POVERTY AS A CURRICULUM TOPIC

IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

By

CATHERINE BANKSTON

Bachelor of Arts/Science in English
Tulsa University
Tulsa, OK
1991

Master of Arts/Science in Educational Leadership
Troy University
Troy, Alabama
1998

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Graduate College of the
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Dissertation Approved:

Dr. Kathryn Castle

Dissertation Adviser

Dr. Pamela Brown

Dr. Hongyu Wang

Dr. Ed Harris

Name: CATHERINE BANKSTON

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Abstract:

The purpose of Christian education is to incorporate Biblical values in the curriculum, and one essential message in the Bible is to reach out and liberate the poor. Through interviews, writing protocols, a focus group meeting, and document analysis of mission statements, this narrative study focuses on the questions, how do Christian educators create "pedagogical spaces" (Dantley, 2005, 0. 512) in their classrooms in order to address issues of poverty and connect these issues to Biblical ideas, as well as how do teachers' own beliefs and practices about poverty influence their curriculum and classroom practices. Important themes that are discussed include teachers' definitions of poverty and connections to social justice, students' attitudes towards poverty topics, classroom activities and desired outcomes for students, the importance of community service, and personal influences on teachers. In the final analysis, a critical spirituality framework is implemented to discuss possible obstacles to teaching about poverty to higher socio-economic students in a Christian environment.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Despite the label "The Land of Opportunities," America is far from being a paradise for all. The gap between the upper and lower classes seems to continually grow, and more and more people are thrust into poverty. Johnson (2006) refers to our system of inequities as one of privilege in which dominant groups in society use differences to oppress or exclude less powerful groups of people. The practice of such oppression results in racism, sexism, and classism. Our capitalist society contributes to the social construction of privilege and the continued oppression of lower economic groups. Since capitalism is grounded in the idea of profit making, Johnson argues that people are often paid low wages, urged to compete for limited jobs, and threatened with dismissal if they complain. A system based on privilege and power will "perpetuate a class system based on widening gaps in income, wealth, and power" (Johnson, 2006, p. 44). Trying to change such an unjust system seems daunting, and until more people bring awareness of the problem to the forefront, things will remain status quo.

I have been a Christian educator for 22 years. Most of my experience has been teaching in private Christian schools whose student bodies are comprised mainly of children

from higher socio-economic backgrounds. In other words, I'm teaching the privileged and powerful that Johnson writes about, and more and more I am recognizing my students' own limited viewpoints of the poor and oppressed. My students have very little contact with anyone who is not from their world, and, therefore, often speak out in ignorance more than prejudice. After five years in my current school, I have felt an urgency to make sure my students become better informed, more compassionate people. They will soon be attending universities all over the country and need to have a broader understanding of non-white, non-upper class people in order to develop healthy future relationships both personal and professional. Furthermore, as a Christian educator, I care about my students' spiritual growth, and the Bible is clear that God expects his followers to take care of and liberate the "least of these," meaning those who are poor and oppressed.

My experience concerning the teaching about poverty and societal structures that perpetuate inequalities is limited, and I want to know what other Christian educators are doing to address this issue in a Biblically integrated manner. Since the Bible speaks often and strongly that it is a Christian's duty to promote justice, especially with respect to the poor, I know that I need to develop this aspect of my teaching. Before I began my research, scattered service projects and perhaps an isolated discussion or two are my only classroom experiences with this topic. Researching how teachers in Christian schools address issues of poverty in their curriculum and connect them to Biblical values has helped me not only develop professionally as a Christian teacher but has helped me grow spiritually as a follower of Christ, more in tune with His concerns and commandments. Furthermore, I have experienced in secondary school settings the eagerness of educators to share their ideas and learn new ones, and the participants in my study were no exception. This research has created

opportunities for open dialogue and the exchange of ideas in the ongoing discussion of social justice education.

One goal of education espoused by many educators (Brady, 2006; Johnson, 2006; Turpin, 2008) is to help students understand the "reality" of social classes and the reasons why poverty exists. Johnson (2006) argues that awareness is essential to changing the system. While all educational institutions should be addressing the topic of poverty, logically Christian schools should be leading the way, purposefully trying to incorporate such awareness in the curriculum. Most secondary Christian schools have mission statements that express an emphasis on the integration of Biblical values throughout the school culture (Hull, 2003; Jelfs, 2010). And while many feel there is a plethora of values in the Bible worth integrating, the importance of justice and the need to alleviate the oppression of the poor are most fundamental. In fact, Gutierrez (1983) argues that the entire history of God's chosen people, the Israelites, centers on God's deliverance from their enslavement in Egypt and their later deliverance from their captivity in Babylon. Throughout Israel's history, God established himself as the liberator of the poor and oppressed. Biblical faith, while rooted in this liberating past, continually points to the future as well, and God's people are called to embrace His mission today. Furthermore, according to Gutierrez, Jesus, the central figure in a Christian's life is "precisely *God become poor*" (p. 13). Jesus, the manifestation of God himself, became a poor, humble man, challenged the powerful of his day, and proclaimed in the first recorded words of his ministry, "The spirit of the Lord…has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives…, [and] to set the downtrodden free" (Luke 4:16-21). There is no more central principle in the Bible than that of justice for and liberation of the poor in society.

Sider (2005) echoes Gutierrez's ideas about the centrality of the Bible's message that no group should be oppressed socially or economically and agrees that by freeing the Egyptian slaves, God "acted to end economic oppression" and liberate the poor (p. 43). Sider confirms this central idea of the Old Testament by citing several rules that God established in order to create a structural system which would eliminate a certain amount of poverty from escalating. Sider cites texts in Leviticus 25 that demanded the return of all land to original owners every 50 years and Deuteronomy 15 which called for the erasure of all individual debts every seven years. Many factors such as sickness or natural disasters can bring a person to difficult economic circumstances, so God provided laws that involve "structural justice" and a means to allow people the necessary resources to provide for their families (p. 71). While these laws were rarely followed and certainly would be difficult to implement in today's world, they reveal God's desire for justice and equity for all.

Not only does the Bible provide a plan to support justice and eliminate oppression, but God repeatedly condemns those who neglect the poor. Sider (2005) cites numerous passages from the Bible where God chastises people who oppress or neglect the poor with phrases such as "woe to him" and "the Lord will smite" those who ignore or contribute to the plight of the weak and less fortunate. Several times in the Old Testament, God punishes His people for their exploitation of the poor, and Jesus himself states that when a person does not help someone in need, he has denied Jesus himself. Gutierrez (1983) states, "To know God is to do justice, is to be in solidarity with the poor person" (p. 52). He continues by arguing that when a person does not take action on the side of the poor, that individual is denying faith in the power of God and his word. Firmly put, Gutierrez states that "there is no authentic worship of God without solidarity with the poor" (p. 51). Clearly, one central theme in both

the Old and New Testaments of the Bible is a Christian's responsibility to the poor and oppressed.

