From *conscientization* to imagining redistributive strategies:

Social justice collaborations in elite schools

Abstract

In this paper we reflect on the challenges of engaging in social justice work within elite schools. Drawing on experiences collaborating with an elite school in a justice-oriented research project, we consider the theoretical resources that informed this work. We demonstrate how Freire's work has been critical in forming the kind of relations that acknowledge and benefit from multiple perspectives. Other conceptual frameworks are then considered, which may facilitate the further embedding and extension of social justice work. We conclude by proposing that Fraser's work offers the necessary tools for this, but emphasise the importance of hope and persistence.

Keywords   social justice, elite education, Freire, Fraser, critical-consciousness, global citizenship education

From *conscientization* to imagining redistributive strategies:
Social justice collaborations in privileged spaces

In a context of increasing levels of inequity, where 'elite' groups across societies experience exponential levels of growth in their wealth, far beyond any income and standard of living increases reported by other well-resourced groups (Dorling, 2014; Piketty, 2014), efforts to challenge inequality and promote more 'just' social, economic and political relations are critical. While consciousness-raising and organising oppressed peoples to challenge dominant relations of power has a long history (Freire, 1970; Castells, 1983), it is arguably elite groups and institutions who have the greatest potential for changing the structures which so effectively subjectivate 'Others' (Fraser, 1997; Skeggs, 2004). This paper engages with the challenge of proactively working with elites to examine ways in which social justice can be promoted, despite the tension inherent in such a move for the elites themselves, who in the process must be open to challenging their own social, economic or political privilege (Howard, 2013).

The problem of social justice work in elite schools

Most of the literature which engages with the social justice potential to be realised within elite spaces, concludes that such practices are inherently reproductive of privilege. Given the 'bubble of privilege' (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2010, p. 3) most young people attending elite schools grow up in, their relational understandings of social class, entitlement and merit are formed within a very closed social space, with others 'like them'. Thus, they often have very little understanding of the broader relations of inequality across societies, and specifically very little affective engagement with the effects of such inequality. Prosser (2016) and Howard (2013) further emphasise that when young people in elite schools do interact with 'Others', it tends to be around one particular aspect of disadvantage – the disabled, the homeless for instance – which

limits young people's ability to appreciate how poverty and discrimination operate more generically across the social and economic relations formed in various spaces, and the role the advantaged have in reproducing these.

Second, many elite education settings actively promote the 'creation of global citizens'. Usually positioned within the framework provided by the International Baccalaureate (IB), schools propose they will form a new cadre of 'young, global, leaders' (Fahey & Prosser, 2015, p. 1038) who will address the problems facing our global society. Scholars argue that such an orientation has the effect of actually reinforcing current social class relations, and promoting the belief that there are those 'who are educated enough and also elite enough to determine which global issues matter, and those who are not. Within this context, privilege isn't necessarily challenged … [but] … serves to create a kind of contemporary 'moral aristocracy' (op cit). Furthermore, as Howard (2008) has previously suggested, 'benevolent acts, therefore, have considerable ideological value not only in diverting attention away from the power of dominant groups but also in convincing subordinates that they are concerned for others and are compassionate, kind and giving' (p. 198).

A third contextual issue which has been emphasised is the long tradition of 'privileged patronage' (Kenway & Fahey, 2015, p. 98) of many elite institutions (see also Allan & Charles, 2014). Therefore, efforts to engage elite schools in differently conceptualised social justice work needs to consider whether a different set of starting assumptions must first be cultivated. To do this, we must first consider how best to define 'social justice'.

Nancy Fraser, a well-known theorist in the field of social justice, argues that justice requires 'social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life' (2007, p. 27), and so attempts to challenge 'injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles to participatory parity' (2008, p. 277). Similarly, Freire was concerned to enable all people to

become active in participating in democratic processes (Torres, 2008). Central to promoting social justice is therefore to tackle forms of misrecognition, maldistribution and misrepresentation within societies (Fraser, 2009). According to Lovell (2007), Bourdieu adds a further dimension to understanding the reasons for social injustice beyond the kinds of structural conditions set out by Fraser. Bourdieu's (1992) work on 'habitus' has been drawn on to suggest that understandings of justice and articulations of merited inequality are deeply embedded within dispositions (Khan, 2016). Such discursive and affective conditions are arguably central in reproducing inequality, and will make the development and agreement of new social arrangements that promote parity potentially more difficult. Thus, as Bell (2007) argues, one should conceive of social justice work as both a goal and a process – where participatory parity is desired, but that the process engaged in seeking to attain this outcome is itself critical. Crucial not only in seeking to achieve and maintain such a state of participatory parity, but also as a commitment to practising such forms of knowing and relating to others.

This paper has two aims. First, despite some scholars' political and theoretical reservations about the potential for elite education institutions to engage in social justice work, we share and reflect on the experience of Howard's development of such an initiative. Second, we articulate the theoretical influences that have shaped the work to date – particularly the 'process' of social justice work. We then consider which additional concepts we might draw on to deepen the school community's engagement in the social justice project, thereby extending the process and impact the intervention might have.

