge advancement" (p. 60). Thus continuing the work in an arts-informed method would encourage participation from varying perspectives and positions within society.

I would also like to consider how a pedagogy for SJID could be incorporated into our Christian education philosophy and curriculum at Green Street UMC. This might involve pastors, staff, parents, and/or committee members becoming engaged in the inquiry. We are already working on ideas for a Sunday school curriculum around issues of social justice. Sharee suggested during the follow-up session that I should create an adult VBS (Vacation Bible School: a format for Christian education usually for children during summer break). Could this work evolve into Sunday school classes, VBS, retreats, etc. with participants of all ages? What would be the value of collecting data from and doing inquiry with intergenerational groups? Could we do a longitudinal study as children are raised in the church? There are many questions for our church to

consider if they choose to move forward with this inquiry. As there are many questions for me to ponder as this chapter literally and figuratively closes and I move one to the next.

Conclusion

This dissertation has been a critical process that allowed me to embody the theories of transformative identities, relational learning, and beloved community in an arts-informed social inquiry praxis. The act of the research became a nexus for the theories and the lived experiences of the researcher. I was embedded within the research group in a way that allowed me to experience my transformative identity as we explored our art and stories. The relationships with the women throughout the process offered me insight and knowledge I could not have accessed on my own, and the creation of this beloved community was a gift. The reality of living this inquiry process with these eight women was more than I could have hoped for. Their openness and engagement during the sessions, their excitement for and with each other, their hesitation to leave after the last session, their care for the project, their wonder, their responses to the writing—it has all been overwhelming. It might have been easier to do a study without human subjects, but it would not have been more fun, more creative, or more inspiring.

I am so grateful for the opportunity, for the privilege, I have had in doing this work. I feel inspired at the close of this dissertation. I feel hopeful that the work I have done, the work this community has done, will inspire social change and create more opportunities for transformative learning in beloved communities devoted to social justice.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION

Letter of invitation for participation in UNCG dissertation study entitled “Exploring the social justice identities of White women engaged in a spiritual community committed to the work of social justice”.

March 15, 2012

Dear potential participant,

Hello. I am conducting my doctoral research to complete my studies in Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. For my research I would like to study White women's participation in spiritual communities committed to social justice. Using art-based activities, I plan to help the women in the study explore how they came to develop a commitment to social justice and to consider why they participate in a spiritual community that often reminds them of their racial (as well as other) privilege and challenges them to address their privilege in equitable ways.

Over the course of two art-making sessions that will involve some at-home reflection, I hope to engage the study's participants in meaningful art creation and reflection in a supportive and friendly group environment. If this sounds interesting to you please read the list of descriptors below to see if you are a good match for the study. If you answer "yes" to the questions then please see me after worship, give me a call at (336) 749 1625, or send an email expressing your interest to amybith@gmail.com. Interest should be expressed by Wed., March 28, 2012. I will contact all potential participants to discuss further steps.

- Do you consider yourself committed to the ideal of social justice?
- Do you identify as a White woman?
- Did you become a member of Green Street with the hope that it would foster your commitment to social justice?
- Do you enjoy the creative process and participating in artistic activities within groups?

- Are you open to learning from others and engaging with the creative/artistic stories of other women from Green Street?
- If the dates work with your schedule, are you willing to commit to two Saturday sessions from 9am-1pm, to a 1-2 hour follow-up session to review research, and to doing an at-home art project on your own between sessions?
- Have you been a member of Green Street for at least two years, during which time you have actively participated in the congregation by serving on committees, councils and/or attending Sunday School or Bible Studies?

Thank you for your consideration,

AmyBith Gardner Harlee
Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Studies at UNCG
(336) 749 -1625 or amybith@gmail.com

Camille Wilson, Ph.D., UNCG Faculty Supervisor
(336) 334-3467 or camille.wilson@uncg.edu.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Exploring the social justice identities of White women engaged in a spiritual community committed to the work of social justice.

Project Director: Amy Gardner Harlee

Participant's Name: _____

What this study is about

This study is about the social justice identity development of White women who are members of Green Street United Methodist Church. Amy Gardner Harlee has explained in the earlier verbal discussion the procedures involved in this research study. These include the purpose and what will be required of you. Any new information that comes up during the study will be provided to you if the information might affect your willingness to continue participation in the project.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

You are being asked to participate in three group sessions with other women whom have chosen to participate in this study. The first two sessions will last approximately four hours. The third session will last approximately three hours. During the first two sessions you will be asked to participate in expressive arts activities in which you will use visual art and creative writing to tell stories of how you came to learn about social justice. You are also being asked to create one piece of art on your own between session 1 and 2. The third session will be a follow up session offering the group a chance to review the researcher's representation of the art and the storytelling.

Why are you asking me?

You are being asked because you are a White women who has been a member of Green Street UMC for at least three years and have participated in a leadership capacity in the church. You self-identified as someone committed to social justice and you are interested in doing creative and expressive art with a group.

Possible good things that may come out of this study

You will learn something useful about your educational journey toward a commitment to social justice. Your story will contribute to the general knowledge about educating young people about issues of social justice. And you will help the Green Street UMC congregation to further its understanding of social justice identity development. You will also have the chance to build deeper relationships with a small group of women within the congregation. You will also have the opportunity to create personally meaningful art.

Possible risks that may occur in this study

By creating art and telling your story in this group you are making yourself vulnerable in ways that can be emotional and stir up painful memories.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study. Art supplies will be available to you, but you are also allowed and/or encouraged to use your own supplies if desired.

All of my questions

Amy Gardner Harlee has answered all of your current questions about you being in this study. Any other questions concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Dr. Camille Wilson who may be contacted at (336) 334-3467 or camille.wilson@uncg.edu.

Leaving the study

You are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw your consent to be in this study at any time. There will be no penalty or unfair treatment if you choose not to be in the study. Being in this study is completely voluntary.

My personal information

Your privacy is important and will be protected and honored. You will not be identified by name or other identifiable information as being part of this project unless you request in writing that your name be identified with your art and contributions to the study. Please be aware that identifying factors can be included in your art. As facilitator, Amy Gardner Harlee, will constantly monitor privacy issues in the art and be in conversation with participants as to their choices to include personally revealing information in the study.

Study approval

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board makes sure that studies with people follows federal rules. They have approved this study, its consent form, and the earlier verbal discussion.

My rights while in this study

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351

By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older. You also agree to participate in the study described to you by Amy Gardner Harlee.

Participant's Signature

Date

Witness* to Oral Presentation
and Participant's Signature

*Investigators and data collectors may not serve as witnesses. Participants, family members, and persons unaffiliated with the study may serve as witnesses.

Signature of person obtaining consent on behalf of

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Date

APPENDIX C
EXPRESSIVE ARTS SESSIONS

Outline of Data Collection

There will be two art-making sessions in which data will be generated and an at-home art assignment between the two sessions. Each session will be 4 hours in length from 9am-1pm. Snacks, appetizers, and beverages will be provided throughout, with 5-15 minute breaks between activities to rejuvenate. Approximate times are given for each activity, discussion and reflection, but it will be up to the student researcher to pay attention to participant's engagement and adjust times accordingly. For example if everyone seems to finish a journal reflection in 2 minutes the student researcher will wrap up and move on. It will be the responsibility of the student researcher to adjust times accordingly to keep the overall session within the 4 hour limit.

Then there will be a follow-up gathering during which the participants will have a chance to respond to the dissertation findings. The following is the format for the two sessions and the follow-up.

Session #1

Welcome

The student researcher (SR) will welcome participants into the inquiry process. She will thank participants for their willingness to give of their time and share their knowledge. She will remind participants that they are free to leave at any time and are encouraged to raise any concerns to the student researcher or the project director, Dr. Camille Wilson. Participants will also be told that due to the nature of the art activities there will be times when they feel rushed to finish what they are working on and other times when they are done while others are still working. Due to this, participants should feel free to use "extra" time to take a break. SR will give some parameters about where to take a break and discuss building and use of space. Bathroom breaks are encouraged when needed, especially during times when participants are working individually.

Introduction of work, reminder of questions and goals of research: SR will go over the focus of the dissertation research and goals of the research as stated in the consent form. (10 min.)

Journaling

- The SR will introduce the use of the journal to the group. The participants will choose from a selection of notebooks to use throughout the research process. The SR will tell the participants that she will collect the journals at the end of every session and will be using what is recorded in them as part of the research. The SR will advise the participants to remember this as they reflect in the journals throughout the sessions. If participants would like to take the journals home between sessions then the researcher will make photocopies or digital copies after each session so that no data is lost if the journal is lost between sessions. The SR will also tell participants that she will be returning the journals to them once the dissertation process is completed, as a thank you gift for their participation.
- Instructions: The SR will tell the participants that the purpose of reflecting in the journals is to enhance the inquiry process and add to the data collection. Reflecting in the journals is a way for participants to capture thoughts and ideas that describe their meditations and/or the ideas generated during storytelling. It is also a way to explore concepts revealed in the art experiences more deeply and personally. The hope is that the data in the journals will offer support for themes that surface in the art activities. When participants are asked to reflect on an experience they can do so with words, images or both. Usually they will be given a 5 minute time period to reflect.

Journal Reflection #1

- In your journal take some time to reflect on why you are here. Some questions to consider (Questions for journal reflections will always be written on a board). What do you hope to get out of this inquiry experience? What do you hope to learn? What are your interests in the topic of social justice and spiritual communities? What do you hope the overall outcomes of the research might be? What are your expectations of the student researcher? You can also explore

your fears. What are you afraid might happen that would be uncomfortable or upsetting? (3-5min.)

- Participants will be given the opportunity to share from their reflections with the large group. (Conversation limit 5 min.)

Activity #1 Community Contract

- Purpose: To help establish ground rules and ongoing guidelines for community culture. Contract is viewed as a living document and can be added to, amended and referred to throughout group experience.
- Instructions: The student researcher will instruct the group to choose a symbol to represent the relationship we would like to have with one another throughout the course of the research. A volunteer will draw the symbol on a large piece of paper. Each participant will then be asked to suggest a visual symbol, word or phrase to add to the drawing as a way she would like for the group to interact to go inside the large symbol, or offer something she suggests we keep outside the group and thus would be drawn outside the large symbol. Once everyone agrees, each participant adds her contribution. Then as an act of commitment everyone signs the contract.
- Time: 10-15 minutes

Activity #2 "I Am Poems"

- Purpose: Participants are guided in creating a poem that describes multiple cultural aspects of their upbringing. This can be found in Beverly Tatum's work and has been adapted and used by many others.
- Instructions:
Step 1: SR will ask participants to think back to their early childhood. As each descriptor is read off the list spend a few minutes brainstorming and jotting down whatever comes to mind. The list will include: 1. Where did you live? Describe the place or places. 2. Whom did you live with? Think about the people. 3. What did you love? 4. How did you spend your time alone? 5. What foods were around all the time? What foods were made for special occasions? 6. What were the sounds of your childhood? Music, voices, environment. 7. What do you remember about church, religion or faith? 8. Finally, what is most important for others to know about where you grew up?

Step 2: We will go through the list as a large group and participants can share some of their memories.

Step 3: SR will ask participants to take their memories and turn them into a poem. It will be suggested that they begin with the words “I am” or “I am from”, which can be repeated throughout to give structure, or just used once as an introduction. Examples will be available for those who would like to peruse before they begin writing.

Step 4: Share poems with group. Each participant will be asked to share with the group. They can read all or some of their poem.

- Time: 30-45 minutes

Break 5-10 min.

Activity #3 Social Justice Identity Development Exploration

- Purpose: This activity will include multiple layers of meditation, storytelling and journal reflection to go deeper into the idea social justice identity development and explore their memories of how they came to be committed to social justice.
- Instructions for each section are described individually.

Step 1. Journal Reflection #2—Defining a Commitment to Social Justice

- Each participant will be asked to take a few minutes to write about what they think a “commitment to social justice” means. What does it involve? How would you describe it to someone else? What is social justice to you? We will share in the group and the SR will share her working definition and ask for feedback. (10-15 min.)

Step 2. Meditation—SR will instruct the group to find a comfortable place to relax. She will encourage participants to lie in the floor if they are comfortable doing so (the room in use is carpeted).

- The SR will lead the group in guided meditation beginning with deep breathing and focusing on relaxing every body part. Then the SR will tell participants, “We are going to go on a journey in our minds. We are going to find your inspiration for becoming committed to social justice. Prepare yourself to go somewhere beautiful where life is a wonderful as our imaginations can behold. Imagine you are walking down a road. Maybe it is familiar to you—maybe you’ve never been here before. Look around. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you

smell? Awaken all your senses and observe your surroundings. Keep walking down the road staying alert as you go. Ahead you see a basket. You are very excited and know deep inside that this was left just for you. It holds a key to how you became you. An important gift that brought you to this place. You rush to pick it up and look inside—what is there for you? (Pause to allow for participants to imagine). It is time to move on. Do you take the basket and its contents with you or leave it behind? It is up to you. The road continues around a bend. Things begin to change. You see a dark cave ahead. It is inviting, not scary or frightening. You know it leads to the place you want to go most. The place that will answer your questions and remind you of your best self. You enter. You move through the darkness. Still very aware of your feelings and your surroundings. Ahhh, you have arrived. Enjoy your time here. Take in all it has to tell you. What wisdom is here for you about creating a world of peace and justice? What messages are here for you? Is anyone here to teach you? Listen closely to what they have to say. Take your time. I will return in a few moments. (The SR will give time for the participants to imagine, paying attention to body movements or restlessness, which is a sign to end meditation). I'm back. It's time to say good-bye. (Pause). You turn to find the exit, maybe a garden gate, or the road you were on before, maybe a lit red exit sign. Walk toward it and note how it feels to be leaving. Don't rush away. Meander through the exit and back to the room. Feel your body on the floor or in the chair. Begin to move a little—wiggle a finger or a toe, take a deep breathe. When you are ready open your eyes. Stretch. Fully return." (5-10 min.)

Journal Reflection #3—Take time to reflect on your meditation. Write about what you saw, felt and experienced. How does it relate to your commitment to social justice, or does it? (5 min).

Step 3. Storytelling—Participants will move from partner to partner telling stories about social justice identity (SJI) development. (25-30 min.)

- Participants will partner up to discuss meditation experiences. One partner will have 2 minutes to share while the other listens quietly, yet intently. Then the other partner will have 2 minutes to tell about her meditation experience, trying not to reflect on her partner's experience. After both have shared they will have a chance to discuss conversationally about each other's storytelling.

- Change partners. Using the same format of taking turns. Participants will be asked to tell a story about a person who was significant in their SJI development.
- Change partners. Using same formant of takings turns. Participants will be asked to tell a story about an experience that was significant in their SJI development.
- Change partners. Using the same format of taking turns. Participants will be asked to tell a story about how they came to make a conscious choice to be committed to social justice. What relationships and/or experiences led to this commitment? Was your spirituality and/or religion significant in this commitment? This story may incorporate aspects from previous stories.

Journal Reflection #4—Reflect on the stories you told and the ones you heard. What do you think is important in the development of a commitment to social justice? How important are relationships? Are there certain kinds of experiences that seem significant? How does your commitment to social justice affect your identity, the way you see yourself and the way others see you? (3-5min.)

Break 15 min.

Activity #4 Mandala of Journey toward Social Justice Identity

- Purpose: Participants will work on creating a mandala that describes something about what they have learned about their personal journey toward social justice. A mandala from the Jungian tradition is artwork spontaneously created, usually within the shape of a circle, which helped to access the unconscious self. The circle serves as a symbolic vessel to contain the artist's expression of the self. This activity is designed to offer inspiration for their social justice identity self-portrait, and also act as a representation of the day's inquiry. This is not meant to be a finished product, more of a process of discovery.
- Instructions: Participants will be given a poster size piece of paper with a large circle drawn on it. SR will explain that a mandala used in the Jungian tradition is a tool to help one explore the self and go deeper into the unconscious to remember and discover. SR will explain, "Please take a few moments to consider your social justice identity development and then just try and let your imagination guide you in creating an image that reflects your identity in the mandala. You can use the side with the circle or flip your paper over and use the blank side. This activity is meant to be spontaneous, so don't worry about a

finished product, just go with the flow. You can use any materials on the table (SR will provide collage materials, paint, oil pastels, etc.) or anything you brought. You will have 30 minutes so do not rush yourself." If time allows participants can choose to share their mandala with the group.

- Time: 35-45 min.

Break 5-10 min. (Before beginning the Mandala activity participants will decided whether they would like to be individually responsible for taking a break during art work or whether we should take a collective break after a designated time. Break will be decided by consensus—everyone must agree.)

Instructions for individual work: "Social Justice Identity Self Portrait". Participants will be given the SJIP handout and we will discuss. (See Appendix C) (Time 5-10 min.)

Wrap-up

Journal Reflection #5—Spend a few minutes reflecting on the day. Did it go as expected? Where there any surprises? Do you feel it was successful in its goals? Is there anything you wish to share with the SR?

- One Final Word—We will go around the circle and share one word each to conclude the day. (SR will write them on a poster.)

Session #2

- Check-in, Welcome, Reminder of goals, questions and contract (10 min.)

Activity #1 Social Justice Identity Self Portraits

- Purpose: This will be a chance for participants to describe the process and final product of a Social Justice Identity Portrait.
- Instructions: Each participant will share with the group how they went about creating their SJIP and to describe the final product. Once each participant has shared, the group may respond with questions and comments. The SR will also share her SJIP.
- Time: 60-70 min.