Statement of the Problem

Christian schools which advocate the incorporation of Biblical principles into their curriculums should not ignore such a significant issue as justice for the poor. Brady (2006) defines this justice as including not only the provision of basic needs for all humans but for opportunities that "develop their talents and gifts and pursue their life dreams" (p. 347). She suggests that Christian education should "affirm our beliefs in the goodness of the world" and in the possibility of that transformation (p. 357). Christian educators need to emphasize the history of Biblical principles dealing with poverty, current facts about the realities of poverty, and a reassurance that God can still move in this world. Brady states, "Justice is his work, and we [Christians] are privileged to join in this venture" (p. 365).

Even though this Biblical principle of solidarity with the poor seems crucial to the spiritual growth of Christians, little research exists that explores how Christian schools address and practice it. However, a few studies have looked at poverty education research in Christian school programs (Bamber, 2011; Brummellen & Koole, 2012). Bamber (2011) addressed a Christian higher education interdisciplinary program that involved interactions with and service to the poor. Only one study (Brummellen & Koole, 2012) specifically looked at Christian high schools, and their focus was to discover if schools taught about social issues in critical ways. They found that while almost all the schools encouraged compassion and service to the poor, very few focused on structural and societal causes of social problems. Both Harper (1969) and Toton (1993) provide several reasons why dealing with social justice issues in Christian education can be quite challenging, including

institutional constraints, solidarity with the status quo, and limited social interactions with non-privileged groups resulting in bias.

Outside of the Christian education arena, several researchers (Philpott & Dagenais, 2011; Ritchie, 2012; Turpin, 2008) discuss various challenges of teaching social justice in any environment, including the lack of support at school sites, the pressure to teach to standardized tests, and inconsistency between "the widely held views of social justice in academia and the views of social justice that circulate broadly in schools" (Philpott & Dagenais, 2011, p. 96). Turpin (2008) also acknowledges the difficulties of teaching social justice specifically to privileged students and discusses several student responses that teachers will face such as anger, defensiveness, or even despair. Other studies outside of Christian education (Fox, 2010; Mistry, Brown, Chow, and Collins, 2012) include practical curriculum research involving the explicit teaching about poverty to children. These practices have yielded mildly positive results, but all studies show that within Christian and non-Christian educational environments, the challenges to justice education are evident.

If the purpose of Christian education is to incorporate Biblical values in order to help students grow in relation to Jesus and to others, and if one essential Biblical message is to reach out and alleviate the suffering of the poor in society, then more research needs to be done to understand why so little evidence exists to support these kinds of curricular practices (i.e. experiential learning, discussions, community service) and what, if any, challenges exist for Christian school teachers in incorporating poverty education into their curriculum.

Research Questions

I wanted to understand how secondary Christian schools address such important ideas as a Christian's responsibility for the poor. In order to address this issue, the following research questions were considered:

1. How do Christian educators create pedagogical spaces in their classrooms in order to address issues of poverty and connect these issues to Biblical ideas?
2. How do teachers' own beliefs and practices about poverty influence their curriculum and classroom practices?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the issue of social justice and how Christian teachers understand Biblical principles about poverty and how to connect these principles to their curriculum development and classroom practices. If the mission of Christian schools is to integrate Biblical values into their school culture, and if oppression and the alleviation of suffering of the poor are central to Biblical understanding and spiritual growth, then Christian educators should be explicitly teaching about the societal structures and the current situation of the poor with the hope that Jesus' mission on earth to free the oppressed and bring good news to the poor will be carried out by his followers in the present.

Theoretical Framework

One theory that guides this research is critical spirituality. This approach begins with a critical reflective stage urging educators to look at their current practices and determine their potential to be spiritually transformative. Dantley (2005) provides one such framework including four stages in the development of a critical spirituality approach. Dantley's first two stages, critical self-reflection and deconstructive interpretation, involve critically

examining the current practices of the school in order to reveal hidden assumptions that need to be challenged in order to bring about transformational results. He argues that school leaders need to "grapple with" policies that oppose one's ethical and personal positions and "interrogate" one's practices to see if they are moral and democratic or simply "systematic rituals" (p. 509).

Dantley's third stage, performative creativity, refers to the pedagogical practices that help promote democratic culture. Teachers need to be insightful and resourceful in developing lessons that do not simply reflect the status quo of mainstream cultural values which often marginalize and oppress certain groups. The first three stages lead to the fourth, transformative action, which encompasses a "radical reconstruction of schooling" (p. 514). This critical approach that involves reflection, deconstructive interpretation, performative creativity, and transformative action will guide my research through all stages. During my interviews, I asked teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and examine how they connect them to Biblical values of poverty and oppression. Teachers had opportunities to share current democratic practices that challenge students' perceptions of social classes. The focus group was an opportunity to discuss these ideas further and move into stage four, the transformative action one. Throughout the process I also personally reflected through journaling and examining my own practices as well. As I analyzed the data, I used the four stages again to reflect on emerging themes, consider practices that do not promote Biblical ideals of social justice, highlight those that do, and consider the possibility for transformative action.

Delimitations

My study followed a qualitative research approach involving semi-structured interviews, a writing protocol, and a focus group. I chose this approach due to the purpose of my study, which is to understand how Christian school educators think about and communicate poverty issues, very personal and reflective subjects. The scope of this study extends only to Christian schools because part of my desired understanding involves how teachers connect poverty issues to Biblical teachings, which is why I have also largely limited my review of the literature to research concerning Christian education and the Biblical integration of specific values although my review does contain a section on social justice education in non-Christian schools as well.

The willingness of participants to reflect honestly and share openly have affected my findings as well as my own assumptions and interpretations, which is why I included several excerpts from my own journal to be as self-reflective as possible during the process.

Definitions of Terms

Christian education and schools—these terms refer to educational institutions that explicitly state that one purpose of their school is to instruct students by means of a Christian worldview based on Biblical values and teachings.

Poverty and/or justice education—"educational practices that critique societal structures perpetuating injustice and place students and teachers in agentic positions to effect change" (Ritchie, 2012).

Poor and oppressed—any group of people who are marginalized, neglected, or purposefully ignored.

Spiritual growth—the process of a follower of Christ to become more like Him through his or her words and actions.

Outline of the Study

In my first chapter, I identify the background, research questions, and purpose of my study. Chapter 2 contains relevant literature in the areas of Biblical integration, the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutierrez and Ronald Sider, and current research on social justice curricular practices. Chapter 3 discusses my research design and theoretical framework, and Chapter 4 contains a report of my research findings and analysis. Chapter 5 contains the final discussion of my findings.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since my research particularly addresses Christian education, the first section of this chapter will be devoted to a general definition of and the possible challenges to Christian education that are discussed in the literature. The main themes of section one include community building, spiritual growth, and critical thinking; the second section will address the concept of Biblical integration and its role in Christian education. The third section of this chapter will explore the concept of poverty and expound on the ideas of Ronald Sider, Gustavo Gutierrez, and others, whose works focus on how Biblical ideas are connected to issues of poverty and social justice. In the last section, I will discuss current research on social justice curricular practices in Christian and non-Christian schools today.