The study

Our examination of engaging in social justice work with elites is based on the experiences of a multi-sited global ethnography of elite secondary schools (e.g., Kenway, et al., 2016) in six countries: Australia, Chile, Denmark, Ghana, Jordan, and Taiwan, led by Howard. The schools

involved in this study are identified as elite based on their high standing and prestigious reputation within their society and, for some of the schools, across the world due to their high academic standards, well-resourced education, and notable track record of sending their students to highly-selective universities (Kenway & Fahey, 2014). The main questions guiding the inquiry sought to address the ways in which the schools defined global citizenship, the lessons students learnt about global citizenship and how these lessons shaped their self-understandings, how increasing global connections and imaginations impacted students' self-understandings, and the role that elite schools played in facilitating and mediating these influences. Critical for this paper is that through the research work in each school and the possibilities for critical engagement with the findings these encounters encouraged, the research relationship developed into a more dialogic set of conversations with each school that prioritised a concern for how elite institutions could promote social justice. In what follows we critically reflect on how these conversations were fostered and what theoretical framework can best support our analysis of these, and consider how productive relations could be further facilitated with elite groups, so that they take responsibility for promoting social justice from their privileged positions.

Global citizenship education – the organising framework for social justice promotion?

In our experience, the organising structure for social justice work in the elite schooling context (especially in those institutions involved in our study) is connected to global citizenship education, largely because of its increasing status and perceived importance in today's world (Brown, 2003; Dill, 2013; Myers, 2010; Resnik, 2009). Global citizenship education can be understood as a set of practices, curricula inputs and a re-articulation of the purpose of education driven by schools' needs to respond to the challenges of globalisation by providing students with opportunities to develop awareness and knowledge of differences, to establish and maintain relationships across differences, to gain a sense of obligation toward others, and to accumulate

valuable forms of human and cultural capital (Dill, 2013; Yemini & Maxwell, 2018). The findings of this global ethnography revealed four domains that give meaning to global citizenship education within the six elite schools studied: *cultural, relational, emotional,* and *material.* While proponents of global citizenship education view it as a positive, productive form of learning, critics have argued that the skills, competences and knowledge developed through global citizenship education in fact prepare students at elite schools, '[to] comfortably and competently … move across and between different locations and cultures' (Kenway & Fahey, 2014, p. 190) and 'to imagine themselves as global leaders in various fields' (op cit, p. 191) in order to maintain, and possibly even advance, their elite status.

Such a perspective understands global citizenship education as serving primarily as another means for reinforcing eliteness within these contexts, or impeding a justice orientation (Gilbertson, 2016; Mannion et al., 2011), despite commonly-stated claims that suggest social justice lies at the heart of global citizenship education. Acknowledging that while critical impulses within global citizenship education (such as building awareness of others different from oneself and establishing relationships across differences) make an important move, overall, it functions to retrench rather than transform the various forces perpetuating power inequities (Pashby, 2011), and sidesteps the political efforts necessary for working toward social justice. Within these elite educational contexts, 'soft' versions of global citizenship education (Andreotti, 2006) – where the starting point 'is of a moral variety based on the notion of a common humanity and a global or world ethic' (Tawil, 2013, p. 5) – are employed rather than critical ones where social justice is central to the teaching and learning process. These soft versions, therefore, circumvent the political engagement and efforts needed to promote social justice (Pashby, 2011). In so doing, these approaches reproduce, perhaps indirectly and unintentionally, existing unjust systems of beliefs and practices (Andreotti, 2006).

In our study, the schools, in fact, intentionally avoided *being political* (i.e., taking particular positions and engaging in social justice practice) or teaching their students the necessary lessons in *becoming political* (i.e., developing the habits of mind and heart to work toward social justice aims and imagining self as an agent of change). Having identified this during the course of the research, here, we explore efforts to engage teachers and administrators at Takau English School[i] (TES), a private American school in Taiwan, in a process aimed at transforming the practices of global citizenship education to cultivate an explicitly political domain. We do this to share the stories of ways we might engage the school in social justice work and offer approaches to theorising the relations developed and the potential impact of these on promoting equality within the realms of the elite school's sphere of influence. Our purpose in doing so is to suggest we need to find ways to work with elites rather than resist engagement with them, a position some scholars and practitioners would take issue with.