Journal Reflection #6—Take time to reflect on the themes of the SJIP's. What similarities and differences do you see in the portraits and in the description and discussions? What is your general opinion of this art activity? (5 min.)

Activity #2 Social Justice Identity Development—Importance of Spiritual Community

- Purpose: This will include storytelling and journal reflection to explore the concept of social justice identity development in a spiritual community which will also prepare participants for the next activity of creating human sculptures.
- Instructions: Storytelling—Participants will move from partner to partner telling stories about SJI development and participation in a spiritual community following the same format as the previous session.
- Time: 30-40 min.
- Participants will be asked to partner up. One partner will have 2 minutes to share while the other listens quietly, yet intently. Then the other partner will have 2 minutes to share, trying not to reflect on her partner's experience. After both have shared they will have a chance to discuss conversationally about each other's storytelling. Participants will be asked to tell a story about how spirituality has impacted her SJI development either negatively or positively.
- Change partners. Using the same format of taking turns. Participants will be asked to tell their story about becoming a member of Green Street church.
- Change partners. Using same format of takings turns. Participants will be asked to tell a story about an experience in the Green Street community that has significantly impacted their SJI development in a positive way.
- Change partners. Using the same format of taking turns. Participants will be asked to consider how Green Street could improve its support of social justice. Participants can tell a story about an experience that had a negative impact and/or imagine possibilities for growth and change.

Journal Reflection #7—Reflect on the stories you told and the ones you heard. How important is a spiritual community in the development of a social justice identity? More specifically, what impacts does Green Street seem to have on the participant's SJI development? What are some areas of growth and/or potential for Green Street in nurturing social justice identity development? (3-5min.)

Activity #3 Human Sculptures

- Purpose: To depict the impact of Green Street on the social justice identity development of the participants and their perceptions of the culture of social justice work in this community. It will be a chance to consider strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth. Everyone will be given the opportunity to create a sculpture.
- Instructions: Participants will be asked to create a human sculpture that depicts their vision of Green Street as a place that welcomes and nurtures individuals seeking to develop their social justice identity. A participant can choose to not be a sculptor. The SR will bring pictures that show examples of human sculptures from other groups. The SR will ask that participants remain silent throughout the creation of the sculpture, unless they are uncomfortable and need to ask for assistance. The SR will instruct the sculptors and sculpees as follows: "Your goal is to position the participants in the group into a sculpture that depicts something about your perception of how Green Street's community impacts the social justice identity development of its members. Then we will take a few pictures of the sculpture. Please be thoughtful about how you ask people to position themselves. Do not touch anyone without asking, and only if necessary. It is best just to instruct someone to 'lift your left arm', instead of trying to move it for them. I will remind sculptors of this if needed during the process. Also be aware that participants may need to hold their position for a few minutes so if you want someone to lean or bend, you might ask for a volunteer who is comfortable doing that. Sculptors may use all participants, even if needed, in which case the sculptor will need to take the picture. And as you are participating in the sculpture please try and follow the instructions of the sculptor without giving input. Also take care of yourself as you hold the pose. You don't have to stay in the pose the whole time, just when the sculptor says, 'Pose.' The SR will ask if anyone needs clarification and then ask for a volunteer to go first.
- The first volunteer will create a sculpture. Someone will take 2-3 pictures of sculpture. Sculptor may choose to jot down a few notes in her journal to describe her sculpture during processing. Next sculptor will begin. We will repeat this process until everyone has had a chance to create a sculpture.
- Time: 50-60 min.

Break 5-10 min. (During which the SR will upload photos to computer.)

Continuation of Human Sculpture

- After the break participants will gather around the computer to view the pictures of the human sculpture. First the sculptor will discuss her vision and intention for the sculpture. Then participants may share their experience with or interpretations of the sculpture. Then as a group they will decide upon a title for the sculpture, making sure the sculptor is comfortable with the title.
- The group will do the same thing for each sculpture.
- Time 30-40 min.

Journal Reflection #8—Reflect on the human sculpture activity and what it said to you about Green Street community and SJI development? Also think about your individual experience as a member of Green Street, did the sculptures reflect your personal story and vision? (3-5 min.)

Wrap-up

To conclude the two expressive art sessions the SR will thank the participants for their hard work and willingness to participate and remind them that if they have any questions or concerns, they should contact her or the project director. She will remind them where to find the contact information. The SR will send them home with an invitation to the follow-up gathering, which will include date, time and location.

Final Activity: Group Poem

- Purpose: As a final goodbye the group will create a collective poem.
- Instructions: The SR will tell the group, “We are going to create a farewell blessing. Please choose a word or phrase that sums up your experience in the inquiry process and expresses your feelings for the group and our time together. Please write it on a large slip of paper. When you are all finished we will each share our word or phrase with the group and place it in the center. Once everyone has shared we will work together to place the individual phrases into a collective poem. We will read it together as our farewell blessing and salutation.”
- Time: 5-10 min.

Third Session

The SR and participants will reconvene for an Afternoon Tea, where the SR will provide coffee, tea, tea sandwiches and desserts. The SR will provide copies of the current dissertation drafts and participants will have the opportunity to read, and then offer comments and corrections particularly as they relate to the representation of the participants' art and stories. This will also be a chance for participants to consider their anonymity. In arts-informed research it is important to honor the artist's choice in taking credit for their art or remaining anonymous. We will discuss possible repercussions, both positive and negative, of their choices. Participants will be asked to indicate on the draft they edited what their choice is regarding artist recognition or anonymity. If a participant is not present as the follow-up session but chooses for her work to be used, the SR will have an individual conversation with her about anonymity. All feedback will be considered in further editing. Participants will also be given the opportunity to have an individual conversation with student researcher if desired at a separate time.

The SR will allot two hours for this session: The first hour to partake of refreshments and read; the second hour for discussion. Participants may choose to leave earlier or stay longer to fellowship.

Social Justice Identity Self Portrait

Instructions for at-home art project

Description and purpose: It is important in this inquiry that we use art to inform what we know about developing a social justice identity: Developing a social justice identity allows one to name as an essential part of oneself a commitment to the work of social justice. This identity would also imply that others would respond to the individual as a member of a group that is committed to the work of social justice. This art project is meant to be a representation of how you see yourself in terms of social justice identity development. It should be an artistic expression that captures a “picture” of you. The “self-portrait” you bring back should be a representation of how you see yourself in relation to social justice and/or how you think others might see you. The reason for asking you to do this on your own, is that I hope that your separation from the group will offer more individuality. It will give you time to digest the ideas we’ve explored and time to work at your own pace, in your own space. I hope this project is enjoyable and meaningful to you.

Instructions: Consider the art and reflection you have done thus far in the group, and then go farther. Your portrait can be an extension of your poem, your mandala or your journal reflections. Or it can be something completely new. It does need to be in an art form that can be captured digitally or electronically, thus **visual art or creative writing would be ideal**. Some ideas include: creating a collage using words and images; photography; a written monologue; short story; poetry; indeed, the possibilities are many. If you have any questions about your art form choice feel free to contact me between sessions. You should have your self-portrait completed to bring with you to the next session. We will share them with each other as a large group, so also be prepared to describe your self-portrait and talk about your creative process.

Time: I do not expect you to invest a lot of your time on this—anywhere between 30 minutes and an hour would be reasonable. Of course you might sit down to write or draw and create something amazing in 10 minutes. Do not feel constrained by time. Also do not feel you need to have a finished product. This project is about identity development, so a work in progress would be very appropriate.

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPT OF SESSION TWO

Dissertation Session Transcription

AB: Amybith

M: Margaret

E: Ellen

SM: Sharon

SD: Sally

P: Pat

C: Clara

SF: Sharee

Self Portrait Descriptions

AB: Welcome. Whoever would like to go first can share.

M: I'll go. Umm. I didn't do mine until last night. And I was kinda wishin' I had my journal. I used your prompt to kinda help my dig back into what he had talked about and everything. It is what it is. And it turned out really ugly and scary and I did really mean for it too (group laughter).

P: Oh I love the hair.

M: Yeah. I started out when I was reading the prompt. The image that I kept getting was the big head with the two kinds of hair. And that goes back to my earliest memory of knowing people different from me was the first grade and I had met other children of other races. And those little Black girls loved my long blonde hair and I loved their little Black pigtails. And I think that was the first time I knew about difference and I did not see it as a bad thing. And so I sort of incorporated that as I am myself but I am you and we all have common ground here.

And then there was something in the prompt about how others see you, so I tried to do some reflection on things I've heard other people say or things I perceived from others. One was my mom, I remember I heard her tell another mother that "I didn't see color." And I was thinking about that and I thought, but I do see color, I just don't see it as a problem. So that is why I made the eyes all different colors. Another friend of mine told me I was a Black woman trapped

in a White woman's body, so that is what this is (group laughter, points to picture). And from now on I think I'll always be seen as the White mom with the Black baby. SO I put my Black baby in there.

And the mouth, I'm not sure I did a good job of conveying, but I'm really a lot more chicken about this than I let on—facebook has been great because it lets me put stuff out there in a safe environment—but this is supposed to be a teeth chattering, sacred mouth, but...and then I did some thinking about "how did all this happen to me?" because I'm the youngest of four kids and I'm the freak. I'm the only one that feels the way I feel about things and I, the only thing that I can figure is that I just always tried to be open to what's in front of me. So I gave myself an open heart, but then I was like it's an open mind as well, so I put some open hearts in my mind as well. Then I just needed some pink tennis shoes. (laughter).

AB: That's great. Does anyone have any thoughts they liked to share?

C: There's so much detail you don't get until you share all the parts. (Others affirm with nods and uh-huhs). And then it's just (?)

AB: That's why we are recording. (Group laughter) Does anybody have any other questions or thoughts?

P: So when you said, you were the freak of the family...and being the parent of a Black child as well, did you ever broach the topic with your family that you would adopt, that you would become a transracial family?

M: You mean before we were in the adoption process?

P: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

M: No, but when we were in the adoption process that was the first question we were asked at the agency was, oh yeah. And then everybody was pretty much on board...but my mom kept saying, "Well, maybe you'll get a Chinese baby." (GL) (Wow.) Most people go to China to get those babies. Although she was saying she was open to whatever, I was definitely getting the message that there were some races that were more preferable than getting a Black baby. And I specifically said to my dad, because I consider him the most racist in my family, I said to him "You know, Daddy, this baby could be Black." And he said, "Well they need love too." (Pause). And to see him now...Anthony says, "Mahalia is the best thing that's ever happened to him." He is just in love with this child, and I don't think that that's done a whole lot to open his mind to the Black population in general, but you know, baby steps.

P: Yeah, cause I just remember when, well, before Will became part of our family we had this conversation because of our experience in Chicago, we sat them down and talked to them. And I

just remember some of their reactions, well, my parents were great at deflecting, "Well, I think you need to think about what the child will go through. Or what other people are gonna think." And I was like, that is not what I asked you. And I mean they're great..and it's funny cause now that my Dad is dead, my uncle has said some things to me that I'm kinda like my dad had struggled with this, but I had never known that. I don't really know that that is true because my uncle, his storytelling is not always accurate anymore. So, it's just interesting, and some of Rich's family, his brother-in-law was like why are you asking us this, "You never excepted Allison." And we were like what are you talking about, you know.

M: Who is Allison?

P: My oldest niece. She is my oldest niece. And I was like I adore Allison why would you say this? I mean, I just never knew where that came from, you know, so...

M: I will say, that similar to what I just said about my dad. I don't think that my whole family really sees that Mahalia's a Black person. She's one of "us" (laughter). We all love her, we adore her, she's one of us. So...

P: Right.

AB: Which in some ways is good that she is not the representative for the entire Black cultre for you family.

M: Right, I think as she gets older and she struggles with her own identity in that place, some of that may come out. That's just something that we'll have to deal with.

P: We've had that, you know David doesn't always want to go out to eat with us cause he's the only Black kid. And as a teenage boy I totally get that. I watch all the (?) But when we're in a city it's totally different. When we travel it's a whole other setting. But my mom really struggles with it. She liked that's just horrible and people aren't really thinking that. And I'm like get real mom, they are. They totally are. And I think she gets it more and more.

M: I'll call you when she gets that age.

P: I totally don't have any answers... Except find some good Black role models for then to talk to..I think...cause David sees this Black man (counselor) that he can talk to about things that like Richard and I, we can acquiesce to it but we can't understand.

C: That's one of the things I've really learned here at Green Street It's exactly what you're saying, that's it's not a matter of not seeing color, or like Mahalia of, she's not Black she's part of a family. But it's a matter of we all have a heritage and to be faithful to who we are you can't not see the color because then you are not seeing the person. And that's huge. That's huge. That's the biggest thing that I've learned because the place that I came from...I grew up in a very

conservative state in a very conservative family, I never saw...I was like Margaret, what I saw it I didn't matter, it wasn't important, they weren't others. We were all together. But now I'm learning that it is important, you do value the difference, you value the culture, you value everything about the person. Whether they are Black, female, gay, whatever, it's a part of who we all are.

AB: There was a study done that really opened my eyes when I was teaching and I read about it. They asked middle school kids to write the four things that are most important to describe them. Every child of color put the fact that they were of color in their list. Not one White child named that. And that really opened my eyes because if that's one of the top four things that you see about yourself then that's one of the top four things you think other people see about you. You know, and so you do have to value that whether it is positive or negative that is the lens through which they are seeing themselves and the world through. And then it made me think, well you know...but it was interesting because a lot of White kids who were you know, early immigrants from European dissent named their ethnicity. And I did, because we all did it, before we read the article you all named your four things. I wrote "Italian." But for me that's very different cause people don't look at me and see Italian. And I think that's something you have to negotiate too, like being gay. Some people being gay and not being seen as gay and some people being very effeminate or being very butch and having to live that out cause that's a whole other ball of wax cause you can be a butch woman and not be gay or not be a lesbian. That was eye opening for me in my early career working with kids. Alright, somebody else?

C: I'll go. You know I didn't do this until last night either. But I'll be darned if I wasn't thinking about it all week.

AB: That's the thing, you've all been doing this since we left, you just didn't put it on paper until last night.

C: It was all ideas coming. And there were instructions? (laughter) So I continued the one I had started when I was here. Let me see there is an up side down side to this thing. What I had done here was just some memories we had talked about—the collard greens were let's eat collard greens and there's a Black hand and a White hand. That has more to it—I grew up on a farm and we were pretty poor like most farm people were, and one of the things my mother did to raise money was she would pick vegetables from the garden and she would go around to all the Black communities, all the Black houses and sell them out of the back of the car...so it was our turnip greens and their turnip greens, we were all eating turnip greens. But also we had a dairy farm, and this is an interesting—and I didn't put this on here—that the feed for the cows in those days came from the feedsacks calico, and that is where the term feedsacks came from. She would take those designs some beautiful, some the ugliest you had ever seen and some really nice. But they were good sturdy cotton and she would open them or no she didn't even do that she would just empty them out and we would pile them in my car. And each sack was about a yard

of material. And about once every two or three months we would go around the all the houses and sell these things for like a quarter a piece and that was fabric and I didn't even...and that was were this whole idea came from...cause that was my first interaction, cause in Mississippi girls are very protected and I'll give an example of that. We lived on a dairy farm and there was a point in the year when they castrated all the male calves and I asked mom, and they were all back in the barn and I couldn't go down there...and you know I could here them talk about cutting them, and you know I asked momma what are they doing cause I thought cutting their throats cause you know I had no idea...and it was like you know they're just cutting their neck...I forgot even what she said, but it wasn't what they were doing. And so you know as a girl in the South I was extremely protected. Of course so I group up in books..but that whole idea, we had a guy that were in the dairy that lived across the street and had two children and I hadn't thought, you know I think about them periodically, and uh Pearlie Mae and uh I wanna say Lonnie, but it's not...But anyway, I had a tricycle and I would take the tricycle across the street and her mother would watch me and I'd ride the tricycle and they would stand on the book with their hands on my shoulders and we had the best time riding, but there's another side to it. They never drove. And years later, I kinda remembered that. Uh...one of the things, and this is the really big thing that happened, in '66/'67 our high school was intergrated. The way that did that was not everybody, they opened it, and there was a couple of brave, there was a brother and sister that came to the school. It must've been '66 cause he was a Senior and she was a Junior I think. And she was in my classes and she would sit in front of me in a desk and I'd sit in the back of the room and they would shoot spit balls at her. And so what I drew there was her sitting there and me looking, crying inside but my mouth was like you (pointing to Margaret) talking about, my mouth was shut, and it was a very, very...I look back on her now and...I put a crown on her about how brave she was and for them how much courage it took for them to do that.

They DNA around the thing, the rest of it kinda comes from me being a scientist. And this to me is the circle of like that, you know we all different, you know there that things they say in the South about "I don't care whether you're Black or White or purple or that kind of stuff" And that's kinda where this came from but in order to incorporate more than just races I made the different the little parts of life...there's polka dots and there's stripes and you know all these different things as kind of a background here. and then final that we are all different but we are all part of the same. And then the disease states is because part of what I work on. The first job I ever had was working on sickle cell. And I was Keecee's mentor and so for me this has a big, big place in my heart. But no matter who we are or what our DNA projected we all suffer from the same problems and we need help. And then the last thing that came to me either yesterday or the day before was, oh my God, I live on a totally intergrated street...and I wasn't even aware of it, cause I'm just friends with the people. And this is what this is like here's my little house, that's me and I'm a White female and next door is Black male and a White female couple and next to that is a Hispanic family and that is a Black female widow. This is a Black female divorcee. He was a White male who recently died and he just absolutely took care of the

whole neighborhood. I'm not sure who lives here. This is a Black male divorced and this is another mixed couple. And this is a White male widower, and like our whole street and it keeps going till the end of the street. And this is, these are the people that I see, I love, I speak too. I'm not real, real close friends except to the couple here across the street who are like brother and sister, and that's my street. That's where I live, and it's just awesome.