The Definition of Christian Education

One aspect that defines Christian education involves shared beliefs about the world we live in. Particularly, these shared beliefs include the Bible as the inspired word of God that holds the key to creation, man's sinful nature, and Christ's redeeming blood through his resurrection (Gaebelein, 1968). In this way, Christian education offers a built-in unifying factor—these shared Biblical beliefs—that can strengthen a school's unity of

Begin purpose and design. Barnett and Flora (1982) discuss similar ideas, emphasizing the importance that God is both personal and infinite, that a logical order exists to the universe which cannot be fully understood, that the Bible's truths are fundamental to all learning, and that man's nature is sinful and limited. Gaebelein (1968) expresses that the purpose of a Christian education is "for the nurturing and training of youth in the truth of God" (p. 4). Similar to Barnett and Flora, Gaebelein and others (Bowen, 2010; Iselin & Meteyard, 2010) acknowledge that all truth is not fully explained in the Bible, and he believes truth can be revealed through a spiritual revelation from God, revelation combined with reason, or reason alone, and Christian educators need to guide students in all areas of thinking and learning.

Within this fundamental definition of Christian education that promotes a community of learning centered on shared beliefs and the importance of Biblical integration, Williams (2002) writes of two dangers that Christian educators need to be conscious of in their pursuit of the nurturing of young minds. First, he warns of the possibility of excessive pride such as adherence to beliefs can bring and the attitude that we are "an outpost of truth in a wilderness of rampant falsehood" (p. 84), which will disrupt a love of learning and pursuit of thinking and reflecting on truth because energy is, instead, devoted to attacking those whose ideas differ from those of the Christian faith. Holmes (1977) also refers to this temptation of intellectual pride and argues that while God gave people a capacity for understanding, the more one learns about the world, the more one recognizes how little one knows. Bowen (2010) also asserts the importance of acknowledging that human knowledge is limited in all subject areas. God is in control in the universe, and an element of faith must resound.

Another danger, according to Williams (2002), is the tendency to demand conformity to these shared beliefs, which can "harden into unquestioned orthodoxies" (p. 84). Christian education needs to allow space for an individual's faith and imagination to develop while simultaneously contributing to community life. Gaebelein (1968) echoes William's concern not to squelch the spirit of God whose workings "are as various as the blowing of the wind" and who must not be confined to "specific outward responses that demand conformity on the part of Christians" (p. 98). These concerns in Christian education for the importance of humility and freedom of thought in Christian institutions cannot be emphasized enough. Overall, these foundational Biblical beliefs and the possible pitfalls that come with them distinguish Christian schools from non-Christian ones.

Community and Relationships

Even though Christian schools in today's society come in all shapes and sizes, many have certain aspects in common in addition to the shared fundamental beliefs about God and the Bible. Many studies cite building community and caring relationships among students as one of the most important values Christian schools hold (Fisher, 2007; Iselin & Meteyard, 2010; Sites, Garzon, Milacci, & Boothe, 2009; Wolff, Miedema, & Ruyter, 2002). Similarly, Jelfs (2010) concluded in his empirical study that Church of England schools desired to reflect the Christian beliefs of love and community as the foundation for Christian education. In his studies, schools reported that Jesus' teachings relating to the treatment of others was "an important basis for school life" (p. 33). Wolf, Miedema, and Ruyter (2002) in their study researched six Christian schools, three Dutch, two Anglo-American, and one German, and found that no matter how an individual

Christian school identifies itself, each has a religious commitment to educate children from a Christian perspective, one that emphasizes the importance of building caring communities. Teachers also recognize their relationships with students and the need for an open, encouraging climate in which all members are respected and nurtured as extremely important.

Development of Spiritual Life

In addition to the emphasis on community and relationships, another shared aspect in most Christian schools is the desire for students to grow in their spiritual life. According to Wolf et al. (2002), Christian values should be present throughout the school's curriculum, and students should be viewed as individuals who need a variety of activities through which to learn and grow both academically and spiritually. Bowen (2010) points out the need for Christian educators to reclaim the purpose of education as a "process of spiritual formation" (p. 8), rather than a product of knowledge acquisition. The goal of such formation is to develop students whose character is like Jesus Christ's (Algera & Sink, 2002; Jelfs, 2010). Jelfs (2010) finds many Christian schools are committed to developing students' Christian faith, and he urges them to articulate these ideas even more effectively because of their importance to the school's mission. Iselin and Meteyard (2010) trace some of the problems of educational Christian practices to the Protestant Reformation and its desire to adopt a rational, objective approach to the Bible, free from superstition and tradition. Unfortunately, in attempts to remain rational, certain "affective and relational ways of knowing" (p. 35), which are at the core of Christian beliefs, have been ignored. Iselin and Meteyard call for a unification of head and heart,

for “soulful practices” that create authentic spirituality and embrace the mystery of God and the universe rather than just academic achievement (p. 35).

In fact, Bowen (2010) argues that Christian schools need to move away from standardized testing, which dehumanizes and humiliates, and instead study sacred texts, practice prayer, and embrace community in order to create spiritually-formative schools rather than simply academic establishments. Bowen sees the narrative imagination as one clear way to experience the unknowable. Biblical stories and other sacred texts provide opportunities for students to imagine “not only the human other but also the physical world and its Creator as others to be loved even more than to be understood” (p. 16). More than high test scores and a 4.0 GPA, Christian educators should desire that their students develop compassion and understanding toward others, nature, and God. Clearly, Christian educators need to create spaces for the inner development of their students and refrain from simply focusing on the inculcation of a belief system. Because Christian institutions will always experience some tension between beliefs and norms compared to schedules and programs, they must understand that there are no quick ways to spiritual development that can be accomplished by simply methods and programs (Arcay, 2011).

When it comes to discipline, for example, Algera and Sink (2002) agree that teachers should not simply enforce certain behaviors and reject others, but that students must experience teacher modeling of Christ-like behaviors as well as studying modeling of historic Christians, such as Mother Theresa or St. Augustine. One problem, they point out, is that some classroom management policies rely on punitive reactions to certain behaviors rather than moral reasoning and understanding of consequences. Rigid discipline and narrow practices do not reflect Christ’s example and interfere with

authentic spiritual development in students. Furthermore, Jelfs (2010) discovered that some teachers at Christian schools do not even share the school's values or have other motives for working in these environments, and therefore promote little if any spiritual values.

Other challenges to transformative spiritual education involve schools and educators that simply do not have a clear understanding of how their Christian foundation "relates to the core pedagogical practices of teaching, learning, and curriculum" (Jelfs, 2010, p. 37). Jelfs criticizes schools whose policies and teaching practices are often unchecked and mimic "dominant educational discourse" rather than Christian values and ideas. Abelman and Dalessandro (2009) analyzed 180 public and private school mission statements to find that while Christian institutions have much more compelling and clear missions than secular institutions, they have fewer concrete ways to achieving these goals and are completely missing real-world practicality. Schools that focus on individual scholarship and academic success stifle genuine spiritual development and collaboration and threaten the potential for transformative Christian education. Algera and Sink (2002) agree that school policies should include more than academic achievement and should include community contributions, awards for good sportsmanship, and praise for improvements. Schools that celebrate only successes and wins have lost sight of true Christian values. Hull (2003) notes that very few schools provide practical applications to their mission of promoting a Biblical perspective. In a previous study of 13 Canadian Christian high schools, he couldn't find any practice that was distinctively Christian and noted the need for a "strong sense of task" and "stronger commitment to reflective planning" (p. 215). Christian education needs to challenge the educational status quo, re-

center on Jesus, and seize any teachable moment "to show the genuine God of grace" (Newell, 2009, p. 149).