TES' engagement in global citizenship education

Central to understanding the hesitancy to engage in 'the difficult but possible work of imagining and creating new political alternatives' (Pashby, 2011, p. 431) was, in this case, according to the school officials at TES, due to three key reasons. First, was the challenge in engaging with parents' desires for the purpose and delivery of an education to their children, and facilitating a re-articulation of it which promoted the political. Although TES parents mostly believed that the school's educational programs provided their children with the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies to thrive in globalised world and cultivate the aptitudes for mobility (ones, for example, necessary for gaining access to highly selective universities in the U.S.), the parents (and consequently purse-string holders) often found themselves in conflict with the particular institutional habitus (e.g., McDonough, 1997; Reay, 1998) produced through global citizenship education which emphasises such qualities as benevolence, critical self-reflection, empathy,

diversity, and leadership. Consistent with other studies (e.g., Ho et. al, 2017), parents placed considerable emphasis on academics; namely, that their children should receive top marks and test scores. They considered everything else as distractions. To maintain a productive relationship with parents, teachers and administrators believed, as the principal explained, 'we constantly need to perform a delicate balancing act between our educational goals and parental pressures.' Avoiding being explicitly political in their educational goals made that negotiation easier.

A second, related, pressure which led to the avoidance of 'being political', derived from the conflict experienced between the habitus of TES and dominant Taiwanese cultural values and practices. The latter reflected oftentimes a logic that stood in opposition to Western ways of knowing and doing. As an American school, the education offered at TES unavoidably reflected Western norms, despite efforts 'to take seriously the fact that we're located in Taiwan and to integrate Taiwanese culture into our programs, classes, curriculum and so on as much as is possible,' as the principal claimed. However, some Taiwanese cultural ideas remained disconnected from educational practices and meanings at TES such as 'face', an important Chinese cultural concept of preserving one's honour, prestige and social standing in society (Ho, 1976). Face therefore offers a counter cultural narrative and practice to openly discussing, in public sphere, topics central to the kind of global citizenship education being imagined by the elite schools in our study. More specifically, the efforts 'to save face' (that is, to maintain a positive image to self and others and uphold approved social attributes) often steer Taiwanese people away from taking political positions or engaging in political discussions publicly. School officials believed that being political and teaching students to become more political would deepen the cultural divides between these Taiwanese students and their 'home' nation. The need for elite institutions to engage with the broader cultural norms of the national or even local

context within which it is situated, so as to facilitate the legitimation of elite status of its members, as the school was concerned to do here, is therefore critical in making sense of what we observed here. This issue is also explored by Prosser (2016) in his work on an Argentine school, originally catering for families with links to the imperial powers, and now for the economic Argentine elite in a post-neoliberalism political context.

A third key barrier to the development of a political dimension within its provision of global citizenship education was, according to the school leadership, the academic demands of the IB programme. As the principal explained, 'It's such a demanding curriculum and students are consumed with work; teachers also are squeezed for time. The rigors of the programme make it impossible to teach students everything we want them to learn.' The stress, high-stakes assessments, and challenging workload connected to the IB programme made it difficult for teachers and administrators to imagine engaging students in a more political teaching and learning process. However, the stated goals of IB are explicitly political by centring learning on the development of particular attributes aimed at 'developing internationally minded students who can help to build a better world' (IBO, 2017, p. 3), for everyone, not just particular groups. These attributes highlight the importance of nurturing justice-oriented values and dispositions such as 'a strong sense of fairness and justice … respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere … [and] to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems' (p. 3) in working toward building a 'more peaceful world' (p. 7). The dilemma of balancing the perceived academic pressures of the IB with the intended values underpinning it, according to the above interpretation, had been barely engaged with by teachers before their involvement in this study. Given the central location of the IB and its symbolic representation for the school – as an elite and global credential that would facilitate the students' mobility post-graduation and their 'Americanisation' – the research team used the IB's definition of the political in their

engagement with the school community. Here, the political was understood to encompass making a commitment to something – the betterment of everyone through liberation and change – and integrating such a position into their thinking, which in turn would shape actions.

Thus, before the research project, TES educators considered these goals, as an English teacher described, 'like a jumping off point or a thought exercise and not really [goals] that could be achieved or be turned into something concrete. Like, are we really trying to achieve peace in the world? But it's interesting to consider what that would look like.' These justice-oriented goals, therefore, served as basis for theorising rather than engaging in action. Revealing the missing political domain through the findings of the research allowed TES educators to identify the misalignment between these stated learning goals grounded in social justice commitments and their global citizenship education practices. This realisation of the existing gap sparked discussions within the research group about exploring pedagogical possibilities for connecting theory to action, and generated a stronger desire to engage in such work.

The research findings, therefore, provided TES educators with useful insights to reflect on their practices, to dig deeper into what lessons they were actually teaching their students, and to reconsider what lessons they wanted their students to learn. Although they were unsurprised to discover the misalignment between goals and practices and the absence of an explicitly political domain of the educational framework behind these goals and practices, surfacing these known yet unspoken realities, and the discussions that followed these revelations provoked a greater awareness and collective responsibility for responding to these limitations. As such, researchers and members of the TES community redirected the aims of the research project to establish an approach that provided an epistemology for enabling the group to imagine beyond these limitations. Through these efforts, the group engaged in a justice-oriented collaboration to transform global citizenship education.