So that's what I did..

AB: So did you, I have a question...so all the Black...are all the diseases?

C: Uh-huh. And the lines are just to indicate separation there's no symbolism to the Black lines.

AB: And is there symbolism as to why you put diseases in certain places?

C: No. Oh and I have to tell this cause it's absolutely, you would never know it. This was accident, it was totally random, cause some of the stuff was here before. But in the HIV here and there no meaning here except the colors just went on the paper...But this was coincidence, this was a Christmas tree with a package underneath behind bars. The first, the first interaction I ever had with a gay person is, was the first year of my post-doc I spent 6 months in psychiatric lock-up, two different three month periods. And in one of those periods I was in the hospital over Christmas and had a little Christmas tree, with a guy that was gay and at Christmas he gave me two little closepin reindeer. Have you ever see those little crafty things (Group agrees)? And they continue to be two of my most precious Christmas ornaments because he was absolutely the most sweetest, caring person I've ever known. And, and we didn't, we talked a lot but we didn't have a real close relationship, but we did. When you're behind bars, especially over the holidays you really do, it's like this group, but you're in a psychiatric setting, and so you really do become close to people, and, and...it was down in Chapel Hill, I couldn't tell you his name today, but I've never forgotten him and the struggle he was going through and...

AB: And that was just...you didn't plan for those pictures?

C: No, in fact, I'd forgotten that I wanted to add that picture and I was looking for an empty spot and that was the only empty spot...so God kinda helped me.

AB: Well you know, that's why I do expressive arts therapy cause our brains connect things, our right and left side...

C: The colors didn't really mean anything, oh and Green Street down there too. Green Street's a huge part of my... (Ellen enters the room late).

AB: Did you mean to connect that with your connections with KeeCee?

C: No.

AB: That's cool. You made it. (A few minutes of getting Ellen settled in and caught up.) We are glad you are here. Can I hang this up? Did anybody, you've only missed two Margaret and Clara, did anybody have any other questions, thoughts, response?

SD: I'll just say it's really interesting for me to hear any of you guys talk about integrating the schools cause it's not even, I forget, and when it becomes that specific, I um...I can't even imagine, and I can't even imagine the courage of those people so...yeah and it's just really good to be reminded of it, cause I don't have that personal, you know I have my personal experience with race and stuff but I don't...

C: And that's another way that I think law can be really damaging...

M: Yes.

C: Cause this was the Mississippi way of giving "nod to the law", you know we're following what you wanted us to do, we've opened our schools (Group responses yeah, right), and in doing that they made the lives of these two individuals absolutely miserable.

M: You see I think we're right there right now, at least with the elementary schools if you look at the demographics and we say we have schools of choice. But who's gonna send their kids to be the only Black kids or their kids to be the only White kids?

AB: But you know unfortunately, I mean I do think our schools are segregated, and there is definitely some...there is definitely race involved in that. But like at Mario's school, at Ibrahim, it's probably one of the most integrated schools...there are White kids in that school, Black, brown, it's very integrated. But it's an all working class and poor school. (Group yeahs). I mean that makes a huge difference when You don't have middle class parents that can fund fundraisers. Their PTA has raised \$1600 this year.

SF: I think understanding the difference, and I didn't fully understand it until coming into relationship with people with CHANGE and have a chance to have a conversation about the difference between desegregation and integration (Group right, yeah) and how folks use that language...you know Whites often will talk about integration, at least in the conversations that I've had with Black members of this community they have never used that language of integration. Desegregation happened. But integration never happened. And I think that a pretty powerful thing to sit with. About what does that really mean?

AB: Because for a lot of them it took them out of schools that they really loved and teachers and principals that really cared about them and spoke to them with respect.

SF: And just because you share space together [others responds doesn't mean you integrate, care, right] which in some ways I think, I think we continue to struggle with that some ways here

at Green Street If we are honest about it.[Oh sure, right, sure]. I mean any shared space, I mean not that that's not a first step because obviously being in the same space is useful to build any kind of relationship, but to recognize that you can't just stop there. I think sometimes...particularly, White folks, I mean it's such a big deal to do that that it feels like somehow we've arrived in some way. So I feel like sometimes we feel so good about that, and not to be dismissive, but just understanding, if we're honest, you know, are we really in relationship [right] and what's the depth of those relationships? And it's hard [mhmm].

C: One of the things that I couldn't put on there that I wanted to, is uh, I have a sponsee that goes to Green Street that's Black. And she has like 4 or 5 sponcess, so there my grandsponeees.

AB: And what is this through?

C: Through AA. Or Na or whatever.

AB: Ok, thanks.

C: She uh, one of her's is White and the others are Black and they invited me to this wonderful little group that meets down here at that little Zumba center [oh, yeahs], once a month on Friday night. The first time I went there, two of us were White. Me and one of her sponcess everybody else was Black and it was just a real, uh, not uncomfortable, but different, eye opening kind of thing. But I felt so a part of, I'm like you sometimes I think like you do I have a Black person in a White body, I don't know but, I love these women, and I wanted to put the ir pictures on there because we went to the theater, but I couldn't because it's an anonymity thing. But I didn't get to put that on there, but you're exactly right. I've been in church a lot, but I've never been in relationship until the last three months. We get together once a month and we're talking about the things that matter to us. Our jobs, our families, this and that and I truly feel, uh, especially with my sponsee, but I truly feel in relationship and we're learning a lot about each other, but that not even the point. The point is we're just in relationship.

P: And I think that kind of goes back...This morning I was listening to NPR and I think the relationship piece is what changes things, right? I mean we can talk about institutional issues all we want but until we have the relationships that's what changes us. They were talking about just snippets, you know how they do little voice things on NPR. And it as like, you know once I got to know someone who was gay, that totally changed my mind. You know, and for me, that's what really changed for me when it came to racial identity and thinking about those issues when you really get to know people it changes you. And I guess you know this, that's like part of my issue with the Insitute for Dismantling Racism, this is all fine and good and I get that this exists, but really what I think makes changes is when people recognize this on an individual level. That's where the power is.

SD: It's interesting, I feel like the environment or the mentality I've grown up with is "we've accomplished something because there's Black people in our neighborhood" or "we've accomplished something because yeah, there's Black people in my school. They're not in my class but they're in my school." And then but it's almost like, okay, but then you forget about but I don't have a Black friend. [right, right]

AB: Or you don't have Black people in your house.

SD: Right, right, and so I feel whereas, it's interesting for me to hear about your experience in school because it's sound like it was so upfront and such a huge thing then it's almost like as time has gone by it's almost like oh we've accomplished something we have Black people in our church, but then it's like well how many of them do I actually know or would I go hang out with and what would we do because I don't even know what they would want to do. Um, so it's just interesting the different mentality and dealing with the different mentality.

C: That's really when you become aware of it, of culture, the importance of it, but also of identity. That's one of the things I tried to portray, we all are different in culture and stuff but then we are all human and alike too.

AB: That's one of my favorite children's books, by Louise Derman-Sparks, and I think you (PAT) had it, I think I have your copy from here at Green Street. It's called *We're All Alike, We're All Different*. And so it was done by a kindergarten class that was very multicultural in California and they have all these different pictures on each page and it's like "we're all alike, we all eat food. We're all different what does your family eat?" And then there will be pictures of different families' eating. "We are all alike we all have hair. We are all different, we have different hair." And I think that's, I'm like you I've always seen difference, I say that in my thing too, but the idea that how do we see difference, cause you know we all see, but how do we see it, and how do we value it? It does have to do with what you're saying. So who Sally are you ready, or Sharon you want to jump in?

SM: Yeah, I'll go next, I don't want to be last. It's very short.

AB: That's okay.

SM: I really struggled with art.

Shows picture—Group: Wow, Oh, my god,

AB: That is not a struggle, turn that around.

SD: That's so cool.

SM: Rob just took a side view and then I cut, I made the picture and then I cut it out. [gosh]

AB: Can you do one for Mario, please?

SM: Sure

AB: I've wanted on forever.

SM: I cut it out, and then I cut it out on Black. That took me a lot longer than the whole project. And I said in here, I hated doing it [laughter]. That's me, I am not artistic [yes, you are]. No, no, no but I through that in because I knew you wanted something. (She started reading from her journal, but added a few things, so I am typing here was she said and read).

The silhouette on the previous page is my one try at "art". It took a long time and I did not enjoymaking it. "Who is this old woman?" Social justice is equality, freedom, human rights, opportunity, fairness and inclusion. Growing up in Charleston, WV. I was in a White world. I grew up in a White neighborhood and went to White schools. Until integration my last two years of high school, I never knew a person of color. Oh yes, my church was White too. The 50's were great for me. Quiet and peaceful. I remember the terms separate but equal and Brown vs. the Board of Education, but it didn't affect me. I hated the protests and the fires I saw on TV. I understood the fight for civil rights and which them well. Did I get involved? No. I loved JFK and Martin Luther King, Jr. and was sickened by their deaths. I believed in equal pay for equal work by women but I was a stay at home mother. I guess I was never on a quest for social justice. I signed the petitions and gave money. Job done. Then in 1994 a gay friend I worked with said her ex-husband and his new wife were taking her to court to get full custody of her two daughters. Sherry was a wonderful mother and her partner was too. I said yes and Rod did too. I knew it was the right thing to do, but I was scared. What would my friends say. I was new at this going against the grain thing. The first day in court the ex was shocked at the support Sherry had with her. After days of testimony the judge announced there was no proof of unfit mothering and after talking with the daughters believed the split custody arrangement was fine. So we celebrated. I saw how cruel someone can be. Years later I've had the opportunity to see the ex and his wife at weddings, baby showers for their daughters. They have apologized time and time again for what they did. It's wonderful when people can grow and admit their fears and ignorance. This same friend asked me to attend a PFLAG meeting with her. When I arrived there were TV cameras everywhere but I just barged right in, you know me, [laughter], and I couldn't find her anywhere. And when I finally did she said you know, my job might be at stake here. And that's when I mean, she was not out to everyone. And that's when I realized her fear of being gay, I mean, it didn't bother me, you know. That was just such a shock to me that she still was worried about this and anyway, she was just afraid someone at her workplace would see her and she would lose her job. This same friend, I was the stand in, you know her whole family rejected her, so I was the surrogate grandmother at their weddings and everything. Of course we still have a great relationship today. What a way to live. I have always know the right thing to do, but did I always do it. No. I can honestly say it was joining Green Street that I started to

grow in all ways. I took the IDR class and it changed my life. In all my church life I have never been given the chance to grow like I have here. There is always someone to talk to when you have doubt. And believe me I have lots of questions about the Bible. I have learned so much and I hope I never stop learning. I have learned patience and respect of others, even when they're wrong [laughter] and I'm right. That comes with age. After Amendment One passed I was down, but not for long. Working the polls and phone bank with young men and women my faith is even more that the youth is OK. I tell my granddaughters to carry on the fight for social justice and they will. They are already involved. I guess the biggest plus in my social justice life is my relationships with others. There is not other way to know how people feel but through personal relationships. In church, in each others homes, at work and play. I am so blessed.

I guess I better say something about art [laughter].

AB: Such a rule follower.

SM: Yes, I am. I have no talent to create paintings or music, but I have a love of both. I could not live without music. I am still high from Kenny's concert. I am a wonderful audience. My life would not be complete without my faith and relationships. God is Good. [All the time.] Life is art just look. (Shows picture) And this one the picture and I said, who is this person? [varied responses, aww, laughter] Then she showed other pictures of friends and family and asked with each one "Is this art?"

Neena didn't live long enough. She wanted to do something with Randall and I cause she thought we were the odd couple. Well that's my story. [woohoo, clapping].

AB: It is art. It's all art.

SM: I think something does come with age, you know. The young people have to me, get it. And they got it a lot sooner than I got it and I am so encouraged. I just...I am. I am not down about our youth at all or anybody that I think you have to surround yourself with, I don't want to say like people, but that are on a quest that are on that same quest with you. Because I think it would be easy to get off track if you just you know. I live in a diverse neighborhood and I absolutely love it. Would I have said that 50 years ago? No way. You know, and I just think, and I remember Blacks in the back of the bus and the balcony of the movie theater. Didn't affect me. And uh so, I like growing. [hmmm.] I really do.

E: I agree with what you're saying though about the young people because like my son is in his, well now he's in his 30's but all through his 20's and college and everything he and his friends were like, "Why are you even talking about this?" Like they don't see it because he's always grown up and they have close relationships and accepted everyone and all of his friends are that way and I'm sure there are some that are not in that age group but I feel like the majority, it comes quite naturally now, which is a good thing.

SM: I think that also comes from parents. [lots of uh-huhs and yes's]. I do not ever, of course I was the middle child and the only daughter and um, I think sometimes my parents were too lenient. I don't ever remember my parents saying derogatory things. I know my father worked with Black men. He was a mechanic, and they never owned their own home. They always rented. But I remember being taught, you know...

E: And I remember being taught that if we heard someone say something derogatory my parents would say "well we don't say that in our house." And that's just how I grew up.

AB: And I think that's really important. I think both your points are really important. And I think that goes back to what Sally said, the younger generation might feel more comfortable with diversity, but don't get complacent. [No.] Because, just because...[E: that my world] right because your world there's still so many people that are suffering when we look at immigration laws and this amendment, and you know Black people are still prejudiced against. When my husband was out of work for two years and you can't tell me that isn't in part because he's a Black man. Given his resume and experience. The networking, it was a White man's reference that finally got him a job. The Black men who stood up for him couldn't get him a job. [Oh it's here.] You know I mean those things still exist, it's just not as blatant in your face Jim Crow laws and so we do have to be more, well it's like you said the Blacks are in your school but they're not in your AP classes. You know so what do we...I have to celebrate too, but...that's all good stuff.

P: Well I think there's too, because of the economic divide, that I see really developing in this country and being at Wake Forest and the wealth of the people that can afford to pay to come there. That upper, upper crust can be very exclusionary. And we have certainly had our issues this year at Wake.

Pause.

AB: Thank you, Sharon.

SM: You're welcome.

SD: I can go. Um, so this is mine, um, and it was good for me to think about, you know last time when we were going and doing our journals and everything, a lot was about when you were younger. And when we were here I kept drawing a blank. Like it doesn't apply to me. I didn't get to know different people until I was in high school or college. And this morning I was thinking surely there's some kind of younger things that happened to motivate me to meet different people and I did. It was kinda cool to start to realize that there were some things that, you know, not as obvious, but my parents had some exchange students from Ireland during that big conflict, which still goes on, but and my brother being really good friends with a couple guys from some country in Africa, which is terrible that I don't know the country, but I, and they were always around with our family, just that beginning idea that my parents, you know our house

wasn't the house to hang out at, there weren't tons of, you know my parents are nice but they're not you know my mom's not the host big parties kind of person. But it was still engrained in me to be open and think about um in some ways. I think, whenever I do art I just do random stuff and then later I kind of think about it, but I think this time I was more, a lot of the social justice idea was um figuring out differences and equality and that type of things for me up to this point has been intellectual, especially in the last couple of years. A lot of it is in my head and trying to figure it out, and um, I would love to one day get to the point where it's more than that. And um, you know I think it is in some ways, but the willingness to speak up or go to things that will cause waves, which I really don't like causing. I like to be the normal, jovial, you know everyone likes me and that kind of person. But the willingness to step out, I'm not a naturally passionate person for things, I don't do things cause I'm so passionate about it. So I'd love to get to that point, but I feel also um, lots of times I draw squiggly lines or do things with squiggly lines cause I feel there's so much just that I don't understand, but then there's a few pieces. It's like I slowly get part of my face, or my identity, so it's just in process and um. Yeah, so I don't know, but I really enjoy everyone's stories and being with, it's really unique to have to have, to me, to have people around me that are liberal minded or you know and even talking about this stuff and um. I would say I didn't grow up in an uberconservative situation, but it's um, we go with the flow and and you know there are Black people in our neighborhood, we go with the flow, but we don't need to go meet them. Not cause we don't like them just cause let's just kinda not dig too deep into it and um...so yeah, that's all I have.

SF: Can I just say I love it [I know, yeah, me too]. I love the...

AB: What are the script behind it?

SD: Um, it's actually a page from the encyclopedia about poverty. [mmm, wow, hmm] That I just happened to find right when I needed it, but um, I think cause...I think facing the intense poverty and stuff is what starts the whole intellectual holy cow —about everything about God and why would anyone be living in a shack with nothing to eat? And for me I think a lot of my thought about social issues here, around and like, here in Winston-Salem or here in the States, started from going somewhere else and seeing it intensely. And you know with my family it was Irish kids coming, it was these kids from Africa and my brother was friends with them. It's almost like I eased in, cause like the racial issues with people from the United States, it's easier to go foreign. You know, it's easier to face 'em somewhere else or to think of you know someone from another country to be friends with them than someone, you know a Black person down the street. And I think that's some of the intellectual wanting to figure it out and wanting to put it into action, but a lot of it has started from seeing poverty in other places. [I love your honesty, me too]

AB: Sally I know that you're enjoying listening to everyone else, but we're all enjoying listening to you. [Absolutely, yes,] I'm so glad that you are here. [yes, yes] That's awesome.