The role of critical thinking

Another important aspect of Christian education found in the research is the need to develop students' critical thinking as they examine their religious beliefs. Providing opportunities for self-reflection is one way to help student's critically think about the beliefs and values they hold (Algera & Sink 2002). Wunthnow (1990) sees even simple Bible stories as opportunities to apply critical thought as the reader contemplates "the human condition" (par. 24) and considers possible interpretations rather than being told what to believe. Arcay (2011) encourages Christian educators to avoid being imposing and authoritative, but instead to provide both the strategies and time needed to empower students to understand what they believe and how these beliefs affect them. Moreover, Newell (2009) points out that Jesus is a model critical educator. Instead of providing facts for his disciples to memorize, he gives them alternative ways of viewing God—"an alternative, generous view of Israel's God"--and challenges established beliefs of society with authority and authenticity (p. 144). Jesus teaches in parables and narratives, which allow his followers an opportunity to determine the meaning for themselves with the involvement of the spirit (Iselin & Meteyard, 2010). Overall, the research reflects the concern and need of Christian schools to create spaces for students to examine Biblical ideas and determine their importance in their own lives.

One challenge to a critical focus in Christian schools is the tendency to indoctrinate rather than actively engage students, and to accept mainstream pedagogical practices without critical reflection. Jelfs (2010) cites one study by Badger (2000) that

finds many Christian schools emphasize “a narrow set of values related to specific academic and behavioural” practices rather than holistic ones that encourage student decision making and critical thinking (p.31). Hull (2003) states that when educators do not reflect on the possibility of deeply entrenched assumptions and values, those that mimic the traditional school system, their practices remain with the status quo. He encourages the need for “better metaphors, concepts and examples” that can clarify the true meaning of Christian education and help its educators “disentangle” themselves from “the reigning secular paradigm in education” (p. 217). Christian educators need to critically examine their programs and look for inconsistencies between their practices and their espoused values. Heavy focus on academic success, rigid behaviors, and mainstream educational practices all defeat the purpose of Christian education. Integrating Biblical values in the curriculum should be paramount in Christian schools.

Overall, general themes that describe Christian schools in the literature include the shared Biblical beliefs, the desire to be community-oriented, the goal of spiritual transformation, and the need for critical reflection in order to integrate Biblical values and fulfill the mission of Christian education. The next section defines and discusses the theoretical approach of Biblical integration which Christian schools use to develop their programs and curriculum.

The Integration of the Sacred and the Secular

The central idea of Christian education is the integration of Biblical values into all aspects of the school’s curriculum and cultural practices. Gabelein (1968) discusses integration in terms of God’s truth, which he believes exists outside of human workings,

and that it can be believed, understood, taught, and experienced. The mission of Christian education then is to bring God's truth into "every aspect of education" (p. 7) in order to connect the school structure, rules, and culture to a broader external world of truth. Overall, he defines integration as "the living union of [the school's] subject matter, administration, and even its personnel, with the external and infinite pattern of God's truth" (p. 9).

Integration refers to more than simply including Bible verses or prayer in a classroom setting; it addresses the entire pursuit of "intellectual exploration" in all contexts as a way of honoring God because one who thinks critically can increase her personal faith and develop her God-given potential to make a difference in the world (Gabelein, 1968, p. 9). Holmes (1977) sees the importance of valuing truth for the sake of truth because all truth comes from God, and, therefore, all truth explored in a Christian context is inherently integrative. In fact, Holmes argues that Christians should be careful when tempted to compartmentalize the sacred, which he defines as anything dedicated to God, and the secular, which refers to the temporary aspects of life. He argues that all aspects of life can be dedicated to God in pursuit of His glory, so, therefore, all is sacred. He argues that the sacred or spiritual aspects of man are not "confined to the inner life" of man (p. 27), and supports a holistic view of learning. In fact, when a person learns, he is doing God's work by developing his mind to the potential God will allow.

Algera and Sink (2002) conclude that the Biblical values in Christian education "should remain firmly established in a framework based on God's Word, the love of Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (pp. 172-173), and that all methods of instruction should include opportunities for students to consider and practice Christian values and beliefs.

Jesus should be the central example that guides all decisions and practices within the Christian school. Jesus took an interest in all aspects of life (Gill, 1979), and His personhood—fully human and divine—symbolizes the possibility of the integration of sacred and secular (Iseline & Meteyard, 2010). Gill (1979) emphasizes that an integrative approach is based on "experience and relationship" because Jesus "came into a real world…interacted with actual people and participated in concrete events" (p. 1010).

Arcay (2011) further discusses the importance of process rather than content in spiritual integration and formation. He discusses Foster's (1998) categories of Christian disciplines that promote the inward, outward, and corporate life of a Christian. Spiritual education should "build and nurture a holistic and organic Christianity" and requires "the transformation of the mind and will" (p. 212). Furthermore, Christian schools need to emphasize the interrelationship between Biblical teachings, present-day experiences, and God's spiritual workings in students' lives.

The question then becomes what specific values, other than community and relationships, should be central to the curriculum and purposefully pursued through classroom experiences. The next section argues that one particular Biblical value, alleviating the suffering of the poor and oppressed, is so central to Biblical teaching that to ignore its integration as a Christian school is to neglect the very core of Christian faith.

General and Biblical Views of Poverty and the Oppressed

The American College Dictionary (1962) defines poverty as "the condition of being poor with respect to money, goods, or means of subsistence" and "a deficiency or lack of something specified" (Barnhart, p. 950). Johnson (2006) alludes to poverty—although he does not attempt to define it—in his discussion on privilege and power. He

criticizes capitalism as one system that promotes economic inequality and states that two-thirds of all wealth in America is owned by the richest ten percent (p. 43). MacLeod (2009) echoes the point that our society is indeed "structured to create poverty and extreme economic inequality" (p. 241). MacLeod describes the black poor as "racially segregated, economically devastated, socially stigmatized, and politically abandoned" (p. 243). And while his study focused on race and class as a compound issue, he discusses the broader poor in terms of "ordinary human beings struggling to cope as best they can under oppressive circumstances" (p. 244).

While Johnson and MacLeod address issues of the poor and oppressed in the United States, Freire (1970) discusses the problem of the oppressed in the context of South America and describes it in terms of "the struggle for humanization, for the emancipation of labor, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons" (p. 44). Gutierrez (1983) offers a Latin American perspective by criticizing the Preparatory Document—a Catholic Church document that attempts to define and discuss the poor. He criticizes the description of them as simply people who are economically, socially, politically, and humanly weak and powerless. He describes the language used throughout the document as "detached" and "devoid" of feelings towards the poor, and the document, instead of urging Christians to protest the injustice of their suffering, simply communicates a "counsel of resignation" to their existence (p. 116). So although a definition of poverty and what it means to be poor is far-reaching and somewhat impossible to nail down, all of these researchers, Johnson, Freire, MacLeod, and Gutierrez, have one thing in common, the passion to struggle with the issue and to urge others to stand up and take notice.