Justice-oriented collaborations emerging through research partnerships

Drawing and extending methods employed by researchers who engage in critical inquiry to study *with* elites *within* elite institutions (e.g., Howard, Polimeno & Wheeler, 2014; Stoudt, Fox & Fine, 2012), the efforts at TES were conceived and continuously shaped through collaboration between researchers (including undergraduate student researchers who mostly come from class-privileged backgrounds), teachers and administrators. At its inception, the research project gathered together individuals (researchers and teachers at the school) with different forms of knowledge, understandings and experiences. Those involved came together not only to explore meanings and practices of global citizenship education but also to interrogate how privilege is constructed and cultivated through those meanings and practices. Grounded in social justice aims and evidence, the project was conceived as a study with a political objective – to examine and actively seek to disrupt the processes involved in reinforcing privilege through global citizenship education.

Building on previous work to explore the individual and cultural processes involved in constructing and cultivating privilege (Howard, 2008; Howard et al., 2014), the group relied on an understanding of privilege as identity in their efforts. As an identity or an aspect of identity, privilege is a lens through which individuals with economic, social and cultural advantages understand themselves, others and the world around them. Values, perspectives, assumptions, and actions are shaped, created, re-created, and maintained through this lens of privilege. This view of privilege is more concerned with people's self-understandings than with what advantages they have. To think about privilege in this way is not to deny or diminish the importance of advantages that certain individuals and groups have over others, but it is, in fact, to underline the relationship between advantages and identity formation, and thus to understand the ways individuals actively construct and cultivate privilege, and the role of institutions in

reinforcing and reproducing privilege as a collective identity.

Taking this theoretical stance helped not only to make visible the ways in which privilege was reinforced through global citizenship practices, but also to direct the collective's efforts toward transforming the lessons students are taught about themselves and others. More specifically, researchers and TES educators concentrated on challenging and suggesting reforms to practices related to community service activities and trips, which are important components of their global citizenship education. This work included studying theoretically and pedagogically the structures and dynamics of privilege, to reimagine learning goals for these activities, and to develop alternative approaches for engaging students in service efforts. Similar to other action research approaches, the group explored 'the potential of different perspectives, theories and discourses that might help to illuminate particular practices and practical settings as a basis for developing critical insights and ideas about how things might be transformed' (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 568). In this way, the research become a political project.

As part of the work, the research team and relevant members of the school senior leadership team collaboratively developed a unit plan aimed at fostering students' critical consciousness during a weeklong service trip in Taiwanese aboriginal communities. Specifically, the group studied different models for engaging privileged students in an educational process to increase their awareness of privilege and oppression such as Curry-Stevens' (2007) model for a pedagogy for the privileged. The six steps of this model were useful in translating various critical pedagogy theories that emphasize critical consciousness into practice: gaining awareness of oppression; understanding the structural dynamics that hold oppression in place; locating oneself as oppressed; locating oneself as privileged; understanding the benefits associated with privilege; and understanding oneself as being implicated in the oppression of others and acknowledging oneself as an oppressor (Curry-Stevens, 2007).

Using this model and drawing on an approach to nurture privileged students' critical consciousness that emerged from a previous research project led by Howard, the collective designed a process for the TES students to develop individual and collective goals before the service trip, to work toward those goals during the experience, to engage in ongoing reflection and dialogue with other students and the researcher teaching the unit, to investigate questions emerging from their experiences, and to present their learning to others within the TES community. This unit centered on a video project that provided students opportunities to document their experiences and learning throughout the trip for the purpose of facilitating further reflection on their understandings of self and others, and exploration of questions related to privilege, oppression, and class and cultural differences. Through the interweaving of creative endeavor and collaborative production, the project was designed to be a medium for students to tackle difficult issues arising from their experiences jointly, openly and head-on.

In June 2017, three researchers joined students on this trip to teach this unit, collaborated with TES teachers beforehand to facilitate goal-setting sessions with students, and afterwards - to debrief experiences and create additional learning opportunities for students. This unit provided the kinds of learning opportunities for students to form more critical understandings of themselves and others. Overall, their final projects and debriefing discussions revealed that through these learning experiences they developed a greater capacity to question their assumptions about themselves and others, to form relationships across differences, and to acknowledge the significant role that their advantages played in their lives, and critically, relate this to the disadvantages of others.

A Freirian perspective

Drawing upon and extending core principles and commitments of participatory action research (e.g. McIntyre, 2008), four tenets guided the collective's efforts that ultimately led to putting this

unit plan into practice: *transformation* (seeking to work toward individual and institutional change); *reflection* (maintaining a reflective stance throughout the project); *ownership* (upholding a commitment to explore the particular topic and taking on the responsibilities necessary for such exploration); and *relationships* (building alliances in all aspects of the research process). Furthermore, the group engaged with the ideas of Paulo Freire (e.g., 1970) as its theoretical starting position through which to conceive of social justice work, and inform the justice-oriented efforts that explored and developed a more explicitly political approach to the teaching and learning process of global citizenship education. More specifically, the group took up the task of rethinking Freire's pedagogical philosophy, as Freire (1994) insisted, to reinvent his ideas to fit the specific context and to translate his understandings of social justice into a practicable approach for engaging the school and its community in this project.