SD: Thanks.

AB: Could we just prop that over...cause I don't think the masking tape will hold it to the wall.
Thank you. Did anybody else have a response?

M: Pat and I just eyeballed each other on the "it's easier to deal with poverty and things in other countries. Um, same thing there's a HUGE, specifically Christian movement towards adoption right now, "Orphan care" they call it, which makes me want to gag. And everybody's going somewhere else to get a baby that needs a home.

SF: Well you know it's really interesting, particularly with the evangelical Christian communities that work around trafficking and Kony, and I know my reaction to that and some of my students , um, some of my Black students in particular, their reaction to that which is just intense anger. That I really understand cause that's my first reaction to of, you know all those poor people and all those horrible things and how's this heartless stuff happening in the world? And my deep sense is like (laughs) there are women and children being trafficked and rapped an all sorts of horrible things right here in front of you. Racism is happening right here in front of you. It's where I really struggle with the church [yes, yes], and my sister's at one of the downtown churches and I have to really, and it's been a really important space for her, but there is like a depth of bad stuff that I feel because of like, boutique mission trips. It's like "oh let's go help the poor people in Costa Rica" and I'm like—I'm gonna cuss cause this is how I feel—I'm like you've fucking never been over 52. [right, like 2nd Harvest Foodbank] And you know, y'all know what I mean by that cause I don't want that to sound like everybody lives across 52

AB: No, like there was a movement called, before IDR there was Crossing 52.

SF: Yeah, it's just to hear them talk about it. And to spend the amount of money to go do this stuff and then to not even come back and debrief it, like, fine you know if you're gonna go do that work...I remember talking to the rector as St Paul's when I was working with CHANGE and saying, "You know when the youth present, is it like a teachable moment? DO you ask why is it necessary for us to do this? DO you talk about poverty? Do you talk about trade policies? [laughter] And he was a progressively minded guy and he just had this blank look on his face. [Like "Why would we do that?"] Yeah. We've never done that. We've never thought about that. It's just so frustrating to me and I don't know what, I don't want to be pissed all the time. And I don't want to be dismissive. That's part of the, so I really hear what you're saying about that particularly about the Kony stuff recently, I've just felt angry about it. And it's not to say it isn't horrible, but I think it's also, and this is the part of me that's a conspiracy theorist, except it's grounded in reality. It really is.

AB: Reality conspiracy.

P: Remind me never to let you talk to Will. [laughter]

AB: Oh, noooo. Nooo.

SF: But seriously, within the more conservative Christian communities, it is co-opting. It is using the language of social justice and being able to attach to the trafficking issues or Kony, so we can say oh we care about these people.

AB: And co-opting the race issue, by going to Africa and China and all these other places and integrating their families, but not going across the street to meet the Black family.

M: And then what happens to those kids when they come over here? They go to Summit. [right]. I mean really.

AB: And then they feel White their whole life.

SF: Well and let's just be honest. No, no, no. I have these reactions and then I have to stop myself because I want to find something hopeful in there and not think that these are just...I know they're not horrible people...I just...I don't know what to do with it?

AB: Well, Sharee I think that's why we're here. Because I'm fascinated by the fact that you White women for whatever reason, and the other White women in this church, particularly the White women who unlike the 3 of us, don't have multi-cultural familes, why in the world do you, you know Kathy Kirse, why do you come out of your Jefferson Middle School, safe, Mt Tabor neighborhood and come to Green Street Becky Beamguard, why do you come all the way from Yadkin County? You know, it is part of that getting out of our little isolated world to challenge ourselves. It's not enough, and we pat ourselves on the back sometimes for just sitting in the pew on Sunday morning, but a lot of you, I mean none of you, just sit in the pew on Sunday morning. SO I do think that it's this conversation, that there are people that are willing to challenge the status quo, you know, and that our youth group. I have to tell you, not one parent I've ever worked with at this church has said, let's go do a missions trip overseas, not one. There's something to be said that every one of you get it. Now there are other things, they'd love to do a service trip to NY or something just for the kids to get to travel.

SF: And I'm not saying service trip are bad.

AB: Right, oh I hear you. I hear you. But it's the money that is spent to get there that you could do something else, and it's the way you approach it. And that's what I loved about Holly Hallman standing up that Sunday and talking about the trip that she took [yeah] It's just the language that she used to understand you know, how, how you go about that. Cause there is a way to go about it, but it's not—let's go save those people.

P: And see, that's what gets me about a lot of foreign adoptions, and even domestic adoptions, when people adopt interracially, is this whole rescue mentality. And you know quite selfishly we

never adopted to rescue anybody, we wanted a family [M:yes] and this was the only way we were gonna have a family and, and whoo, there's a whole lot that's gonna come out of this because I went into it for the "right" reasons and look at my two children right now, especially my oldest, it's like, "really, really, why did I do this? I chose to do this." Um, and so sometimes I'm very mad at God because God I never had this attitude and so why isn't my oldest son a little bit better off than he is right now? So but, by the same token, I have my youngest son, my African American son at Forsyth Country Day cause I got so fed up with schools around here . [Sure]

AB: And he's happier than he's ever been.

P: Oh my God yes, he's going...if you guys mention a word of this I'll kill everyone of you —ok... he is going to the restaurant tonite for a girl's quincenera. It's a big deal, he got the formal invitation and he can't wait to go. He's so excited. He's so excited. But you know, he's a young Black male but he doesn't fit in the public schools because, and you know this, in the public schools you get tagged. Did you knw he was accused of being a liar in 5th grade because he knew that Sir Walter Raleigh was beheaded because Queen Elizabeth thought he was having an affair and so he was imprisoned in the tower and was eventually beheaded and the teacher didn't believe him.

AB: But he had just been to London and she did not believe.

P: We had just been there. Well her comment was "that's not what we're talking about and really I'm not sure that's true." Why? Why did she not accept [except that he was a Black child] that he was a Black child. But she knew us, you know.

SD: It's also interesting. Or I will just say that there is hope because it's not that I'm offended by that at all, but that was completely my experience and the mission group that I went with to the Dominican Republic, year after year. We spent, it is sooo expensive, and we stayed in a nice hotel at night and then went to the poor neighborhood [P: Oh my God] Yeah...and it's, it's \$1200 to go for a week and it's that's one of those things that's also like, none of this makes sense, but it's part of who I am. And it's part of my story of understanding poverty. It's ridiculous the stuff that we did and the stuff that they're still there doing and it's like "Americans are here". Let's be buddies with little kids that love us and then say, "Oh my God it's so amazing their joy." But it's like they don't have food. You can say they're joyful, but they don't have food. And so it's interesting to now feel like, oh my gosh that was ridiculous all of that and my mentality through it all, but also accepted as part of what has made me who I am. Realize that it was necessarily right, but I don't have to say that everything that made me who I am is right. You know, I feel like so often people get offended when people are talking about things that were part of their growing up, and it's like, not just one things, it's like, you don't have to get upset that everything growing up wasn't right. You know, it's like —No I don't like that I didn't approve of gays until

college, you know it's like, but yeah, it's too bad. I hate it but that doesn't mean my whole growing up was bad, but, so there is some hope that God will make something good out of it in the end. But it is crazy all the stuff that goes on.

M: And at the same time I wouldn't necessarily say it was wrong either [right]. It's not wrong to go help poor people. And people's hearts are in the right place. I mean, we go to an adoption support group once a month and there are people there who, there are far more people who are adopting or have adopted internationally there and I sit there and listen to them talk and go like this (squishes face and body in cringe) a lot, but those kids are beautiful and they did need a family and it's good that they're loved and they're here. And it's ok if they go to Summit...[laughter] you know, or Whitaker or whatever White neighborhood you live in. You know, I mean there's good in that. Its not that those people are bad people. [afe talk over each other] they could be better people.

E: There's a chance that somebody might have a relationship with a person of another color, and then come home and go oh my god and realize and get the whole thing. [right, right] I mean there's a chance that could happen, maybe.

M: And I think it does happen.

AB: It does happen, yeah. And I think we can't question everyone's journey. You know. It's growing. Well, I have to rush us. I have to rush us cause we're moving into our other time. [chatter] but we're all judgmental. Who's up?

SF: So um, I did this...last night as well.

AB: Thank God for deadlines.

SF: I learned all sorts of things about my mac. It was very exciting. So all of these with the exception of the butterflies, are all pictures that I've taken, and um I guess the way I was just thinking about...where I've lived along the way and kind of the source of my understanding at the point in my life of the essence of social justice. Um this picture was actually taken in North Vancouver 2 years ago. And um it wasn't done in Black and White, it had actually rained that morning and uh it was just a really powerful place to be. And I guess the way I was thinking about it was kind of the stories that are kind of in the trees and that I sit with and that the light breaks through which is you know someone of you have heard my story which is kind of like having the experience when I was 6 years old of my grandmother slapping me when my sister's friend who was this beautiful boy named um... pause..his name has just escaped my brain, why is that, anyway he um, he dropped her off from school on day and I went running out to meet him and he kissed me on the cheek and gave me a flower and I was just smitten with him and I came in and my grandmother was just she was so angry and she hit me and she yelled, "never let a Black man touch you again". Kind of just such a pretty pivotal moment of being 6 years old

and knowing that I loved her and that she was wrong. [mm-hmm] And spending my life kind of negotiating that...which we did a lot cause. So kind of I don't even, just a deep sense of, I just remember a deep sense of it was wrong.

E: You felt it in your heart.

SF: Yeah. And I grew up, you could probably count on your hands the number of children who were different in this little small town that I grew up in. This little fella named Mark who actually married me under the slide in kindergarten, to my friend Jason who was the preacher. Mark was Black and I can remember sitting on the playground with us and us holding our palms up together and saying, "You look just like me" and kind of exploring our bodies and going way but your darker and just having this deep sense. Yeah we're different, but we're alike and then kind of becoming older in that setting and realizing...wow, you know just um the darkest that inhabits, you know I love that town and there are people that love me, but wow there's a lot of stuff there. So you know I guess down here in these trees having the argument with my 6th grade teacher when he said that, so that was in the mid 80's and HIV we were just talking about HIV and he was saying that all gays should be put on an island and be left to die. And saying to him that he was a modern day Hitler. {laughter and gasps}. And having an argument with him in class I remember him asking, and now I look back and think, how messed up this was that we were having this conversation, cause I was twelve years old. I remember him saying well if you know, and I'm trying to think if there were any Black children in this class cause I just cringe to think about this but him you know saying, well if so you would marry a Black man? And I was like...

E: This was a teacher?

SF: Yeah. Well if I loved him. I remember this conversation of well like even if your family would disown you? And I was like, you can't help who you love. I remember having these arguments with this teacher. And now looking back and thinking that is just troubling on so many levels. But also figuring out what was happening for me that I had this deep [right] you know and I just had this deep and you know, I love my family but they just particularly my grandmother and my dad, you know I was told I'd be disowned if I dated a Black man, um interestingly enough we haven't really ever talked about sexuality, but I remember you know God bless my father, who has totally chilled out in old age. And his very much was, I so connect with what you were saying about your family's experience with Mahalia, cause my, my dad would be in relationship with individual people but then he would make sweeping statements and would use just really offensive, he never said nigger, but he used terms like jungle bunny [M: yep] and that sort of stuff and just reacting to that and also just you know kind of coming to a point. I remember saying to him you know, "Dad do you identify as a racist?" You cause I just had, just wanted to see what he'd say and then coming to a place later of recognizing that he and my grandmother. You know my dad is a depression era baby and he didn't have any relationship with anybody

who was any different from him. And in recent years watching him transform in a number of ways, so I guess just kind of that these stories in these trees. This picture actually from the statue that's outside um the Oklahoma City Memorial. It's really powerful picture. I don't know if you've been there but it's a um astounding memorial. It's a statue of Jesus with his back to the bombing site with his head in his hands. And we went at night, we were traveling through last summer and it was...for me there has been a great deal of grief that comes with all this and I felt like that really captures that (she got choked up and was hard to understand). And then fundamentally and you can't really see it, but this is a picture of some of our CHANGE leaders. Um and I think this has really been the space for me, I work the, with the community organizing work I connect with the people of faith in this community who really helped me reconnect to a faith journey whatever it is at this point in my life...a deep sense that it's, there's more. And that there are people that really believe that Jesus was a prophetic voice about people loving everybody and inclusion and courage and all of that and so I guess. Um from, that's kind of been a grounding space for me and um my sense of growth and then just some foundational pieces of love and then in the midst of all of this for me trying to find some sense of peace and reconciliation with my own story, with whatever guilt I might carry, and anger and whatever kind of, but always there this overarching sense of justice and what does that really mean and what does that look like? And how does that break through? And for me personally right now I think it's um the part of me that does think strategically and what's the end game and that sort of stuff, and then being very connected to Ghandi's call to us that "every step toward liberation, must have liberation in it." So what does that mean..umm. so I guess that's what I'm sitting with right now. [I love that. That's beautiful.]

C: Will you pass it around, it's hard to see all the parts of it?

P: I like the trees with the shadows. [It's very arresting]

SF: I think I've also decided...I have this little camera and I've never taken photography but I have these kind of moments...these wonderfully caught moments and I think that's one of the reasons that I decided and thought about integrated these photos too, because um...that is a really magical space in um Vancouver and I, I didn't know if I would ever be able to capture it and you know, those pictures are some of the few that I really felt like really got...

AB: I think photography is a really amazing expansion, you know the digital world has made that art form so fascinating and what we can do. There was a mother the other day that had gone to Africa and she showed me this picture of a tiger. And she showed me the original picture and then she showed me the picture that she made through digital photoshopping and it was truly art how she took, just that process and so it is amazing that you did that.

SF: Well and I never really embraced or felt like I was a visual artist in any kind of way. I feel like I'm a creative person but I also um self-censor and have self-censored a lot growing up and I

think that's...that's even in terms of creative writing I've had to push myself because I can write a paper. [laughter] You know I grew up in a family of educators and I know, but I've had a real perfectionist streak for many, many years and was so joyfully liberated from that in my master's and grad-doctoral programs but so I just have to say I kind of had to play a little bit and then I discovered on my sweet little mac this little button called you know "remove background" [laughter, Oh I didn't] Which is great and you know I just haven't/hadn't sat with it or whatever and I was like "ooo, that's magic". So...

AB: Thank you.

E: That's beautiful.

AB: So Miss Ellen, would you like to go or do you want me to go?

E: I'll go. I guess. Umm on what she was just saying, I'd like to make a note: I grew up with, my father is an artist and um. He and his wife, that's my stepmother, are very, very, very artsy people and I grew up looking at everything always aesthetically, and if I showed him a picture that I took of my son—this is how extreme it was—he would say, "well why didn't you put it over here, cause don't you see this light" and not see the human being in the picture and be like it was not perfect. SO I've always struggled with doing artistic things because everything I would do artistically was him trying to teach me, you know, so I finally just said, "I won't do it".

But this is like a, so this is like all the different religious symbols and I had to look up the gay and lesbian ones cause I didn't know what they were, but I included them. And this tells about my father and my high school and how I grew up never understanding exactly what all the fuss was about, because I had relationships, from the beginning. We had a, I told some of you in our group, we had a maid, some of my friends had maids, we sat in their laps we knew their families. It was like part of my family. When I went to school, it was like, you know I loved my Black friends, just like my other friends. My husband's from Canada and when I was cuttin' these out of my yearbook last night, I was showin' him and I was like was your high school like this? His eyes got big and he was like "Ellen in our entire school we had like one person." And in my school every other picture. And so then this is the Ghandi phrase "We must be the change we want to see in the world." And so then I went from there just trying to...I think the whole key to all of this is teaching the children. And this is my seed of change is my son when he was a baby. And this is umm, I think going back, my parent's taking me to church when I was little, even thought my mom was sick and crazy half the time and all this. I never thought about it until you brought it up and we were writing about that—that it had to come from somewhere. And I think that when you're in church and we learned the "red and yellow, Black and White, they are precious in His sight", I took that very literally. And um, I didn't put it on here, but in my journal something else came back to me when I was writing, being at the pediatricians office with my mom one day and the doctor was just talking to me real casually about the patient who had

been there before, which oh they are not supposed to do. But he referred to her as a little colored girl. And I remember thinking “colored girl, what is that?” and I started thinking of a girl with all these colors, and I mean literally to this day, so I put the things about “take it literally” and “teach your children well”. And then this all up in here has more to do with yoga and um this is a quote that say, “Science has proven that meditation actually restructures your brain and can train it to concentrate and feel greater compassion.” Because I do a lot of yoga and meditation. And then just different things, the wings and the dragonflies. I have always been attracted to dragonflies and I didn’t know anything about it, but I looked it up and it says, “they symbolize change, and the change in the perspective of self realization.” Which I thought that was interesting because I never knew that. And then this is Linville Falls, where my mother’s ashes are. [Tears up]. And uh, anyway, that’s just the center and the light in your heart and it just seems to me like it should just be so simple. And it upsets me that why, and there again, I understand, but my perspective has always been, “What is everybody, why can’t everybody just get along?” [get along]. And I know that sounds simplistic, but it’s just where I come from it. And um, but I do know that everybody doesn’t get it and so I think it’s important to be committed. And this part right here says, “At peace, the love inside” and right here, it’s real faint but it says “and that my friend is how you change the world.” And so...that’s the whole thing. And I really wasn’t finished with it, but I [it’s so beautiful, beautiful]. I have some more stuff to put on there.

SF: That’s great. That really is quite beautiful.