Many other researchers agree that an established definition of poverty does not exist (Akindola, 2009; Laderchi, Saith, & Stewart, 2003). Of course, a plethora of statistics is available about poverty. One census population report noted that poverty was up 14.3 percent in 2009 and that the number of people in poverty is the largest in 51 years (Census Population Report, 2010). Akindola (2013) stated that, according to the World Bank, more than half of the world's population today lives on less than 2 dollars a day and that in 2002, 44% of the world's population lived in poverty. A 2004 report from the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization stated that from 2000 to 2004, "the number of chronically hungry people rose by 18 million" (Sider, 2005, p. 4). The numbers aren't promising, and, even though statistical reports do not include the various other factors involved in poverty, they do give a rather grim picture of the problem.

Laderchi, Saith, and Stewart (2003) discuss four current approaches to defining and understanding poverty, including the monetary approach—which is the most widespread and the one used for statistical data. The capability approach takes a broader definition of poverty which includes not just levels of income, but the role of other social goods and an individual's personal qualities such as physical health, and how all of these factors indicate the "freedom of individuals to live lives that are valued" (p. 253). The capability approach and the other approaches, social exclusion, which looks at structural issues in society, and participatory methods, which involves people's own view of themselves and poverty, all emphasize that monetary indicators alone are not sufficient to define poverty.

One prevalent theme in the literature on poverty is its multidimensional aspects and the need for understanding poverty's complexities and the many factors that

contribute to people's understanding of it (Rose & Baumgartner, 2013; O'Connell, 2012; Kim, Carvalho, & Davis, 2010). Rose and Baumgartner (2013) discuss the role of media coverage in attitudes towards poverty in the United States. They predict that public opinion will continue to reflect how "tired, frustrated, and discouraged" people have grown based on media portrayals that actually stem from the Reagan era and his anti-poor rhetoric (p. 43). Kim, Carvalho, and Davis (2010) also looked at news media and how their framing of the poor influences where people place the blame for the problem. Specifically, media covers the "story" using episodic framing, which tends to ignore a larger view of societal structures that might be at work, and instead tells the story of an individual in stereotypical ways. Finally, O'Connell's (2012) research confirms that areas most deeply ingrained in slavery in the 1860's even today "have a greater degree of black disadvantage than places that had lower concentration of slaves" (p. 730). Factors such as media coverage and historical events do seem to affect both attitudes towards and experience of poverty. Educators today need to address the complexity of the issue of poverty, including its possible definitions, causes and solutions.

And while its definition and causes are complex, a Christian's response to poverty remains clear based on Biblical teachings. Since this issue of the poor and oppressed is so important throughout both Old and New Testament teachings, it seems logical that Christian schools, whose mission is, or should be, to teach Biblical values, would integrate this idea in their curriculum. Many theologians and Bible scholars have emphasized the importance of addressing issues of poverty as essential to one's spiritual growth (Sider, 2005; Gutierrez, 1983; Birch, 1975).

Birch (1975) describes the Bible's teachings about the Christian community's responsibility for the poor as "clear and unambiguous" (par. 3). Sider (2005) points out several Old Testament ideas concerning God's view of the poor, confirming Birch's statement. Throughout the history of the Israelites, God made it clear that he wants "all people to have the productive resources to be able to earn a decent living and be dignified members of their community" (p. 86). Sider cites passages from Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15 that illustrate this idea. One law God established that is explained in Leviticus 25 is referred to as the jubilee text. Every 50 years, God required that all land must be returned to its original owner, a law that guarantees no matter what hardships a family faces, eventually that family will be given its opportunity to be productive members of the community again. Deuteronomy 15 expresses another law from God that demonstrates His solidarity with the poor. During the seventh or Sabbatical year, farmers must cease growing crops and allow the poor to glean from the fields, those who chose slavery as a last economical resort must be set free, and all loans must be cancelled. All of these provisions allow for "structured justice rather than mere charity," as Sider describes (p. 71). Since God so clearly identifies himself with the poor, Birch (1975) urges Christians to also view this group as an important concern in their lives, and he points out that God promises his people that if they follow his commands concerning the poor, there simply "would be no poverty" (par. 9).

Gutierrez (1983) supports both Birch's and Sider's views of God and describes God as one who "takes sides with the poor and liberates them from slavery and oppression" (p. 7). God not only established laws to ensure short-term effects of poverty, but he also intervened in a miraculous way when he brought the Israelites out of slavery

in Egypt. This liberation of His people is again seen when He allows them to eventually rebuild their city of Jerusalem after many long years in Babylonian captivity. Again, God delivers his people from oppression and reestablishes them as an individual nation. Once a Christian has a full understanding of God's design for justice and liberty, to not act, Gutierrez says, is a sin, one that creates "relationships of injustice" (p. 9) and sides with oppression rather than liberation. Sider (2005) argues that based on the texts and examples that show God's emphasis on justice, "Christians should work to eliminate poverty" and "search for effective structures in the larger society that enable every family to have the basic capital needed to earn a living" (p. 74). He references James 4:17 that states, "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him, it is a sin." Brady (2006) reminds Christians that ignoring issues of poverty and oppression is both personal and social sin. If Biblical scholars see the need for Christians to address issues of poverty and oppression, Christian schools should also be taking a close look at the topic as they try to instill Biblical values in their students' curricular and classroom experiences.

As Christian educators try to broaden their students' understanding of poverty and God's call on their lives, they must first expose students to "the complex web of interlocking factors that create an environment of poverty within which the poor are separated from the broader society" (Brady, 2006, p. 352). Brady urges Christian educators to draw from the scriptures as a foundation for what Christians' response to the poor should be in matters of justice. She emphasizes the need for educators to "affirm our beliefs in the goodness of our world" and the "power and potential of human efforts to change and even transform the world" (p. 357). Sider (2005) provides concrete ways that Christians can help provide for those who need help and suggests that if even a small

number of Christians would practice Biblical concepts of generosity and material restraint, the world would be a very different place. He urges Christians to consider the Bible's view of property and possessions which command people not to worry about acquiring earthly wealth but focus on spiritual things. Similar to Sider, Birch (1975) asserts that just as Jesus identified with the poor, his attitude toward wealth was negative. Birch blatantly states, "Riches are at least an impediment to the kingdom and at worst a damnation" (par. 23). While this interpretation seems harsh, both Sider and Birch make the point that Christians need to examine how and why they acquire and accumulate wealth, and Christian schools can help guide students to these difficult questions as they apply to their lives.

Gutierrez (1983) challenges Christians to see Jesus Christ as the ultimate liberator of all—those who are physically and spiritually poor. In fact, he lived a poor life on earth, and, according to Gutierrez, his death is "the consequence of his struggle for justice, his proclamation of the kingdom, and his identification with the poor" (p. 15). Sider (2005) emphasizes Jesus' teachings that echo Old Testament ideas of taking care of the poor and oppressed. Jesus tells his followers that they should treat the poorest in society like they would treat Him and that failure to do so will incur rejection and eternal despair. In fact, "acceptance of [Jesus] is equated with ministering to their needs" (Birch, 1975, par.22). With such strong teachings from both the Old and New Testaments, Christian schools have an eternally important responsibility to instill in their students the necessity of practicing solidarity with the poor as both an extension of God's work on earth and of the hope that each one has as a child of God. Birch (1975) sums up the importance in this way: "Identification with [the poor] is at the heart of what it means to be the community

of faith" (par. 30). In the final section in this chapter, I will discuss the current available research on Christian schools and the teaching of social justice issues.