From a Freirian perspective, social justice is understood as a struggle for liberation (Freire, 1970). Within the TES context specifically, the group used Freire to work towards the idea of social justice commitment which focused on critical literacy and consciousness as a means to change social actions. Critical literacy provides a means for 'reading the world' in ways that cumulatively challenge the existing circumstances (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire emphasises the need to move away from "naïve" ways of reading the world where meanings are understood as given, apparent and uncontested toward an analytical (or rigorous) form. This is an essential part of working toward critical consciousness (or what Freire (1998a) called *conscientization*): 'the process in which [people], not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform their reality' (p. 519). Through critical consciousness, Freire (1970) believes that people should learn to question society, see through versions of 'truths' that teach people to accept unfairness and injustice, and become empowered to define, envision, and work

toward social justice.

For the group, this meant exploring the ways in which global citizenship practices reinforced the processes involved in the production and maintenance of privilege. This inquiry required identifying and then reconsidering everyday assumptions that kept privilege hidden, not talked about, and unexamined, and to acknowledge and explore aspects of educational practices 'that are ordinarily invisible … [and] lost in silence' (Greene, 1988, p. 19). Through this process, the collective engaged in conversations with others to understand more fully the structures (physical, discursive and affective) that limited possibilities for transformation. Teachers and researchers within the group deliberately reached out to a diverse (in terms of belief system, nationality, gender, and experience level) group of other TES educators and administrators to extend the base from which knowledge was cultivated. These discussions surfaced various limitations to change such as those related to the ones identified previously in this article and additional ones (e.g., some teachers feeling ill-prepared for engaging in issues related to privilege with their students and others believing students would be resistant to making personal connections with those issues) that revealed the need for deeper understandings of privilege and the kinds of instructional spaces that would be most facilitative for developing those understandings. Freire (1970) points out that people perceive limiting situations as obstacles/barriers to change. Transformation is thus ultimately about how people come to view those situations as 'realities' whether as something impossible to change, something they fear to change, or perhaps something that could be changed.

The capacity to view realities (or such pressures as the ones identified earlier in this article) as possibilities to ignite action and change, necessitates reflection that brings together individual and collective efforts to excavate conflicting and similar understandings, and the necessary questions so as to make sense of those realities. Through reflection, Freire (1970)

argues, individuals become more capable of transforming those realities by 'see[ing] the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation' (p. 71). For Freire, reflection is not simply about deepening understanding but instead part of making a difference in the world.

Central to his ideas is praxis, a dialectic process of constant movement between reflection and action 'directed at the structures to be transformed' (Freire, 1970, p. 126). The research group carved out necessary time and created the spaces to maintain a reflexive stance throughout the process. The initial question of how to design an educational process to encourage critical consciousness during the service trip that framed the collective's inquiry was the basis for their continual reflection. The group regularly came together to surface additional questions about past and current practices related to the teaching and learning process of service activities such as the role of teachers in facilitating this process throughout the experience, the purposes of these activities, and the ways in which these purposes related to students' prior learning. These questions served as points of entry into collective reflection that led to new and different ways of perceiving the various limitations and possibilities of these practices. At times, the insights gained from this reflection and dialogue prompted the group to develop a plan of action for gathering additional information from multiple sources such as theoretical literature, research studies, and perspectives from TES community members, which initiated further reflection.

After developing the plan, members (researchers, administrators and teachers) paired up into what they called *dyads* to explore a particular question (often about learning outcomes and the teachers' work with students before, during and after the activities) or discuss specifics about the community service learning project logistics. These dyads were an effective means for facilitating a process that allowed deeper dialogic relations to be formed between members of the group. Through these one-on-one collaborations that had a specific purpose and initiated exchanges of ideas around on a focused task, each member of the group developed distinct forms

of knowledge and expertise that advanced the group's collective understandings. This process also mirrored the method of collective, ongoing reflection within the group – questioning, dialoguing, and decision making (see McIntyre, 2008). Through this process, the group gained critical insights into their own experiences, and developed perspectives that enabled them to begin to reimagine global citizenship practices as political action.

Engaging in this ongoing reflection, and the dialogue that facilitated that reflection, served as an important vehicle for everyone in the group to contribute meaningfully to all aspects of the research process, through providing the conditions for cultivating a sense of ownership of that process – another essential principle underlying the group's efforts. An overriding political objective of Freire is to overturn those circumstances that restrict communication between individuals and treat some people as knowers and others as receptacles. A necessary condition for a justice-oriented process is that no one has a greater capacity to contribute than anyone else. This requires everyone involved in a process to take on the responsibility 'to decide, to struggle, to be political' (Freire, 1998b, p. 53) in the process of making sense of the world and altering the world through their actions. In so doing, as Freire (1970) argues, everyone becomes 'jointly responsible for a process in which all grow' (p. 67).