E: That’s all.

AB: That’s a lot.

SM: I love the “teach to learn.”

E: But that was the biggest thing I got from doing this. I think learning why I feel that way is because I was taught. And all anybody can do is be an example and teach others. I mean you come in contact with people every day and have a relationship. If you haven’t ever had one — make one. I mean it’s easy, it’s fun you know. I...I guess people are scared...actually I should read this. This is one of my, I’m sure yall have all probably heard it, it’s just a quote, I’m not even sure where it came from. “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves—Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, fabulous or talented? Actually, Who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine as children do. We were all born to manifest the glory of God that is in us. It’s not just in some of us. It is in everyone and as we let our own light shine we unconsciously give, excuse me, we unconsciously give other people the permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presences automatically liberates others.”

SM: Wow.

M: What is that from I want that?

SM: I do to?

E: It says it's from something called "A Return to Love".

SF: Yeah, [chatter]

M: It's a book.

E: I've always had it on my refrigerator.

AB: It's really. I love it because so many young people now know it from Akeelah and the Bee. [Oh. Yes.] It was multiple times, it was in that. Because there's also a Mandela poem.

SF: That's what I was gonna say is it's usually referenced as Mandela, but he didn't. Yeah.

AB: Yeah, cause that's what I always thought it was his writing. But he wrote a poem about being the grass. About not being afraid to be that blade of grass that grows taller, cause you might get cut. And that's a really powerful...it's that same idea of letting your light shine.

SF: It just reminds me Margaret, I've just been following your posts on facebook and you've just had some wonderful things recently. It's just been really interesting like. People somewhat celebrating being defriended because, cause, because they feel like they're telling the truth about things and saying things and they're realizing, it's been interesting. I've had an interesting reaction to that, but you said something the other day about hiding your light.

M: Under a bushel.

SF: Yes. [No.]

M: Cause that's the verse that's on the CD. [That I no longer have a cd player for.]

SF: You did and it was just so funny and it made me smile so big. Cause I could just hear...you know...[chatter]

AB: You know what I'm leading music Sunday morning and we're gonna do that verse. Get ready to shout "No". [laughter]

SF: Hie it under a bushel—NO! [lots of other no's!]

AB: I do it with my little piano students. [I bet they love it]. Well Thank you Ellen, that was amazing.

P: So say more about this post—so you...

M: So I just, and I was gonna put a disclaimer that said, “And if you’re gay and deleting friends who voted for the amendment, Do it.” [Right]. Cause I was speaking more to the straight ally community, I just kept seeing where people were like “I just deleted 5 more friends cause they said they voted for the amendment.” So I just said, “If you delete everybody who disagrees with you, then they’re never gonna hear what you have to say.” [Exactly. Wow. Yeah.]

SF: And that’s, yeah. I have reactions like that too, where some people posted stuff and I was just like...

AB: I don’t want to stay your “friend”.

SF: Well, I was like I’ll hide your stream right now. [laughter] But

AB: And I love that option on facebook, where they can still see what I put out there [right.] But I don’t have to be inundated by their...

SF: I was just so glad you had said that. [yeah].

M: There was a little argument on my page and there was a guy that I went to high school with that I probably haven’t seen since high school or maybe once or twice, who was you know, redneck, Rural Hall, Tobaccoville guys who go on their and said a few things and so I had this moment of, “Do I need to take a stand with my gay friends and just delete him and be like, get out of my face”. And I thought about it, and I was like he likes me. We were friends in school [E: so maybe you can..chatter] Something might click. [right. Right.] He respects me. He values my opinion. He wasn’t the one who got ugly and starting cussing at people on my page. [AB: Yes, I saw that thread.] He was trying to be respectful and just say this is my opinion. [right.]

SF: Well it reminded me, I had kind of a similar. I posted a quote which was very empowering for me at the time. And there were other people like this guy that I grew up with made like a typical comment, and it was about human dignity issues and his comment like out of the blue was, “Unless you’re talking about a fetus.” And I was like hmm, wooh. I’m not going to engage. And I didn’t have to which is usually what happens on my page cause I have all these other [right.]. The facebook universe like swarms, which is always like and you know I will mediate if people start to...I’ll throw in a “Hey alright”. But I just kind of let things play out, but what struck me was—he’s reading my posts. [mmhmm. Yep.] And we were kind of joking yesterday at work cause we’ve been a little frustrated about like some of our board members being resistant to policy and advocacy stuff and we had like taken a stand on the library bond which I know it like sooo radical [laughter]. And the chamber of commerce had supported first and so I was like this is as innocuous as you can get and so there was an issue cause we had two donors who called and where not happy cause it went out through our newsletter, and the reason I’m telling you

this is cause what was so funny—and this is why I love my boss—cause his reaction to that was “wow they read the newsletter the whole way through”. [laughter]. And my reaction was like aww shit here we go. I knew...and kind of his, you know he said that was his first reaction and that’s what I was thinking about the other night. I can either get upset and delete him or whatever, but like for some reason he’s like he stays connected and he’s obviously reading stuff I post. And so even if I think, “so what the hell are you talking about and why do they always pull the no matter what”...I could have gone with the you seem to care about the fetus until you find out...

AB: until you find out its gay. That conversation happened on one of my threads, that t-shirt [yes]. I don’t remember what it said, you know, and well then other people from my facebook world argued and I just watched it so.

SF: I mean it’s interesting to think about does it create a space where...you know in a way, we talk about like in reality and people feel and we certainly see it in Congress right now—if you don’t agree with me then we can have no relationship—and so this craziness of Dick Lugler losing his seat and he’s not a like a progressive [he’s a moderate]. He’s a statesman and he was in relationship with people and so on and so forth. And so it’s like I feel like online is this really weird space of in some ways it’s real awful as in like the blog connected to the journal when it was still anonymous and people could say all sorts of horrible things. Um but I also wonder if it always people to be, to continue to be connected in relationship. [M: I think so. AB: I think it does.] They wouldn’t necessarily like they could do in person.

AB: I think it eliminates some of the fear. Just to Ellen’s point—it eliminates some of the fear.

SF: But it feels like this really double edged sword. I feel like we’re, you know it allows with people’s anonymity people can say all sorts of weird and horrible things, but then like this guy still stays connected to me.

M: Well and I’ve also had other people that we probably would never have had this conversation and people would be like I agree wholeheartedly and I’m like “YOU DO?” [laughter] “But you go to my mom’s church?”

AB: Right, right and so it can deepen your relationship in ways that you wouldn’t, you know we don’t sit around and cry and tell our deepest sorrows and confusion about life all the time. You know this is rare space that can bridge a gap, that’s fascinating.

E: Just one more thing that occurred to me, another reason why in my, my thing is that I feel different. I’ve always felt this way, it’s like my dad’s wife, her brother is gay and married, sorry they’re not married. They’ve moved here from California to Winston-Salem actually. But like they had my father’s birthday recently and they were there and we were celebrating. They’ve been together 50 years [gasps] 50 years [wow. Mhmm.] So I grew up with, this is okay. It’s all

fine and you know it's just uh...I mean it's a good thing, I'm glad. But it does help me to keep being reminded that everyone doesn't...it's not like that and you need to keep sharing and being an example and being in relationship so that other people will find it more natural.

C: I have to apologize, I had to go to the bathroom or we were gonna be sorry. The upward part looks like mars and venus it that what that refers too? [like up in here?] The planet and the wings? I missed that part of the explanation

E: I...not really, like these are like dragonfly and butterfly wings, I've just always been kind of drawn to that. And that's a saying about what dragonfly's symbolize.

C: And what's the round thing?

E: That's just some clouds that was in a photograph.

AB: They are just sideways, if your closer...

E: That's Pilot Mountain, that's my home.

C: Oh, from here I'll tell you what it reminds me of is the book, *Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus*. Which is a really nice juxtaposition there to the whole everything—it's not just men and women, but we're all kind of from different places. And from here that's what it looks like.

E: Different planets, that's true.

AB: Well, I'll share mine and we'll take a break. We you guys feel free to do what you need to do. SO I um, wanted to tell a story. It just kept, like coming up, cause I'm usually drawn to this, like collage type art and I was like no I wanted, so when I was in college I had done a children's book with water color and so and um...I really thought about how when mom passed away she didn't leave us with stuff. I wanted the journal that Neena left Kate. I wanted that stuff. And I didn't get that and I'm pissed so...and I thought let me rectify that and so this is really in a lot of ways for Mario and Akiyah. I wanted to tell my story and for them to understand, as I was understanding it. So I did it in watercolor, cause I love water color how they blend together and how the imperfections become beautiful. So um I wanted it to look like a children's book, so it was cute cause Larry came in and look at it and went so did your kids do that? So but you know, so anyway this is my story...

I was a little girl from two worlds. At 5 years old we moved from Massachusetts to North Carolina. My mother was a Yankee, a child of immigrant families from Italy, Scotland and Ireland, who were still living out those cultures with food, faith and language. My father was Southern. He was from a farming family that knew no roots any further back than North Carolina farm land. A son of a tobacco farmer who left the farm to find his own way, only to

come home again. These two worlds made me different from my peers. So growing up in Yadkin County, I was the *different* one. I sounded different, I ate different food, and went far away to visit family. I loved all my differences, because I loved my family and they loved me.

M: What does the sign say?

AB: Mason Dixon Line. And I had all these things written in there but I liked the way it looked, so when I sketched it out I didn't...

I was a little girl raised in the church. I was baptized and christened in the Catholic church. When we moved to North Carolina, we started attending my Dad's home church, Flat Rock Baptist Church. When I was 11, I was baptized by Pastor Dave Witt. I remember how cold the water was, how calm and peaceful and right it all felt. I belonged. I grew up in a home with a welcome sign and a welcome table. Just like at my church now, all were welcome at Marilyn's table. We fed people soul food, maybe not of the Southern variety, but it was born of the same spirit, made with the same kind of love. I learned how important cooking and eating are to the bonds we create with people. I learned about creating family and sustaining family by keeping recipes and by teaching recipes. I was always so proud that I could cook Italian food. Proud that we made things from scratch and ate from our own garden. I hated working in the garden in the hot sun, but I loved all the bounties, and now I cherish those memories. I was a little girl who felt different. I did not feel alone or isolated. I felt different, and to me that was special. I don't know when I got the message that different was special, but it came across loud and clear and was deeply embedded in my being. I always wanted to be around other people who were different, too. I liked that Landon played tennis in tournaments when no one else did. I liked being in VICA and traveling across the country, often alone. I liked having exchange students stay with us. I liked that Amber, Brad and I had all gone to Germany. I liked that Jason lived with us and had been to so many places and was really good at soccer, when no one else was. When I went to college I joined an international committee and got to know people from around the world. I signed up to do summer missions to go and explore my faith by exploring the world. I got to explore eastern North Carolina, instead of Eastern Europe, [laughter] but it was still a world away from how I grew up. Then I got to go to England. I truly felt at home there. I think some of my roots must be in the English countryside. I became a big girl who travelled the world on her own. I learned about myself by learning about others. I was an exchange student to Germany in high school and a summer missionary to England in college. Through VICA, I travelled all over the country, and I remember riding through Oregon and thinking how different the landscape there was. Then at the conference giving my speech I was looking out onto a sea of mostly Asian faces, a sight I had never witnessed. These visions changed not only how I saw the world, but how I saw myself in the world. I was not colorblind, I saw rainbows all around me and I thought they were beautiful. I also saw suffering and discrimination in all its ugliness. I remember the Turkish friends I met in Germany. They truly taught me what it was to be discriminated against

because of the color of your skin. Their stories opened my eyes to my own country and our oppressive ways. Seeing all the rainbows of people and places helped me to see the hope that Martin Luther King, Jr. preached of. I could see God's love at work in the world—and at work in me. I was a little girl who believed in God. I felt God's love through people and trees and animals. I became a big girl who believed in the importance of sharing God's love and being part of faith communities who preached love, mercy and compassion. Sometimes they were hard to find, but I found them: Flat Rock Baptist with Dave Witt, Dewey, Gail Brown, Ron and Willa Bell, Reid and Norma Lowder; BSU with Bob Clyde, Chris Copeland, David Harris, so many more; The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North Carolina-North America; Green Street UMC with Kelly Carpenter and Willard Bass. I was always different, but never alone.

I was a little girl who was taught the love of God. "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

And then the end was the scripture that I think I live by and that speaks the most to me: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." John 12:1

So that's my story. And I have to tell you that I did not love this picture...

M: That's one maybe my favorite one.

AB: Well I, I showed it to Mario and I said, "Mario what do you see?" And he said, "I see love. And I see Nana's house and she loved you." [ahh. Ohh.] If y'all know, Nana's house doesn't look anything like that. [No, it does not. Laughter.] I love my child, and so this is a picture that Mario did and um, I want to and I didn't get a chance to do it. We're all um a little unfinished I think, and that's a good thing.

P: Some of us are very unfinished.

AB: We're all in different places. But what I wanted to put on this was how much I saw the rainbow coming through. And you know last week I didn't get to come to the interfaith service cause I was um...I was sick, but I read Rabbi Josh's sermon and he's such a good friend and has..um, he and Carrie and baby Hannah, that was the first Brest I ever went to and um they really meant a lot to me and so just the verse about the rainbow and how it is a sign of hope from God. And I think for me that is what it has always been and so the bright colorfulness and the need for that image. The need to see that. The day my mom of my mom's funeral there was a rainbow in the sky. [Tears. Laughter]...So thank you, this has been really awesome. Oh and my professor said, I was talking to her about it in between and she said, "So how did it go?" And I said, "It was great. We shared and we cried." She said, "They cried?" And I said, "Uh-uh". And she said, "Did you cry?" And I said "Uh-uh." [laughter.] She said, "Wow." So...I think people don't...people don't appreciate how you can come together and be so honest and create trusting space so easily when you want to. When you volunteer. So. So let's take a break.

How You came to be at Green Street Discussion

AB: SO let's talk as a group about how you came to be here? What was your journey in coming to Green Street? You can share with each other, about, was that similar or different for you.

C: So I told this story to some people...I grew up in the Methodist church out in the country. And as I grew up, I'm an alcoholic and I was in graduate school. And at that time, lived in that little pink house across West St. with the porch and everything, I lived there in that downstairs apartment. And I was in graduate school and I would come home at night. And I was so poor I couldn't turn the heat on, and so I would take the blanket and...I had baseboard heat so I would huddle over the baseboard. And I would wake up in the middle of the night and we had roaches. But during that part I discovered pot. It was a graduate school thing back then. This was in the 70's. Quickly became my drug of choice. But as with any drug you have a down flux, and I would get into these really bad down periods. And I would come across the street and sit on the steps of Green Street And it was the only place I could find of peace. And I would sit out there and it just felt very peaceful...and ahh (sigh). Never went to church here just would come sit on those steps. And so years later I uh, got sober and every thing was good and fine and I started going to church. I went to a bunch of churches in Winston-Salem. It was the beginning of a lot of charismatic stuff, so I went out to Reynolda Presbyterian. I went to a Baptist church, you know I'd been baptized like 5 or 6 times in all different settings [laughter. S: So you're good.] God doesn't know...So one of the things, I just didn't really find a place. But then I remembered this little church, and I said, I'm gonna go back to my roots with was Methodist. And it was 1986, and I came here and just kind of stuck. Like it was not the kind of church it is today. It was just kind of typical Methodist church that was going through a lot of transition, so I just sort of stuck, and never felt...even with our UMW night circle I always felt like an outsider kind of, but I do that anyway..(voice fades) But I stuck it out and then we went through a periods of changes where Dorothy came. A bunch of people left the church. We had a pastor and a bunch of people left the church. And so God basically, winnowed I call it, winnowed this church. And I just stayed. You know, I guess my being here is a very passive thing maybe. I don't know, I just never seemed to leave. And that's how I became part of the Remnant. One of the ways you can be successful is just by perseverance, and I am so glad because I have grown with the church. I started out sort of typical, you know like y'all have talked about, but as Green Street has grown, I have grown. And it's been huge in my life and that's how I came to Green Street

SM: Did you ever think about leaving?

C: Well part of the reason some people left was a gossip chain. I was not in the gossip chain and I noticed how it can destroy [yeah. Yeah.] And I never had a reason to leave. I was always where I needed to be.

M: Where did everybody go?

C: Trinity. Some people went to Southside Methodist.

AB: I think Burkhead United Methodist, was the White flight sister church of this one. [That's correct.] So I think even before the winnowing, some people were over there. [yep]. So some people might've...

C: A lot of our older women went to Trinity because they had a senior dance or they had lots of senior services, social.

P: Where's Trinity?

C: It's on Robinhood or Country Club one of those.

P: When did it get to its lowest point? You talk about the Remnant, what period of time was that?

C: Right after we started to pray and a bunch of people left cause they didn't get invited to the prayer service.

P: Year. What year?

C: Before Mike Goode came, so that would've been, before Mike was here..about ten years ago, it was right before Mike came.

AB: Yeah, Mike was like 97/96 to 2000? Or something like that. So it was like 90's.

C: Late 90's. Before mike came.

AB: So mid 90's.

C: Right, I don't want to tell tales, but before Mike came. The pastor before Mike had a lot of problems [yes.] A lot of people got mad and left and that's when it really got down. I remember like when there were like 8 people in the service. [Oh.]

AB: So that was the mid-90's before when Mike Goode came and then when he came they started...

C: People got mad and that's when they asked us to leave the place and go out in the country and have a nice little White church. And they said, no we want to stay here, give us three years and if in three years we haven't built back up then we'll go build another church in the suburbs. I was not at that meeting, but that's what they were told.