Current Research on Social Justice Curricular Practices

The literature on curriculum and poverty provides some limited research on how non-Christian schools are developing poverty awareness among students. Both Fox (2010) and Mistry et al. (2012) discuss curriculum that focuses on explicit discussion and creative projects designed to broaden students' understanding of poverty. Fox (2010) explores one specific learning approach that is used in a public elementary school. The teacher brings in speakers from various organizations associated with helping poor people and attempts to help students understand why poverty exists and how people can take action to alleviate the problem. While the article provides very specific curricular techniques and topics, it does not provide any discussion on the effectiveness of such a program on its students. Mistry et al. (2012) discusses an 8th grade poverty curriculum and specifically explores how such explicit curriculum affects students' beliefs about poverty. The results were mixed, and in the end students still viewed individual choices as a "strong determinant of success both prior to and following instruction and viewed economic inequality as an acceptable and natural consequence of society" (p. 704). The researchers suggest that a more integrated and sustained approach to teaching about poverty may be necessary given students' entrenched stereotypes and beliefs.

In contrast to a short unit on poverty, Zygmunt-Fillwalk (2009) discusses research on an interdisciplinary higher education approach to broadening students' understanding of poverty. Ten students from a variety of academic disciplines participated in this semester-long study that included daily meetings with professors discussing the nature of

poverty, meeting weekly with community members, and working towards a goal to eliminate poverty in the university's area. Students created media opportunities to share the voices of the poor and distributed information in the community that fostered more understanding of poverty. All participants felt the experience helped their understanding and broadened their views of the poor. Similar to Zygmunt-Fillwalk, Bamber (2011) explored a higher education program involving an international service-learning experience that sends teams around the world to work with the poor and oppressed. Bamber provides anecdotal evidence from participants that the experience not only broadened their awareness of poverty in the world, but also led to a "development of their faith" (p. 346). This program has an embedded critical component that forced students to examine their own beliefs and unquestioned assumptions about the poor. Overall, "critical reflection alongside immersion in an unfamiliar setting and the development of authentic relationships are identified as key transformative processes" in any program attempting to broaden students' understanding about poverty (p. 355).

Two studies (Brummelen & Koole, 2012; Engebretson, 2009) specifically offer research on Christian high schools and programs designed to provide poverty awareness to their students. Both studies cite schools that emphasize community service as a moral obligation and as an important calling by God. Brummelen and Koole (2012) find very few schools that promote "analysis and understanding" about poverty over simple involvement in service projects (p. 46). They also find that while the schools they studied desire to help students develop cultural awareness and compassion for the poor, very little evidence exists that any school-wide programs are in place, and that even in courses specifically designed for cultural awareness, issues of underlying structural and systemic

causes for social injustice in the world are mainly ignored. Finally, Engebretson (2009) looks at case studies involving Catholic secondary schooling. These programs try to help students view service work as more than charity, and many students state that as a result of their service in the community, they realized their own materialism and selfishness and, while working with underprivileged people, recognized their own stereotypes, and admired those people trying to get on with their life in the face of poverty.

While many of these studies address the effectiveness of poverty curriculum programs on students, only Brummelen and Koole (2012) attempt to determine teacher perspectives and none of the studies on Christian education cite any evidence of Biblical teachings embedded in their service learning programs.

One reason for the lack of research involving Christian schools and social justice issues stems from the negative views that often come with the term itself. A few years ago, Glenn Beck, a conservative Fox talk-show host, urged Christians to leave churches that preached social justice because he said the term is code for communism and Nazism. His comments outraged many Christians, but also influenced others with regard to the term social justice. In his response, Wallis (2010) replied that Beck "attacks the very heart of Christian faith" and that "social justice is an integral part of God's plan for humanity" (para. 3). On the other hand, Villegas (2007) found several critics who stated that social justice is an "ambiguous and ideologically loaded term fraught with potential for abuse," and others who commented that the "social justice agenda is nothing more than political indoctrination in the service of the cultural left (p. 370). Christians who have been critical and suspicious of the word itself are most concerned with issues related to homosexuality and women, not those living in poverty. Despite Biblical support for

social justice action, conservatives like Glenn Beck cannot see past political and economic agendas, including their own.

Some progress is being made throughout Christian churches. Stetzer (2013) reports that based on telephone surveys conducted between 2008 and 2012, "there is a growing awareness of and involvement in social justice ministries among Protestant churches" (Par. 2). And out of 1,000 pastors surveyed, ninety-five percent believe that "caring for the poor is mandated by the gospel" (par. 3). In fact, according to Stetzer, many of these pastors are trying to use the conservative term "pro-life," which had been used almost exclusively for abortion, and expand its meaning to include the poor, sex-trafficking victims, and those suffering from global hunger. Christians need to embrace the social justice movement, detach themselves from the unfounded politicized connotations surrounding the term, and reacquaint themselves with the Biblical teachings that uphold the tenets of social justice for all.

Conclusion

Overall, Christian schools have shared beliefs and a desire to build community, develop students' spiritual life, and critically think about their world, but even though they espouse to integrate Biblical values within their curriculum, many fall short, and very little research exists on how specifically they integrate Biblical ideas about wealth and poverty—teachings that, according to the Bible, are central to living an obedient Christian life. My study will bridge a gap in the literature and will explore attempts Christian schools are making to integrate Biblical values in curriculum that are specifically centered on poverty and oppression as well as how teachers' own beliefs about poverty influence their curriculum and classroom practices.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how Christian teachers think about their pedagogy as it relates to Biblical principles and more specifically to principles connected to the poor in our society. In order to explore this topic, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do Christian educators create pedagogical spaces for their students in order to address issues of poverty and connect these issues to Biblical ideas?
2. How do teachers' own beliefs and practices about poverty influence their curriculum and classroom practices?

This chapter provides a rationale for a qualitative research design and narrative inquiry methodology, a brief discussion on researcher limitations, a description of the research sampling and data collection, and discussions on the data analysis, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness of the research design.

Rationale for Research Design and Methodology

Qualitative research involves an interpretive framework that includes "the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation

of the problem, and its contribution to the literature of a call for change" (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). Issues of social justice and Biblical principles are complex and personal and require more than survey and statistical research. Through interviews, writing protocols, and a focus group meeting, participants were given opportunities to share their stories, describe their perspectives, and explore their own assumptions and biases. Qualitative research can provide a richer depiction of the issues than quantitative approaches as well as offer transformative power in the process for the participants, the researcher, and the eventual reader. Furthermore, qualitative research allows a more contextual approach to the issue, multiple perspectives to be explored, "a complex, detailed understanding of the issue" to emerge, and the use of a "literary, flexible style" (Creswell, 2013, p. 38).