Having everyone equally responsible for the process allowed ideas to be formed through collective action and dialogue and established the kinds of relationships to build trust to collaborate in change (Stoudt, 2009). The group tapped into the varied expertise and experience among members to craft a plan for fostering the kinds of learning opportunities for students to think critically about their self-understandings. TES teachers imported the knowledge of their prior experiences engaging students in service-related activities and the challenges they faced in teaching students to think more critically about themselves and others within those contexts. Researchers from the academy contributed theoretical and empirical works to advance dialogue

about those experiences, to critique prior practices further, and to offer justice-oriented educational frameworks and approaches informed by Freirian ideas (e.g., Nurenberg, 2011). Each member of the collective contributed valuable forms of knowledge that deepened dialogue and guided their efforts. The researchers relied on the teachers' experiences to make educational frameworks relevant, while teachers deepened their understandings of prior experiences through theoretical perspectives and exposure to related research offered by the research team. Such work required mutual respect for the collective's multiple situated perspectives and the significance of each person's contributions.

Freire sees efforts toward social justice as a social enterprise: People form their ideas through collective action and dialogue. Building meaningful relationships plays an incredibly important role in justice-oriented practice. For Freire (1973), relationships are made possible particularly through dialogue, a 'relation of 'empathy' between two 'poles' who are engaged in a joint search' (p. 45). Freire deploys dialogue in efforts to provoke critical consciousness and to create spaces where 'facts' are analyzed, 'causes' are reconsidered, and 'responsibility' is reconceived in critical and political contexts (Weis & Fine, 2004). Freire (1970) argues that this form of 'dialogue cannot exist … in the absence of a profound love for the world and [people]. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love' (p. 77). He points out, 'If I do not love the world – if I do not love life – if I do not love people – I cannot enter into dialogue' (p. 77). Love, therefore, is necessary to any process of transformation.

Through the relationships developed within the research group, research became an act of love; that is, 'an act of courage, *not fear* … a commitment to others … [and] to the cause of liberation' (Freire, 1970, p. 78). Each member of the collective maintained the necessary level of passion and commitment for improving practices connected to the service trip and the larger goal

of transforming global citizenship education to keep motivated in their efforts. For the researchers, this work extended previous efforts to imagine the possibilities of teaching and learning in elite educational contexts as social justice practice. These efforts provided TES educators the opportunities to awaken and deepen their justice commitments and to stimulate their capacity to put those commitments into practice. By establishing dialogical relationships, the collective built a learning community that provided a context for all within the group to freely give voice to their thoughts, ideas, and perceptions about what they knew and what they were attempting to understand, within the context of a larger political project of social justice (Darder, 2002).

This process required engaging not only with shared beliefs but also with the differences that existed within the group. These differences usually revolved around conflicting perspectives about the primary purpose of the service trip. For example, some individuals emphasized the need for the experience to remain mostly a bonding experience for graduating students while others understood this as a secondary goal and prioritized the need for students to tackle difficult issues related to privilege, oppression, and class and cultural differences through this experience. Although these conflicting perspectives seemed incompatible at first, the group found common ground by recognizing that each position emphasized the importance of building and further developing meaningful relationships and providing an educational process to provoke reflection and deeper understanding. Therefore, one goal did not need to be prioritized over another one – they could develop the experience in a way that focused on both. The collective's shared commitment to improving the teaching and learning process of the experience, and their sincere willingness to work together allowed them to arrive at this kind of mutual understanding and to engage productively with the diversity of thought and experience found within the group.

Limits to a Freirian approach?

While this framework opened up opportunities for engaging in social justice efforts at TES, it is important to acknowledge the limits of a Freirian approach that focus on working toward critical consciousness. Transforming the understandings of privileged individuals to increase their critical consciousness is arguably not enough to address the processes involved in the production and maintenance of privilege. As Pease (2010) points out, 'changing people in privileged groups will not itself abolish privilege any more than empowering the oppressed will eliminate oppression' (p. 170). Since privilege is generated and reinforced at the personal, cultural, and structural levels, 'privilege is rooted in societies and organizations as much as it's rooted in people's personalities and how they perceive and react to one another' (Johnson, 2001, p. 35).

Smith (2013) even maintains these personal changes are ephemeral and often do not lead 'to any political projects to dismantle the structures of domination that enabled their privilege' (p. 263). Given this, she concludes, 'The undoing of privilege occurs not by individuals confessing their privileges or trying to think themselves into a new subject position but through the creation of collective structures that dismantle the systems that enable these privileges' (p. 263). In other words, individual transformation must take place concurrently with efforts to transform the institutions that structure the everyday experiences of individuals. Although changes to global citizenship practices were central to these intended efforts, the focus primarily rested on individual transformation through the process of critical consciousness and dialogic relations. This Freirian framework therefore provided a limited scope for disrupting the institutional processes involved in perpetuating unequal distribution and accumulation of power, resources, and legitimacy. In fact, some would argue that such efforts might in fact facilitate yet another means for legitimising privilege. Within elite contexts, working toward individual transformation might have considerable ideological value in diverting attention away from the advantages of those involved in such efforts (e.g., Gaztambide-Fernández & Howard, 2013);

thus, potentially legitimising (and thus reinforcing) the very thing we aim to transform.