P: Now the story I was always told was that you guys had the endowment and you were, if you had closed the church that endowment would have gone to the Methodist whatever...

C: Might have. I was not on council then.

P: Okay, so they just decided they'd go out in a blaze of glory and spend the money. [Blaze of glory. Laughter.] I didn't mean it like that. But..[chatter]. Why not spend that money to see if you couldn't rebuild the church instead of letting that just go to the district?

C: Well that's true.

P: That's what I've always heard.

C: I've never heard the financial end of it but I know that there were a lot of people here that loved this church. Some of them would still be here, like um, that died or that have Alzheimer's now.

AB: Oh I loved the VonCannon's {loud responses of agreement} when I first came. I still have an African violet from her, I mean. Her and [Jimmy] were adorable. I mean when I first started singing, I was very self conscious and it was really hard, I mean because there weren't very many people in the congregation and half of 'em couldn't sing and Jefferson didn't always play the melody, so if I didn't know a song, I mean I screwed up a lot of songs and that's really hard as a singer. You know you want to get it right and some people would be critical. But Georgia VonCannon was just, just my little sweet ray of sunshine, and if I sang I would just look at her. And no matter what I did it would be okay. So. I mean there were a lot of other supporters, but she and Dewey I really, really miss.

SF: Is it Norm that has Alzheimer's. [Norm, yeah].

C: His wife left, cause she was part of that gossip circle I told you about. It's particularly one of the UMW's.

SF: I always wondered why she left.

C: She left as a part of the...

SM: What was the gossip about? The minister?

C: Yeah, the minister...yeah.

AB: How did the rest of you get here? [We'd rather talk about the history.] It'll be in the dissertation too.

SD: I came a couple of years ago, with a friend from college. And I hadn't been going to church in a little while. And I came. And I left, and I didn't feel mad about anything. [Laughter] And I hadn't felt that way in a really long time and so I came back. And I remember in the first month of coming here, there was a baptism of...I think it was of Avery? The little girl, and I thought...it

was weird cause at the time I was just starting...like I was open to gay and lesbians, like the idea of gay and lesbians and being around, like being okay with that. I was just starting to become a lot more liberal. But when that happened, I was like wow! This is okay here. And it made me like it so much more. And then there was somebody joined the church and her husband was Jewish and Kelly made a point to say, you know, he didn't want to join, but he was a big part of the community. And I was like, "What?! Like this is okay?" And it was so comforting, cause I hadn't ever seen anything like that. And I was like okay, this is good. And ever since then I haven't been mad at all.

E: That's similar to my experience. Cause when we did go to church when I was growing up, we went to a Baptist church in High Point and um. It' was not your typical Baptist church, but there was a lot of wealthy people there and the congregation was pretty much 99% White. And it just didn't feel like I feel, and then when I came here, I was like "Oh my gosh there's a church where people get it." You know, and it just, it felt like home.

SM: How did you know about Green Street?

E: Someone invited us to come, and we, um, we didn't go to church anywhere so, so we didn't have somebody to marry us. So cause Brad and I have only been married about 6 years, so Pastor Kelly married us and we just started coming back.

SM: I didn't know that. [Mmhmm.]

E: On Pilot Mountain, up on top of the mountain. And then the music was the main thing, cause we're both just really, really into music. Well that and, and just the openness and the accepting of everyone. It's just a , it's just, it feels like a home, like a church should be. That's what I say about it, when I tell people that go to church. I'm like, this is different. You gotta just come. You gotta just visit it one time. You know. People that don't go to church, they would go to church if they'd come here. That's the way I feel.

M: That's a lot of the people come here. [laughter.]

E: I mean I don't go to church anywhere else. I mean I will if like if we're with his mom, cause like she's Catholic. I'll go to mass. When his kids are here, they insist to do the mass thing, so I do it. But I don't feel at home and I don't get it. And I just. I don't like the fact that I have to go like this and I don't get to have the communion. That pisses me off.

M: You have to go like this?

E: Yeah, when you go up there. I have to go like this (crosses her arms over her chest) like I'm not worthy or something. And I try to get him to explain it to me. And he's like you'd have to take the classes. I don't think he really knows. But it's just frustrating.

M: I've taken communion at a Catholic church.

AB: Well it depends on the Catholic church. It's just like the Jewish church, some are more Progressive.

M: Well I don't think I was supposed to but they nobody said to go like this and I'm like, I'm a Christian I'm taking it. [Yeah].

AB: And that's the thing, some churches just don't make a point to say it [right] or they're not gonna just turn somebody away.

E: I could've just lied and gone up there. (holds hands out)

AB: That's what I do. Cause I was christened Catholic.

M: You were christened so you're good.

AB: No, you're supposed to go through confirmation and do your First Communion. [Yeah.] There's a whole procedure. But I've been through Confirmation in the Methodist church now, so...I got all kinds a learning.

E: That's what I mean all that procedure and pomp and ceremony, unless it means something and you're doing something for your fellow man, then it's just to me, well I don't want to be condemned or anything, but it's just a bunch of bullshit. [well, yeah]. I just don't get it.

SD: What's interesting is like for something people that grew up. I mean like I can imagine if I grew up in it, it would mean something. [right. Right.] But to me I'm like, I do not relate.

E: SO I try to respect that. And I respect it and I'll go with his mother because that's what...

AB: And I love all the ritual of the Catholic church and it's one of the things I like about Green Street It's that we don't just go off on a contemporary cuff [SM:exactly]. We try to cling to something traditional, cause I just, I just respond deeply. I mean my baptism was a deep and powerful experience because of the ritual, not just because I made a profession of faith, but because I remember being dunked in the water and all of the that. And I think it's the same thing for our kids who go through the ritual of standing up in front of the church and writing your credo and being part of something. Well and you know baptizing Mario here. I think we have a really nice way of, you know Mahalia's and I was very jealous cause Willard said her name [laughter. Simba.] She got the samba and Mario didn't get that, but I'm sure he was too heavy to be held up that high. [laughter.] but you know , I remember Avery's and that was so powerful, especially after the loss of her mother and you know...I think...

M: What I remember is the one where she didn't want to get baptized. [Yeah. Yes.] That was very powerful for me. [and allowing]. Then don't make her do that then. [yes. I do remember that.]

AB: Yeah, so, I do remember saying to Kelly before um Mario got baptized, cause I had seen quite a few baptisms of infants while I was here. And one of the things he will do is take the baby and walk, and show the baby the congregation and say, "This is your family." [yes.] "And they are gonna love you and protect you and if they don't, you come tell me." [That's right.] And I said, "If you don't say that, we're gonna do it again." [laughter.] Because you know, I just think it's so important for the congregation to here that, to hear that this is your child now and you're responsible and if you don't treat them correctly, I will do something about it. I think that's such a profound, and to do it for every child, in every family, for everyone who comes up. I think that says a lot.

SM: Well I came here because, I was just looking. Rod and I were, we were already members at Centenary. I just remember, I was getting near retirement and I thought, I wanna work. And I'd filled out all kinds of things at had done. I'd been a hospice volunteer and I thought maybe they could use me in their adult day care or whatever. And I just never got responses, it was just. It was so big and unless somebody died, you weren't getting' on that altarguild. Which is great if you don't want to do anything, you know. And we joined because of Dr. Robinson. We'd visited a lot of churches and he was just a magnificent preacher and we just loved him. And so, I told my daughter, you know in the meantime, she and her husband were going to West Market St. and Kelly was their youth minister. Well I'd always been there for the christening of the girls but it was another minister that did it. So I had never seen Kelly. So she said "well, mother I was talking to some friends the other day" and in the meantime they had had a big blow up at that church and hundreds left and she said, "do you remember Kelly Carpeneter?" And I said, "No I don't" and uh, she said well, I guess he'd been in Chicago or something and she said um I just found out he was back and he has a church in Winston named Green Street And so I looked it up to see where it was and everything. But I'm pretty shy about, you know going anywhere alone. Especially to a church so Rod was golfing one weekend and I was driving to Centenary and that car just drove to Green Street And I parked and I thought, oh I don't know anybody and you know. And uh, but I went in and it was just so different. I mean I've always been in a very quiet Methodist church, whether it was big or it was little and I had never been in a church with a tambourine and Sissy was in rare form. And I'd never been in a church were you raise your hands, or you talk back and you say Amen. You know Methodist's are just kinda, you know, we just go along. And I, so the thought crossed my mind "So I won't be coming back here". But it was all within me. It was anything around me it was all my reaction and it was my insecurities. And so I thought, well I met a lot of people and so the next Sunday I told Rod, "you know I'm going back to Green Street this Sunday." And so I did and the rest is history. And I found a home here. Um, I did have one experience here. You know I think we've all been disillusioned by

churches, and the people in 'em. Not the churches, but the people in them. And when people say I don't go to church there's a bunch of hypocrites there. I say, "Yes there are come on. You're just like the rest of them." [exactly.] And um I was very involved, and I know what we say, stays here, I was very involved in United Methodist Women and it was once a year I think we, was it once a year when all the circles got together?

C: I think it was once or twice.

SM: Yeah, and um I know it was on a Saturday morning and I was in. I was the youngest one in my circle. It was Georgia VonCannon, because they asked me first, and they went during the day cause none of them drove at night. Well, I was honored and I loved every minute of it. And so when I came into the UMW meeting, I knew something was, something was wrong. I mean I could just feel it in the air. And I think what precipitated it was um, Kelly had asked me if I'd like to be on congregational care and I said well yeah and I, were you in charge of congregational care (Asking Sharee). [AB:She was head of the leadership council.] Okay, okay, so I said so just tell me what everybody does and so. And I think you (Meaning Sharee) called a certain person and asked "What does United Methodist Women do?" And I think that, that set off, you probably didn't even know this, that set off a firestorm among some people. "Well if the minister doesn't know what we do...[wow]...then maybe we just won't do it anymore."

P: Oy my God is that why, what kind of a reaction?

SF: I never knew.

SM: And if that goes out of this room. I'll deny it. [laughter].

C: I didn't understand it. I really didn't.

SM: And that's why.

SF: Because I called and asked.

SM: Mhmmm. And two or three [seriously] people. Well you have to know the people involved [wow.]

P: Well it was probably more a reaction to Kelly's...

AB: Yeah, it was a reaction to Kelly.

SM: Oh yeah, yeah.

P: That Kelly didn't know.

SM: Yeah, but Kelly did know. It was just a fact gathering thing. There was nothing meant...

E: Was wrong with learning? With asking questions?

SM: Well, but...

AB: That was just an excuse or...

SM: Thank you, thank you. Because the people in charge were tired of being in charge they said they could never get any of the people to take any of the things, but we never really tried. We never really tried. I told them one time if you give me the name of every new person that joins, I'll call them personally and invite them. Because Methodist women was part of my life from the time I was married. And I was married at 18.

AB: And I was here at the church at the time and had never been invited to a United Methodist Women meeting.

SM: Right, right. It was, it was. You have to admit it was cliquish and half the people didn't even go to church here. [right. Hmmm.] So when I walked into that, into that, I felt, I took a personal affront, cause they made me feel like, "Well you the hell are you? You're new in this church and you're gonna take over." And that wasn't it at all. I just wanted to know what do people really do so we can get our congregational care going. And so went I walked into that meeting. 2 or 3 or 4 people. I could tell this had been a discussion in their life for probably a month and they announced that that, it was gonna be the end of the Methodist women. [hmm.] And I truly felt that I had been, not hijacked but [M: scapegoated.] I was so discouraged because I knew where it came from. It was a hateful reaction. It was an excuse, they wanted out. But there was a point too, that they thought they could hurt by..[E; It's all so anti-Christian...] Well honnneyy. [laughter] How long have you...

AB: Our Polyanna.

P: How are you gonna quote that? Now honnney.

AB: I'm gonna right it, now honnneeyy, pat, pat on her leg.

SM: We all know that people don't do Christian things in the church all the time.

C: We also know that power struggles go on in the church all the time. [yeah].

SM: Absolutely and see I was oblivious.

P: And see sort of historically that had been a power struggle. [Oh my, yes.] Kelly...I've been part of that power struggle with Kelly.

SM: But I don't think it was that at all...

P: No, no, no, no, but I think. Those women had been in power struggles with Kelly. [SM. Could be] Yes, I..

SM: See that was before my time, all I knew was I loved UMW and I wanted us to aaalllll get a long. And I felt like they were blaming me. So I sat through the meeting and it was disbanded. And so my first, of course I was hurt cause I thought these people were my friends, but I knew exactly where it was coming from. It was coming from a, I'll show you, if you have to ask what we do then we just won't do it anymore. And see at that time they did all the bereavement, they did everything, and we just wanted to get it down on paper, because you know...Yar and I had been to this thing about creating teams to take care of people and we were so excited and so high about what we could do. And so I remember and I didn't really talk to anybody about it. I just really I thought this church is just like every other church and then I thought "you know what I'm right about this". My only mission is to help the people in this church and they're going to have to answer for there attitudes. And if it's not gonna be helping through United Methodist Women then we're gonna set up the bereavement and we're gonna do it. And I never did anything that I didn't ask them to help. I think they were kinda mad at me cause, but I wasn't made at them. I was just innocent in this whole struggle. You know I was just like [laughter] lalala. So anyway, that's why we disbanded and that's the closest I ever came to just walking out. And then I thought no, that's not the thing to do. And, you know, you guys said, and then I started Lunchables and we have a lot of fun and we go to each other's homes and they all come to my house for Christmas and I love it! And we did that and we formed our teams and we really got that off the ground, so when Mabel said we were gonna stat UMW I said well that is great! Cause I believe in it, and Mabel said "well Lunchables don't do anything" and I said Mabel "Everybody almost in this group works they're butt off, and it is so nice to just have a social thing. We go out and nobody comes home with an assignment. [It's important. Just to get to know each other.] We work our butts off calling people and getting there, but um, so I'm glad I did.

C: I wanna say something to that [SM: OK] standing on the other side looking. I was not involved in the decision to disband...I may have been somebody said, we're gonna disband are you okay with that..but it had nothing to do with you. I know you felt it very personally [SM: Oh boy I did] But I can tell you from the other side. It was nothing to you, it was to Kelly that the whole group felt that Kelly was trying to run things, that we're not appreciated, blah, blah, blah the whole bit. {SM okay]. But I will say, I was heartbroken at the time because I thought, what..when, it's just like now, when things got done in the church the women did it. [right]. You know, and that was the UMW and I was thinking, you know what are you, what, what? And I think it was a reaction. The other thing that was said was that people were invited, the young women didn't want to be a part. Cause I know that a bunch of people were invited to night circle and they'd come once and then they'd go away. SO that, that the UMW was seen as an older stogy kind of whatever and that the women. And that the new women weren't coming was another reason it was disbanded. I am, but, this is the point, you know I talked about the winnowing of the church?

And it's true a lot of the women in UMW didn't go anymore which was weird. I think the disbanding of the UMW was part of that winnowing process. God has his ways. And at the time, for me personally, it was like I can't believe you're doing this? But I think it was God doing it. We needed to time for the church to become different. And Green Street is different and it was part of Green Street's growing and now UMW is coming back on a much better plane than it was. It's no longer the traditional power struggle organization that it was. because it was a hold over from how the church used to be. And Green Street is not that way anymore and I think it had to disband so it could come back and grow. But I just wanted to say it had nothing to do with you personally. I was not involved in the cetal part of all of that...

SM: I sure wasn't involved either.

C: But I would not, don't take it that it was you. It was Kelly.

SM: Oh, I'm over it.

AB: Well this is actually a great transition, so for those of you who have not told your "how you came to Green Street story if you want you can, if you wanna put that in your journal you can, but I want to make sure we have time for the sculptures. (Gave instructions for human sculptures).

Margaret's Description of her Sculpture

Okay, so my, I feel like we're really good at the outreach and the getting' to the community and making sure everybody's fed and has clothes and that stuff. When somebody new comes particularly if they're from one of those groups we're really happy to see them and we welcome them and we love them in that moment , but I don't think we're reall good at the relationship part. We all come on Sunday morning and we sit beside each other and we sing and then we go home. So...

AB: That was this?

M: They were told to smile and not to get to close.

AB: And what does that have to do with social justice for you?

M: Well we talked about the, I like Sharee's term, boutique mission trip. I think we're a step beyond that. I think we're good at getting into the community and getting to know folks that way, but we haven't gotten all the way to the point of, once we reach those people let's have a real relationship with them and they're not just people that we help. So. [Awesome].

Sally's description of her sculpture

So I just automatically thought about at Green Street there's, there's people that are sitting and not ready to do something. There's people that are completely confident and speaking up and then you know there's everyone kind of in between. There's some totally comfortable with what goes on at Green Street, some people not as comfortable but really enjoy it and then there's some people that are like what's gonna on or not even sure where they want to be in it.

AB: Can I ask you, where would you be?

S: I think I would be in between those two maybe.

AB: So in between Sharon and Sharee?

S: I may be like strong in my head, but then like literally sitting down. [laughter. I like her honesty. Yeah.]

Sharon's description of her sculpture

I see our church as, as we're all here for a reason and, and so we're all really here together. But we're not there yet, you know we think we're accepting and you know we think we're doing everything we can. But the reason I turned some people is...we're just not there yet. We still have work to be done. But we're aaalll in this together.

Ellen's description of her sculpture

It was just that when someone comes they are greeted and the music is glorious. And then everyone is always welcome and then there's always someone here for the first time that's going "What is going on?"