Since the ultimate goal of this research is to understand how Christian educators think about and focus on poverty in their classrooms as it relates to Biblical beliefs, narrative inquiry research can offer the "context for making meaning of school situations" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 3). Narrative inquiry is one way to understand an experience by providing a particular context in time, at a unique place, and in relationship with others. Overall, it provides a method to understand how Christian teachers "experience" their "world" (p. 2).

I used narrative inquiry as I conducted my interviews and writing protocols and collected stories from other Christian educators. The "telling [of] their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989, p. 10) has provided me with the data needed in order to discover emerging themes that can empower others as well as myself, and uncover "the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon [teaching about poverty in Christian schools]"

(Carter, 1993. p. 5). This type of research has allowed me to "restory" (Creswell, 2013, p. 74) the participants' stories and weave in some of my own autobiographical reflections in an attempt to capture the intricacy of my topic and point to "an imagined future" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989, p. 11).

Researcher as Instrument

I have taught in private Christian schools for over 20 years and have a vested interest in this topic. Not only do I want to continue to develop as an effective teacher, but I want to offer research that can provide insight for other Christian educators as well. My research questions emerged from the culmination of my teaching experiences and review of the literature, and my research will be affected by my background and beliefs. Hopefully, the reader's understanding of my identity will make my "qualitative work richer and more comprehensible for both researcher and reader" (Gordon, 2005, p. 280). For example, my own experiences in private Christian schools had led me to believe that they are not doing enough to promote social justice. I was aware, as I began my data collection, of this particular assumption and tried to remain open to listening to the stories of others. Because Christian education is my passion—a field I have dedicated most of my career to—I believe I have both brought my expertise as well as my open mind to all stages of the research process.

Procedures

Before carrying out my research, I began a thorough review of the literature, developed my dissertation proposal, and received the approval from my dissertation committee and a final approval from the IRB (Appendix F).

The steps summarized next will be discussed in-depth in the following sections. I contacted several school administrators to ask for the names of teachers who have a reputation for good teaching, possibly in the area of social justice. I then contacted each of the potential participants, explained my research, and received email confirmation from those who were willing. I analyzed mission statements from participating schools, conducted semi-structured interviews, and transcribed all the data. During this stage, I also asked participants to engage in a writing protocol in order to enhance their stories. They were asked to email me their response by September 30, 2013. After I interviewed all the participants, I conducted a follow-up focus group session with participants to discuss the themes that were generated from the interviews and writing protocols and transcribed this meeting. Finally, I analyzed all data and completed the write-up of my findings.

Participant Selection

Since I did narrative research, a small number of research participants were appropriate (Creswell, 2013). Participants who teach at private Christian secondary schools and have an interest in teaching about poverty within a Biblical context were selected. Although this type of "convenience sampling" is not ideal (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 238), the nature of my topic relies more on a willingness on the participants' part to share openly, and hopefully teachers who show an interest in the topic will offer honest responses. I ended up contacting 5 local Christian schools as well as an out-of-state school I used to teach in that has an excellent reputation for Christian education and based my participant selection on an administrator's recommendation of two effective teachers with outstanding reputations as teachers. I interviewed 8 participants from four

different Christian schools in order to look for common themes as well as gain multiple perspectives. Using my own experiences through personal journaling, I consider myself another participant as well.

I sent emails to the principals of the two schools that I have taught in, one associated with the Southern Baptist denomination and the other non-denominational, as well as three other local Christian schools, two non-denominational and one Catholic, communicating the nature of my research and the criteria for my participants (See Appendix A). In the email, I asked the principal (or administrator) to suggest the name of one or two potential participants that I might contact. I heard back from three administrators within one week, the two schools I had taught in and the Catholic school, and was given names of participants to contact. Finding a fourth school for my study turned out to be more challenging. The first principal never returned my calls or emails, and the second principal told me that he really admired the topic, but didn't think his teachers were doing anything related to social justice. On my third attempt, the principal seemed very enthusiastic and gave me the names of two teachers. Although one of those teachers declined to participate, the second teacher responded very positively. I was able to find one more participant at that school after speaking with that principal again, which completed my participant search. I then contacted these eight potential participants to determine if they were willing to participate in a 45 minute interview, a writing protocol, and a focus group (See Appendix B). These eight potential participants all agreed to participate. I met with each participant at his/her respective school, with the exception of the school located outside of Oklahoma. I contacted these two participants by Skype. The

connection with one of these interviews deteriorated after about 30 minutes, so we finished the interview up over the phone.

Participant Profiles

Mitchell. Mitchell has taught 10 years at the same K-12 Southern Baptist, private, college-preparatory school in a large city in the western part of the U.S. The school is 75% Asian background with about 450 students in the high school and offers minimal scholarships to a few students. He teaches a variety of high school Bible classes. His early experiences associated with poverty involve one girl in his class who was never clean and always smelled. Students would make fun of her, and he had little to no interaction with her himself. He didn't know anyone affluent and commented "there wasn't lots of wealth," but cases of extreme poverty were clearly rare. The only other encounters with the poor included youth mission trips and church projects in which they would go somewhere else to meet the needs of the impoverished.

Ben. Ben has taught high school 38 years, 28 of those at the same private Catholic high school in a moderately-sized city in the mid-West. He is also the head of the Theology Department. The student body is 75% Catholic, and 10% of the students are on full scholarship, 10% pay full tuition, and the remaining 80% pay somewhere in between. Also, the student population is 85% white. Although he did not have any early significant experiences with the poor other than the occasional service project when he graduated from college, what started as a one year volunteer assignment in an Eskimo village on the West Coast of Alaska became a five year experience with the very poor. He described the experience as a simpler way of living, where the people share whatever they have and are content with what they have.

Cheryl. Cheryl has taught four years at a non-denominational small private Christian school in a moderately-sized city in the mid-West. She teaches Earth Science and Chemistry. The student body is mostly middle class and white, with a few need-based scholarships. Growing up, she admits to probably not recognizing poverty among her classmates, but in high school, she worked with small children in a church and recognized that many dressed themselves and were often unkempt. She also went on a church mission trip overseas and ministered to children in a small village.

Mark. Mark has taught 14 years at a non-denominational small, private Christian school. He teaches 9th and 11th Grade Bible classes and theater. He describes the student body as mostly white, upper middle class, with some financial assistance based on family need. He experienced many encounters with the poor growing up. His father was a police officer who patrolled on the North side [mostly poor and minority] of a moderately-sized city in the mid-West. His family would visit widows, play with orphans at a local home, and have them over for Christmas or Thanksgiving dinner. At one point, they took in two cousins who came from broken homes and alcoholic parents. He watched one cousin break the "generational poverty mindset."

Coach Byrd. Coach Byrd has taught 15 years total, 13 at a public high school, and two at a medium-sized, non-denominational private Christian school. He teaches World History, Government, and Oklahoma history and coaches basketball. Since we met in his athletic office and he identified strongly with his role as coach, I chose to include the title in his pseudonym. He describes the students as mostly white, middle to upper class, many with two parents, some step-parents, but mainly intact families. He grew up in a small town where a lot of the people were poor, but he remembers being over at a

friend's house one time and realizing his dad wasn't around, and that they didn't have a car, and that several people were sharing one bedroom. As an adult, he has held basketball camps on the Lakota-Sioux Reservation and experienced extreme poverty. He described the kids who would come as wearing the same clothes for several days, hair matted with lice, but they just wanted to be held and loved. They wanted a connection with others.