One argument that could be made is that through the practice of critical consciousness-raising, if this occurs within a collective setting, involving all individuals – the process of individual transformation might facilitate a shared understanding that in turn cultivates more collectivised forms of thinking and desire for action. Through the process of working collaboratively to foster students' critical consciousness during the service trip, for example, TES teachers became more equipped to transform other educational practices and aspects of the curriculum, and perhaps most significantly, to engage others in collective action to bring about such changes. While the move from individual to more collectively-driven forms of transformation were witnessed in the work at TES, we wish for a moment to consider what other theoretical frameworks might support us to imagine and institute practices which promote institutional transformations.

Other theoretical resources

Bourdieu's (1992) conceptual repertoire offers one alternative framework for thinking about ways to initiate and develop a sustainable approach to promoting 'social justice' in and through schools. Here, as argued in Maxwell (2014), if the social relations and broader culture of the school are re-articulated by the institution in a concerted effort to reshape the 'field' of the school, then this has the potential to disrupt and displace the tendencies of the 'habitus' of the students, staff and potentially the broader school community in which the institution is situated (local area, parents, other relevant stakeholders). Thus, a commitment to and a set of initiatives that seek to integrate social justice as a core feature of the school's purpose and programming could arguably inculcate a commitment to such practices in its students and the wider community more long-term. However, in the case of TES, such an approach was not feasible for the institution: given its concerns about parental resistance; the perceived challenge of combining a

commitment to academic excellence with a broader engagement with the world and the formation of elite subjects ready to take a stand on relations of inequality; and finally, the inherent dilemma, as the school leadership saw it, of aligning themselves with cultural notions of 'face' and a more westernised engagement with the political.

Rancière (as discussed in Pelletier, 2009, or Biesta, 2010, for instance) starts from the presumption we are all equal, and takes this 'as one's epistemological starting point' (Pelletier, 2009: 142). In the context of the work in TES, adopting a Rancièrian approach might be interpreted as engaging with young people and other community members outside the school as fundamentally their equals – in terms of intelligence, rights to access education, opportunities to aspire to particular futures, in the nature of the social relations that are formed. While discursively and affectively Rancière's philosophical point has significant merit, critical within most elite (education) institutions are the ways they are structurally privileged, that make the reproduction of inequality appear almost inevitable. How might the assumption of equal intelligence be integrated into school practices? Through a lottery selection system of all students who apply to the school? Through removing fees as a barrier to applying and attending the school? Perhaps the merit of a Rancièrian approach is to imbue social relations with the presumption of equality through the way the school develops its admission policies but also its engagement in community service learning work. However, in order to do this, the structural still needs to be engaged with, as thought experiments in and of themselves will not do away with these. To this end, Fraser's work (1997) is potentially critical for our deliberations.

Fraser (1997) posits that socio-economic and cultural injustices need to be considered together. She calls for a politics of re-distribution (of socio-economic resources), or recognition (of an identity that has value) and of representation (so that all groups have a voice in negotiating forms of re-distribution and recognition) (Lovell, 2007). How might a Fraser-inspired social

justice programme take shape at TES? As with many engagements with Fraser's work – seeking to articulate how her framework might be applied in practice (Keddie, 2005; Lovell, 2007) is not always as straightforward, especially in relation to what the re-distributive remedies might be. In terms of forms of recognition, one might argue that within TES it should be that young people, their families and the school take ownership of their role in establishing and embedding relations of inequality – seeking to understand the micro- as well as macro-processes at work here at the structural but also interactional level. Fraser's (2008) later emphasis on the ensuring all are represented suggests that the work of 'recognition' and negotiating re-distributive efforts should involve a wide range of (non-institutional) stakeholders as well. Re-distributive practices might include: bringing new stakeholders into the governance of TES; involving a broader range of school community members in decision-making processes throughout the school (thereby reducing the hierarchical nature of such processes internally, and with a view to extending the integration of 'others' into these in the future); re-allocating resources so as to make the institution more accessible, in terms of the fees charged to certain groups, inviting others to make use of the school's facilities, lending its voice to broader policy discussions that seek to examine how to make the experiences of education provision more equitable and so forth.

Fraser's redistributive justice, as interpreted by Keddie (2005), should seek to abolish the classed division of production and labour, while transformative cultural justice remedies work to problematise, deconstruct and proliferate alternatives to the binary and hierarchical understandings of social class. The challenge here, of course, is to find a way of leading a transformative set practices at an institutional or local level without broader involvement of, or instigation from 'the state' – the latter being the entity which Fraser (2007) initially theorised as having to lead the way. Perhaps, for the purposes of our work with TES, it is more useful to use Fraser's framework as guiding principles in generating thought experiments within the school,

initially, through the collective reflections that had begun and are being continued. In this way, Fraser will help inform the next set of conversations about developing a more redistributively-inclined form of social justice work, with the aim of practically implemented these.