Sharee's description of her sculpture

I...I think that there are different levels of connectedness in the congregation but that there is a shared longing. And that there is something, even if maybe we haven't quite figured it out yet that Margaret was symbolizing that there's something that holds us here and that, and, and keeps us together and we just maybe don't all know what it is or know how to name it...

E: It's the thing bigger than us.

SF: Yeah, but that there is a longing, so even if we haven't quite connected yet, like the first two of you...there's still, I think by virtue of coming here that people are expressing a longing to be connected in a deeply spiritual way, in a just to other people, but something. And I think that that's both our strength and our challenge. And I just remember one Sunday and I can't remember who it was, like there's something going on. It was Neena actually, it was Neena,

Neena and I were sitting on the wall outside the church and we were. She was just expressing some frustration about some things and I was too and I remember her saying, and it was more about the world at large, and she was like, "You know we haven't all completing figured it out here, but we're trying to." And that's what kind of keeps us here, that like, if we're all really trying too and if we can't figure it out here then the world...laughter...the fact was, her point was, we were all really trying. And I needed to here that at the time. Um, and I think that's what keeps me connected. Whatever challenges I have, just with my faith journey and the Bible and Christianity and all of that. What keeps me here is that people are really trying and I can be a part of that, like I can really live in that uncertainty and in fact have come to a place of finding that incredibly liberating and am able to be uncertain and not know, but at least there's a longing that I can share with folks.

Clara's description of her sculpture

Oh, sorry, just what I was just saying, it's not all of Green Street, I think there's so many facets. But to me that is Green Street when we "pass the peace" and we all love each other, and when we, we "pass the peace" in our own ways and on Sundays I see people that will not hug [right. If Becky beamguard had been here today she's would've done that very differently]. Yeah, so that's a huge part of what I see [P: I'm so glad I know that about her now, cause I don't try and hug her anymore. Laughter.] That's it.

AmyBith's description of her sculpture

So mine was a vignette of sorts. I imagined Margaret being that person who needs somebody to keep her here. You know like a lot of us came, we were invited and that relationship kinda keeps us here even though we struggle sometimes. And some people want to leave or leave and come back and so that tension of for all kinds of reasons wanting to be connected. But Sally was kinda like that bridge. So Sally was connected to Sharon and willing to be that person who is holding, who is willing to be in relationship with that, with that struggle. And then I think there are people like Ellen that long to be more connected. You (pointing to Clara) were the Remnant, like for me you were the symbol of the Remnant and the core of what brought us here and what keeps us here and that we keeps telling that story is so important. I love that we tell that story over and over again and we bring it to Confirmation, and so that was your, that was the symbolism there and so you (Ellen) were longing to want to be part of that, but I think for a lot of us who weren't here, like I wish I was a part of that. You know, like in a good way I wish I could say, I was here and I stayed. You know and so I think that, I think about that and then, so just the children, the innocence in all of us that sitting at the feet of that. And then the love for that. SO you (Sharon) were kinda my love for that. Sharon, just clinging to that and being so happy that we have that story and we have elders. That we're not just a new church that sprung out of somewhere, but that we have a story and that and so just clinging to that. And for me

that nurtures my social justice, because I'm a, I'm a product of survivors and a product of people standing up for the right thing. And so...

C: That's amazing. Cause so many years I wanted to be a part of, seriously I didn't feel a part of, you know just all the strides and stuff, it happened and I didn't do it. Am I making sense? I wanted to be one of the people who was a part of Green Street and I wasn't.

AB: But I think of you now as, you know they often call them the secret keeper, often in the stories of the people, of the survivors and you, but you're the historian and you tell that story and you keep in going, when we've lost so many people.

C: That's a message for all of us because you know, we're all secret keepers, but yeah.

SM: I think the Remnant makes me feel like I have to keep it going. [right. Right.]

C: Yes, exactly. How many were here for the 200 Anniversary? [In '02?] That was amazing.

SM: I came in '03.

AB: I cam in '02, but I wasn't.

C: I still have the shalom...I made homemade banners. I still have the shalom banner.

Pat's description of her sculpture

So Sharee is me and you (I think, AmyBith) were the leaders of the church and the other people in the church. And sometimes I feel like, I'm not in the group. Um, and um, come with different experiences. But because I don't fit, and a lot of this is probably because of my history lately, um, I don't feel like I'm valued or like I'm welcomed. You know, and whatever else, and I'm really struggling with that and like do I have a place here [whispers of yeah] um, yeah and so that, so for me sometimes I don't feel Green St, is necessarily about social justice or about, I don't like that word social justice. For me, sometimes it feels like I'm not welcome cause I come with a different perspective. Um, and because I don't fit in the group I'm not valued. I don't know if that makes any sense or not. [That's exactly what I was talking about earlier].

APPENDIX E

JOURNAL ENTRIES

Journal Entry #1

Why am I here?
What do I want to get out
of this?

Want some reflective space

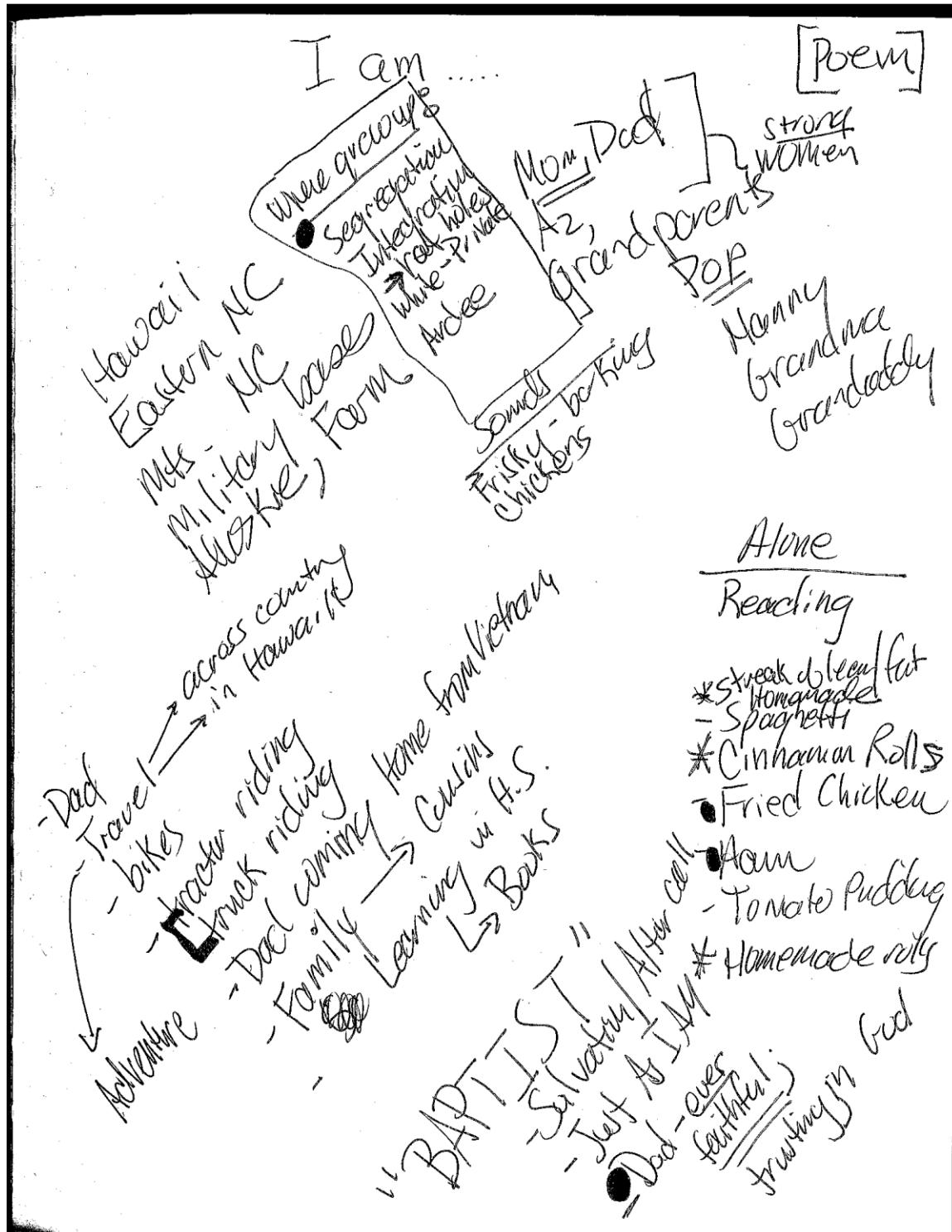
I "get" that I can go places & never be? but my son, David, can not...skater, ...teenager, Black

Love AB) want these to get to know better's love. Of diversity enriched my life, enriched my soul.

at even time now it has enriched my life, enriched my soul.

Social Justice

just → what}
"just" doesn't always be the same...



I. am

Sunday dinners of fried chicken, corn
pone, ham, and tomato pudding

Farm with tractor & truck riding
picking strawberries & hog killings

military - Edenton, Cherry Point,
Hawaii & Vietnam rejoicing
with returns

Easter NC & Va with tenant farmers,
Segregation, Ardee cooking &
cleaning for me with no
indoor plumbing of her own

Integrated middle school at R.L.
Vann of rats & rat holes in
doors, saw white kids in class
being threatened because of note

Baptist with "Just As I Am"
with Dad of quiet unwavering
Faith of God who loves us

Product of all of these ... Does
God Love us All ...

IF God loves US ALL ... why
are there

rat holes

private schools

No indoor plumbing

Have, have not ~~the~~

privilege + not privileged

Segregation?

-Journal #2 -

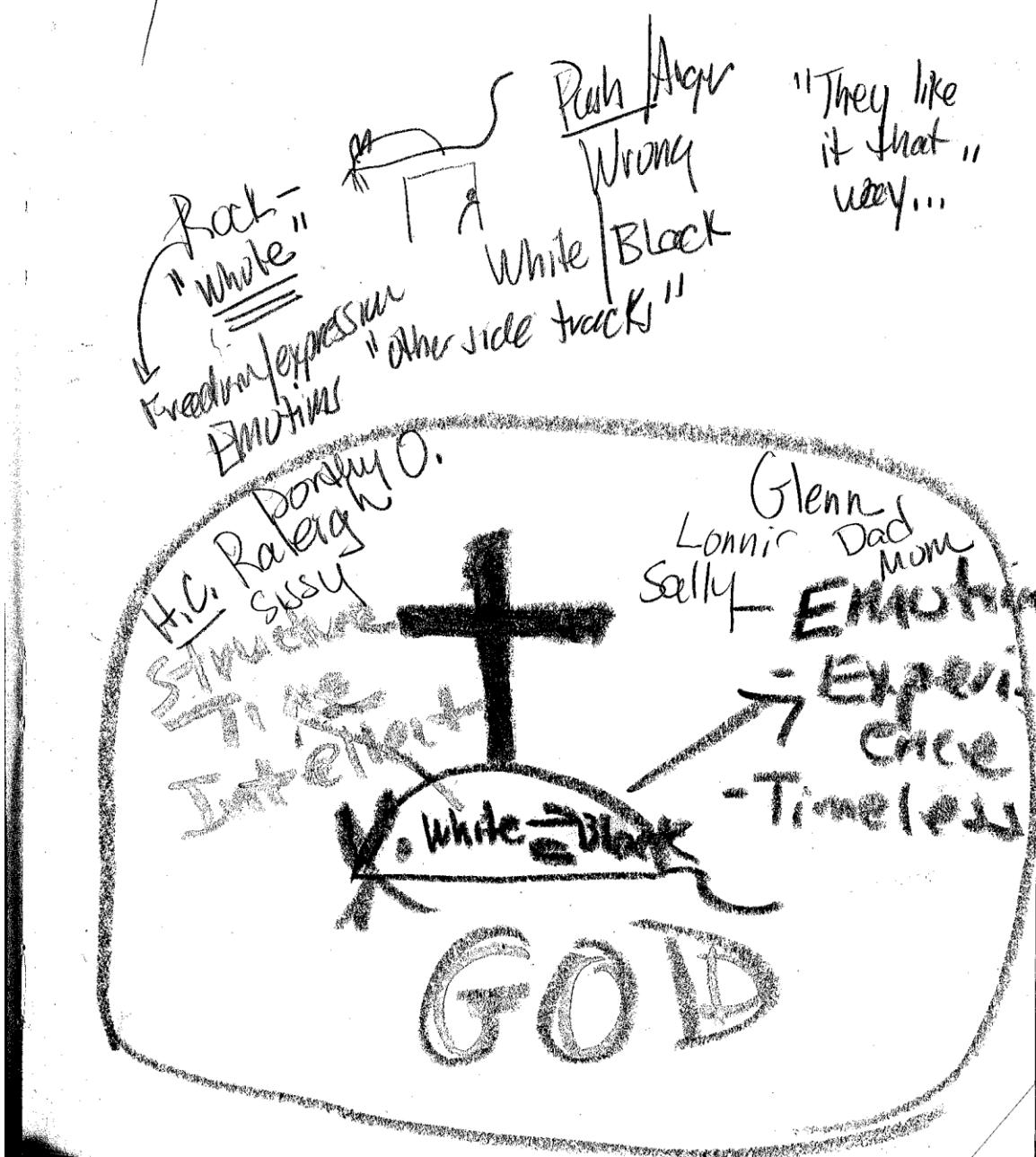
Spirit Matters
by M. Lerner

What do you think of a
"Commitment to social justice" means?

I hate that term - it sounds so
PC - I think people use it & never
really live it. It means to be
being Jesus in my world ---
plain & simple. As I look at what
he did while here, if we all lived
that way ... would we need this
term?



Journal #3



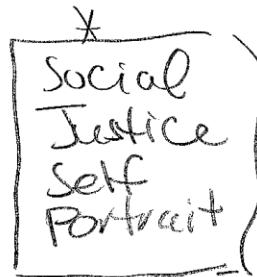
Living #4

12 May 2012

Response to Scripture

Now - what depth of feelings
issues --- coming so much about
doing what Jesus called us to
do but not feeling like I belong
@ Green St sometimes... Why? Is
it because no one acknowledges ME
because no one does it the way I
think they should do it? Also -
how many of us had connectedness but
also disconnection (inconscience) as
part of our stories -- Like we are
trying to figure it out but don't know
it yet ... how powerful... TENSION
probably is always a part of change;
confronting issues ... knowing & being
changed by God. →

We are all wounded in ways - not
whole - - God helps us be whole.



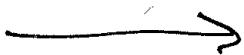
Ending Reflection

Reflection about experience

"

It was great - to be with all these different women from different backgrounds with different stories... but to have common stories.... that for all us white women to want to have full lives; full faith lives by being in relationship with people not like us ... either in color, sexual orientation, etc. To recognize that if we don't have this, then we are less than we can be but even more -- less than God wants us to be.

To realize; to know that we all have wounds, often very painful, but what a journey we are all on To me, I am not sure I would ever leave this group out as friends, but what potential there is now. I found it invaluable -- just to know others who are slouching, wounded just like me ~



The only thing I would have done differently is to spend more time working on self-portrait so would have done it when rest of group did it -- didn't hold up my responsibilities.

Evaluation

~~I~~ did feel a little strange just all of us white ♀ talking - It would be interesting to do w/ group black ♀ to compare / contrast experiences. Or with white women with no social justice experiences or thoughts. [Can you see scribble method coming out?]

~~Amy Bily - You can decide whether to use my name or not - it doesn't matter to me. So ... AB, you CCM~~

4-21-2012

Shawnith

I hope to discern what others
think and feel. I hope to get a
better understanding of why
things the way they are.

I like being with people. I
may be surprised how others in
this group feel.

Big Bang
Balance
full of flowers
Young living
the old

1. Charleston, WV Blue Collar Clerical
Center of the world, City on the river,
2. Mother, Dad & brothers. Father was
an alcoholic. ~~Dad~~ in the middle
3. Was several years older than my
young brother.
4. Father working. Trip to the land.
Playing outside with friends.
5. fruit, veggies, meat, special -
Colored faces, Cookies. We never ate out.
6. Kids, airplanes.
7. Church (was on the cover), SS,
chow, Bill S School, youth group,

8. Dressed up with freedom. Maybe
too much, ~~it's~~ no fear.

Sam

4-21-2012

Shawnith

I hope to discern what others
think and feel. I hope to get a
better understanding of why
things the way they are.

I like being with people. I
may be surprised how others in
this group feel.

Big Bang
Balance
field of flowers
Young living
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5. fruit, veggies, meat, special -
Colored faces, Cookies. We never ate out.
6. Kids, airplanes.
7. Church (was on the cover), SS,
chow, Bill S School, youth group,

I am happy to be a part of this group
I am mostly a positive person,
I am proud of my grand daughters
I am teaching them to carry on
Social justice when I am gone,
I am not an artist but
I am a wonderful audience,
I am not always nice,
I am sad my parents are
dead.
I am always learning
I am so glad I took the
IDR training!
I am safest in intentional
about race
I am so happy I walked
through the door.
I am a product of the 50s
and never gave Segregation a
thought.
I am sorry I never thought
about Black's sitting in the
back of the bus or sitting in the
balcony of the theater.
I am a good student and
the happiest when sitting

in a classroom,

I am happy being with people
and I am happy being alone,
I am not sure where in heaven

and hell.

I am pro-choice

I am a very insecure person,

I am blessed.

3

I was on the dirt road to my
grandparents home in WI.