Concluding thoughts

Despite critical scholars' analyses of the theoretical impossibilities of doing social justice work in and through elite institutions, Howard's experience of developing dialogic relations through the research process have led to changes in TES' understandings of, and commitment to social justice work, initially through the vehicle of global citizenship education. For the purposes of opening up dialogue and encouraging the development of a social justice orientation, Howard's research team found Freire's approach to engaging their elite school partners the most productive way forward. It is critical, we argue, to approach this work openly, without a restrictive set of expectations that must be adhered to before embarking on a collaborative venture. We found the sharing of multiple perspectives in the process of critical consciousness-raising was key to moving towards a social justice-informed praxis where new approaches to community service activities, and the framing of global citizenship education, were conceived of and developed.

The TES principal and Howard served as important theoretical resources for members of the group. Their prior extensive study of Freirean perspectives allowed them to facilitate a process for the group to think critically and theoretically about social justice efforts. They introduced key concepts into their conversations that deepened their understandings and guided their efforts. This opened up spaces to question and complicate everyday practices and meanings that had become normalized and understood as 'common sense' (Kumashiro, 2002). At the same time, though, the teachers involved in the process offered similarly valuable perspectives developed through experience and intimate knowledge of their students. They grounded abstract concepts in the social and cultural particularities of the school community. In so doing, they

anchored theory in practice.

The continuous reflection within the group helped to sustain the momentum and continue to challenge the ways privilege was understood as informing worldviews and practices. Yet, as the collaborative nature of the joint enterprise became more firmly established, and the necessity and value of more informed and critical social justice work more broadly accepted and understood by the stakeholders within TES, we have found that a more structured set of ideas are now needed to further develop and embed the global citizenship education work. For this, after reviewing a number of potential theoretical resources, we have found that Fraser's work on transformative justice could offer the conceptual apparatus we need to shape the productive dialogic relations we have established to date. Drawing on Fraser will help ensure the work with TES has the potential to move towards a collective project, involving the whole school community, move beyond the initial focus, that of a community service activity for a group of students, and to become more sustained both under the umbrella of global citizenship education, and beyond. Fraser's theoretical contribution is also apt because it focuses on how institutional structures must initiate change in economic, cultural and social relations – so as to move towards redistribution, recognition and representation.

We agree that Freirian principles are critical to starting the engagement, but are aware that as Chen's (2010) 'Asia as method' and Connell's (2007) southern theory argue, we need to engage colleagues with theoretical concepts that held meaning in their respective spaces. Despite being located in Taiwan, the American school drew on Western ideas and forms of rationality, hence the theorists proposed were not incongruent, though we raised the significant issue of 'face' in acting as a barrier to the promotion of social justice work. Our efforts continue across the various sites of this global ethnography to consider what opportunities and challenges we have encountered in engaging other schools in such efforts. In Ghana, for instance, the

concept of social justice does not exist in the local language, and yet the concept of liberation does, and is central to the stated purpose of the school. Hence, Freire's work would still carry meaning in our engagements with this school. Though, as explored elsewhere, the racial constitution of the research team – as mainly white – posed challenges to the development of a dialogue about 'social justice'. Thus, this article offers an initial contribution to actively consider 'with hope' how such work can be started in elite schools, but during our continuous engagement across all field sites, requires us to further examine the potential introduction of new, more contextually-appropriate theoretical resources.

Ultimately, social justice work that seeks to transform inequitable social relations, must be on-going (Howard et al., 2014). It is a continuous process, seeking to create more socially just practices within institutions and particular spaces, and between different groups. We must endeavour to open up new theoretical, empirical and pedagogical possibilities for doing social justice work. Sometimes our commitments do not always result in anticipated outcomes – positive or negative. To sustain us in this continual effort, we must infuse our praxis with hope, and a belief that the process in itself is a critical part of socially transformative work. As Freire (1994) points out, 'Alone, [hope] does not win. But without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly' (p. 8). Hope is an 'ontological need' (p. 9), essential to both our being and our knowing, and integral to both epistemology and ontology. Freire (1994) argues that one of our tasks in working toward social justice is to 'unveil opportunities of hope, regardless of the struggle' (p. 9).

Those of us who research elites should arguably do so with the aim of finding ways to promote social justice with and through elite institutions and groups. This is not only imperative – as it is in these spaces that structural change, which will make redistributive justice possible, must start – but it is also through seeking to form dialogic research relationships that such

moments for change might productively emerge. Therefore, despite the range of affective responses that immersing ourselves in elite spaces can stimulate (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2015), we urge our fellow scholars to remember Freire's plea that we must continue to 'hope' and persist in our efforts to engage others in processes that seek to create more socially just relations across society.

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Notes

[i] A pseudonym, as are all names of people in this article who attend or work at this school.