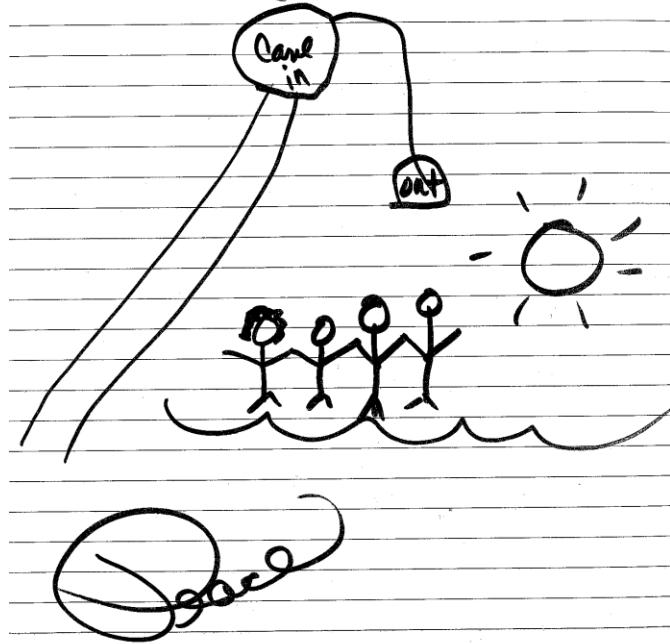
Was barefoot and the sand in the
road was like velvet.

At the top of the hill I
went into the cave but I was
not afraid. When I came out of
the cave I was on a beach. It

Sun was shining but not burning.

There was a group of people
holding hands. Some knew
others did not. Matisse, Hitler Jr.,
Jesus, people in dresses I did
not recognize but knew they were
from all parts of the world.
They were Swinging and Smiling.

I knew the world you at school,
Did not want to leave,





Journal #1

Why am I here?

- Curiosity - are others experiencing the same things I am? what are their stories?
- the need for a reflective space - I haven't been incredibly attentive to my spiritual life in an intentional way in recent months and am hungry - but I can't do Bible Study

I Come from . . .

- a home that Santa Claus didn't want to visit until I was five
- a hot mess of people - Dad, step-mother, ^{older} siblings
- felt like an only child in middle school (other sibs had moved out)

What did I love?

- quiet summer days out in the woods
- my grandmother's house

I am...

Liberated by not knowing

I am...

from the land of "covered dishes"
pimento cheese and deviled eggs
twice baked potatoes and congealed salad with
dollop of mayonnaise on top

I am...

a survivor, a motherless child who doesn't
want to feel responsible for everyone else's
shit anymore

I am...

a creator, believer, lover, ^{seeker,}
that my existence makes a difference
(whatever that means)

I am...

whole and in fragments all at the
same time

I am, I am, I am - becoming?

I am living the mystery that is my journey

Alone time

- working on projects
- melancholy

Food

- pimento cheese
- pop-tarts
- cheese!

Sounds

- Music
- silence
- turning of newspaper pages

Church, Religion, Faith

- suffocation and love

Need to Know

- complicated - wrought w/ emotions?

+

5-12-12

I have no illusions about Green St.'s imperfection at this point. I learned a long time ago not to put people or institutions on pedestals. I too, have felt disconnected from the "inner circle" that has developed at Green St. and sometimes I feel sad that I'm not more involved. However, I know this is due to my own periods of absence which have been my choice. I think my absences have occurred because I've talked myself into feeling that my presence is inconsequential. Life goes on whether I'm here or not. And honestly, in some ways that is liberating. Other times I feel enormously guilty, because I believe in community and that being in a community means being present and responsible to and for others.

In a way, this group is the most connected I've felt to what brought me to Green St. in the first place and what has kept me coming back.

Maybe it's time for me to re-engage. ❤

While our time and discussions together have not been immediately conscious, they have been present in my continuous stream of feelings, and musings. I think the experience definitely cracked some things open for things that have been under the surface needed to be explored in a more intimate way (my connection to Green St., what keeps me from being fully present, what I am doing with the grief I feel regularly, the hurt and injustice happening in the world). I definitely think the process is effective for engaging people already connected to a community like ours in a deeper way, particularly women. I was torn between the longing for a more diverse group of people (because I tend to believe that is always good) and appreciating the opportunity to hear other white women. I also think it would be nice to extend our time together and how much further we could go. I also think it could be a great process for an adult "school" type gathering.

Becky

Journal Entry 1

Why am I here?

only because I know how hard it is to find people willing to commit to research! As for Soc Justice, I don't know that I have made a firm commitment. I certainly believe that all people deserve & demand the right of equality in all aspects of life but I have not participated in organized activities.

What we started @ GSUMC & continue to come up I want my children to know people from different socio-eco levels, races, beliefs & to realize that we are all God's children. No one person or group is better than others.

I Am . . .

Childhood

Charleston - neighborhood, ex-military, lower income, non-affluent section

mom, dad, brother, sister, step-brothers

baby of family brother-dreamer

mom: dad-work sister - athlete

going to the movies, playing outside, reading,

falling asleep while parents watched TV,

staying up late on Sat Night, socializing
at church, backyard cookouts, school

Reading, watching TV, laying in hammock - reading
roasted peanuts, popcorn, eggs

spec occasion - ham, sour sauerkraut, rolls

cars, dogs barking, talking, singing

friends to play with, socials every month, VBS,

Mrs. Brown & Bible drills, Fear of hell

great childhood - lots of friends, close knit community,

socializing - opening home to friends was
important

I am
a product of my up-bringing

I am
a believer in equality for all because that's
how I was raised

I didn't see
the cracks or discrepancies in my parents'
beliefs until my sister started dating a
boy from another race

Spent my childhood roaming the neighborhood,
but knowing little white girls did not go
"Up the hill"

did go "Up the Hill" to ~~by~~ my best friend,
Santé's house, where her grandmothers ~~cooked~~
cooking permeated the house with ~~great~~
aromas

Am
a social creature, who wants ^{for} my children
to not see the same ~~pester~~ prejudice in
me

Journal Entry 2

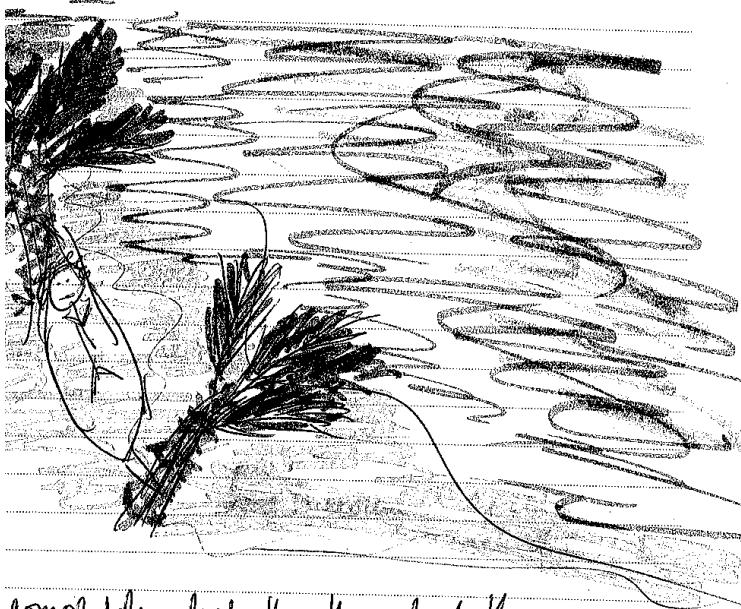
Social justice?

Equality for all - both governmental and interpersonal

Seeing and acknowledging the individuality
of others

Enforcing equal treatment of students

Journal Entry 3



completely lost the thread of the
editation. I was in the hammock on the
beach, listening to the gulls, smelling the
salt in the air. Then you said something
about a gate and saying goodbye.

#1

Margaret Wages

Well I always enjoy digging down and learning more about myself and figuring out how I came to be the way I am. My faith & my interest in "social justice" are all rolled up together. I put that in quotes b/c I think it's such a buzz word these days. When really I just think it's being a thoughtful, loving human being and, for me, a (feminist) Christian.

On another note, it sometimes bothers me to be the "white woman helping the poor kids" (or whatever), often alongside one or more other white women, so maybe looking to find some peace with that.

I AM a big, strong,
happy, ~~old~~ woman
raised in the south

I AM LOVED. By God and
my Mama
and my family
and an amazing
community of friends
who are spread out all
over this world.

I AM wrestling & struggling each
day with the joy of being
loved and the fear of
people knowing who I really
am deep down inside. With
Christian theology & liberal
politics, with the God I know
now and the God I learned
about in Sunday School, with
love that is pleased and happy
and love that is concerned
about my eternal salvation.

"I am whole
and in fragments
at the same time,
all at once
am from always
whole and never changing
now unique that was"
Sally

#3

I never figured out what was in my basket. I carried it with me, and it seemed important to, but I think I may have left it in the enlightenment place. I always seemed kind of empty, with a few papers and/or (ringing) things making noise in the bottom (?).

The final destination was a place of light and people with long white robes. Just

it was hard to make out any of their faces, but I sensed that the one in the highest place was God. I also saw Willard, Amaris, & Mabel. Then MLK & Rosa Parks. Then I was back in my college dorm room, with the newspaper clippings of MLK, Spike Lee, etc., and my friends joking about how I "liked black people". There is another story here about irreverence

#4

Human Sculptures

I guess my gut response
is that some people see a
rosier (rosey-er) (more rosey)
picture than I do, which
doesn't seem very nice. But
then again at least one person
seemed to see a less rosey picture
so I guess that's ok. I
do believe Green Street is a
wonderful place to be in so
many ways - otherwise I
wouldn't be here I guess -

but I wish we could do a better job really creating community among ourselves.

My church experience growing up was so much about church people spending time together - ~~and~~ to the extent that outreach wasn't much of a priority - but I do wish we could find more of a balance between reaching out & reaching in.

6/9/12

For me, the more I can be around other Christians who think & believe like I do, and the more I can talk about and reflect & process things with them, the more empowered I feel to be and think & live into who God has created me to be, I say this because I think the word "Christian" has been hijacked by folks who believe a certain way and, having "deviated" from that I am often almost ashamed who to be who I am around those people. It's a big

hurdle to get over, and things like these sessions help a lot.

So it has gone onto the pile of "stuff" that is coming together in me that gives me power to know that I am a Christian and I am not a fundamentalist - or whatever term you want to insert there.

Frankly, I'm still trying to get my brain around how you are using this as research because in my assessment it's just been good hands-on bonding & self-exploration/ expression work. You know I

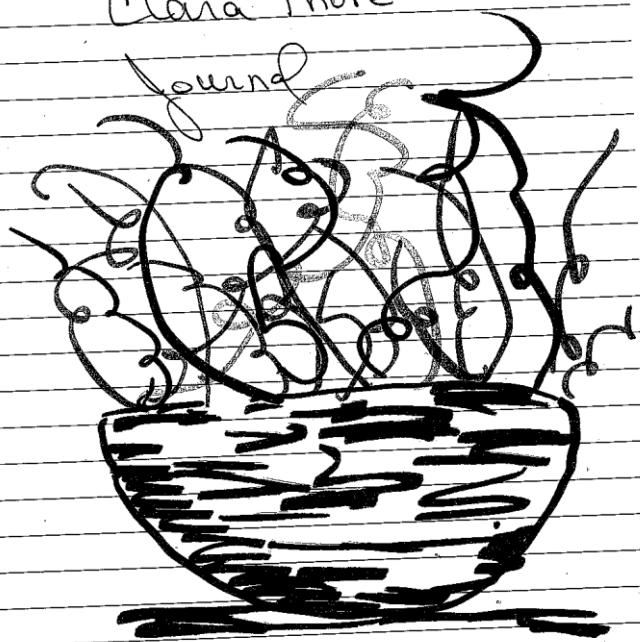
am way into this kind of
thing, but to see that
the other women have
also enjoyed it and gotten
a lot out of it just confirms
that it's worth doing. Research
or no research.

Thanks for
including me.

(I'm not wearing my
glasses so I hope
you can read this.)

Clara Thore

found



① I don't have any idea. I would hope to be a "good" guinea pig first of all! But seriously I hope to learn more about myself in relation to social justice but (being from Mississippi + raised in a Deep South mentality) am kind of afraid what I would find or "be revealed". Some the art aspect + "good guinea pig" is an oxymoron though.

~~Childhood~~ Childhood -

- 1) I lived on a farm in Southern Mississippi 15 miles from the nearest town which was 3000 people
- 2) I lived with my Mother who was a hardworking schoolteacher - Mama and Daddy who worked on farm then on a sawmill and my little sister Ouida Sue, 10 years younger. We fought a lot! :)
- 3) I loved loved loved to read & watch t.v. Also the smell of grass in Spring & eating plums in June from bushes barefoot but watching out for snake. And my grandmother (Gloria) & fishing with her and Granddaddy and my cousins. Shooting firecrackers at Christmas
- 4) I spent alone time reading & watching t.v.
- 5) Foods - rice, peas + beans from garden, oatmeal
Special - fried chicken, cakes

VHW-H

6) Sounds - moos of cows,
dogs barking, cicadas in summer,
whippoorwill outside my window,
rain on the roof of my bedroom

7) Religion - Bible school, Sunday
school, playing piano in
Church, United Methodist

8) the freedom & healthiness
of growing up in country. Also
the "judgment" of towns
kids. Having close family.
Extended family.

I am the product of the world
the people, the smells, the tastes, the me.

Mama cooking waffles and revealing one
Rain hitting the tin of my bedroom roof
Mowing the grass in the hot summer sun.

The judgment of the people around me
City kids laughing at the country kids
Other kids resenting what I could be.

My heart hurts today when I think
those above me but those below too
The smell of money and the colored stuck

I am ashamed of who I was and am and
will be.
My salvation says, "That silly"
my mind says, "How perverse"
My heart says, "Just like"

I am not the product of the world
the people, the smells, the tastes. I'm me.

#2 Social Justice

Social = people interacting

Justice = fairness, equality

To act with a commitment to this
would ~~not~~ but be to treat
my neighbor as I would be
treated but it requires faith,
courage, and love? Also it is
not blind -

May 16th 2012

(#4)

Gosh it was amazing to see all the different aspects of Green Street. All the way from the superficial (passing peace) to the very deepest (Pat's need for more acceptance). The surprising one for me was that the Remnant are valued so much - I didn't know that!

One thing about that particular scenario was that me playing Remnant really highlighted the imperfectionness of the Remnant (my self image of being too large, too shy, etc etc). The Remnant is certainly that way.

And like our shortcomings bad things happened, we weren't all we could have been but God is leading Our lives & is leading G.S.

① I found the idea of the
exciting, just as I found
Church when I first came here.
Being a part of a church that
and serves all races, all income
all people without exclusion of
me. It makes me feel at
I am interested in exploring
own place in all this --- my
and probably why I am led.

(2)

I lived in High Point N.C.

When I was one year old I lived for about a year with my aunt, Jamie (mother's sister) because my mom was in the hospital a lot, my base family consisted of my father who is an artist. My mom & one brother who is 2 years older.

I am stumped over remembering what I loved about childhood. Mom was tragic in a lot of ways - Mom had multiple sclerosis and was bi-polar with some other mental problems like being totally crazy, but I loved her a lot.

I liked to listen to music write in journals a lot. Loved nature. I loved animals a lot.

Bad memories Don't have a lot of memories about foods at all. Lots of blank spots in my memories of childhood due to a lot of Drama.



I am happy that I am here and I
am proud of my journey even though it
has been crazy

I am excited to have the time
forced by this class to explore my
deepest feelings and to journal.

I've been missing it.

I am curious what we will learn.

I do not know how I came to
feel the way I do about having such
a deep empathy for others, no matter
their race or social standing, or their
sexual preferences. ~~I wonder~~. Did
someone teach me to be this way?

All I can remember is not
understanding how or why everyone
is not the same -- why do they hate?
It bothers me when I run into it.

I mean it really upsets me.

I want other races to know that
I care + love them just as I do
anyone else.

I worry that I am judged by
blacks sometimes... just because I am white.

X

I believe a commitment to social justice should mean that ~~I~~ am going to come to terms a person lives their life in a way that always makes everyone feel accepted and welcome.

One thing I hope to learn + figure out

#4

5-12-12

Response to Human Sculptures Project -

It has been eye opening to hear what some of the others are feeling about this church --- and their feelings about their place in it. Ironic, that from outward appearances... these very people are some of the ones I assume were sure and steadfast and almost intimidating to me as far as getting to know them.

However, in reality, they are searching, unsure and just as human and meek as I am.

The glue of the church seems to be all of us being open minded and inclusive in our search and with our questions.

6-09-2012

I most certainly believe the process we went through was beneficial --- especially on a personal level for me. I enjoyed the entire process, the sharing with other women, the art expression, the inner reflection. I think it is always beneficial to listen to other people's story. It builds empathy.

Empathy is perhaps one of the greatest gifts we have (if we love it). I have come across some folks in my journey, who do not seem to access empathy easily. Perhaps this is one of the most important, worthwhile things we can and should try to teach our children. (The children of the world.)

Continued —

6-09-12

I've set aside time for this project "forced" me to write and be creative -- which is something I think about doing constantly and want to do always yet never seem to find the time. I believe that is why I enjoyed participating in the exercise so much. And like most things, once you begin and actually write or create -- it becomes easier & may even become a priority!

I would be curious to see reactions to our discussions, our art, etc., from varied people.

Those at Green Street -- and maybe even more interesting would be a response from those who are not involved routinely in a social justice setting -