Marge. Marge has taught 15 years altogether, 13 at a public school, and two at a medium-sized, non-denominational private Christian school. She teaches U.S. and world history classes. She described the student body as upper middle class, approximately 95% white, and is not aware of any scholarships to students. She had no early experiences with poverty. When she started teaching in public schools, she understood the situation better, and when she went to Mexico she "saw real poverty," unlike any condition of people here in the U.S. She saw "large communities of people living without basic necessities" and was shocked.

Mary. Mary has taught 38 years at a large Catholic high school. She currently teaches one English class and is the Director of Campus Ministry. She is in charge of the service program, retreats, masses, the faith formation of adults, and is the liaison to the Christian Brothers (Lassalian tradition). She distinguishes between the reputation of the school as being a "rich white kid's school" and says that they have 25-28% on some financial aid. Last year, they gave out $700,000 in financial aid. She grew up in a little mid-western town in "cotton country." The town had a Black section of town and her parents spend a significant amount of time there visiting friends they had known growing up, so she had early personal experience with poor people. She didn't understand the

extent of the poverty until she spent the night with a friend whose home did not have indoor plumbing. The kids were integrated into the school, however, and their poverty wasn't an issue.

Mei. Mei has taught 25 years at the same private, Baptist school in a large western city. She teaches U.S. history and government classes. She describes the student body as an "upper middle class clientele" and the tuition as $13,000 a year. She knows that multiple generations within a family will pool together their money to send their children to the school. Their population is mostly Asian—mainly of Japanese ancestry—and they do not offer full scholarships. She doesn't have many distinct memories of the poor growing up, but one man stands out in her memory. She and her mother would ride the bus around town and he wore a dirty tuxedo and carried a case, so she thought he was a player in a symphony. Her mother used to say things to her like "if we ever need to, we are going to come here (the public pool) and shower like him.

Table of Participants

Participant	Yrs. Ex.	Subject	School Description
Mitchell	10	Bible	Medium-sized Baptist private college prep
Ben	38	Theology	Large, private Catholic high school
Cheryl	4	Science	Small, non-denominational K-12 private school
Mark	14	History/Bible	Small, non-denominational K-12 private school
Coach Byrd	15	History	Medium-sized, non-denominational, college prep
Marge	15	History	Medium-sized non-denominational, college prep
Mary	38	English	Large, private Catholic high school
Mei	25	History	Medium-sized Baptist private college prep

Data Collection

Interviews. The interviews were my primary method of data collection. Interviews allow the researcher to "uncover participants' descriptions of their experiences" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 106) and provide direct quotations that "build the reader's confidence that the reality of the participants and the situation studied is accurately represented" (p. 148). I contacted willing participants to set up an interview time and conducted those interviews at their own schools, except the out-of-state school as mentioned before. During the interview, open-ended questions were asked to elicit relevant stories from participants (See Appendix C). Specifically, these questions provided insight into the participants' understandings of Biblical teachings about poverty and how their own beliefs influence their classroom practices. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. After my transcriptions and initial analysis of the interviews, I then arranged a focus group meeting in which three participants attended. The discussion that took place confirmed my interview findings and I felt I did not need any further follow-up interviews.

Writing protocol. I asked the participants to take part in a writing protocol in order to gain a deeper understanding of their language and story and add another layer of data for my analysis. Van Manen (1990) states, "Writing forces the person into a reflective attitude—in contrast to face-to-face conversation in which people are much more immediately involved" (p. 64). I asked participants to respond to the following Gutierrez (1983) quote: "To know God is to do justice, is to be in solidarity with the poor person…there is no authentic worship of God without solidarity with the poor" (p. 51) (See Appendix D). The writing protocol provides more insight into how Christian

educators think about social justice in terms of its importance in a Christian's spiritual development and relationship with God. I received writing protocols from seven out of my eight participants. I sent several emails to the last participant, but he did not send me a response. I included findings from these writing protocols in my data analysis.

Document Analysis. Also, I read and analyzed each school's mission statement, which I found on all of the schools' websites, as a secondary data source in order to understand the purpose of each school's program and, when needed, raise concerns "about the clarity of the institution's mission" in my interviews (Whitt, 1992, p. 448). I also used the analysis to clarify some of my discussion in Chapter 5.

Focus group. After initial interviews and some transcription and analysis, I invited all participants, except the out-of-state participants, to join in a focus group meeting. Due to the five-hour time difference, trying to coordinate a Skype meeting with these participants did not seem like a possibility. In fact, finding a time when most of the in-state participants could meet, proved difficult. I sent out an initial email with three possible times and two choices of location to ask participants which times they were available. All participants agreed to the central location that I had offered on a university campus, and one meeting time worked for five of the six participants. The sixth participant emailed that she had to look after her grandchildren during the evenings and would not be available. I confirmed the time and place with the remaining five participants, but another participant responded that due to his coaching duties, he would not be able to make it. The day before the focus group meeting, yet another participant backed out due to personal reasons. So the focus group meeting consisted of three

participants—Ben, Mark, and Cheryl. Despite the low turn-out, the meeting turned out to be highly effective and all the participants responded well to each other.

I first showed participants a Stephen Colbert quote that illustrates the problem of Christians and social justice in order to initiate conversation (See Appendix D). Other questions stemmed from ideas that had been uncovered through interviews and further studying of the literature. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) explain that a focus group not only can extend findings from other methods but "allows for increased richness of responses through synergy and interaction" (p. 252). The focus group strengthened the credibility of my findings because several themes that emerged in the interviews were reinforced during the group meeting. Furthermore, the participants enjoyed sharing ideas from their own teaching and two of them exchanged contact information at the end of the meeting.

Data Analysis

I listened to the recordings of the interviews and transcribed each one, focusing on the significances of what was shared because I am interested in "the meanings and perceptions created and shared during a conversation" (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005, p. 3). After transcribing my interviews and focus groups, I completed the data analysis after several readings and re-readings, making notes in the margins as a means of open coding. I revisited the margin notes and "generate[d] as many codes as possible…without considering possible relevance" to my research questions (Emerson, Fritz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 182). I then looked for common themes from all data collection and grouped together those themes that were closely related. At this point, focused coding began as I chose certain specific themes that address my initial research questions to elaborate on.

Emerson et al (2011) describe this breaking down of fieldnotes as opportunities to discover “new themes and topics and new relationships between them” (p. 192).

In narrative analysis, the process of finding themes and relating them to one another is crucial in the sequencing and rewriting stage of the findings. Open and focused coding provided the foundation for uncovering these themes and linking them up in new ways. And while the data reduction process was certainly influenced by my primary focus on social justice and Biblical principles, I did uncover new themes during the open and focused coding processes that I explored.

Finally, I revisited my findings and implemented a critical spirituality approach to examine themes through the reflection and deconstruction stages in an attempt to discover creative and effective ways to address the issue of poverty in a Christian school setting. These results are recorded in my final discussion.

Timeline

I conducted initial interviews and collected the writing protocols in the summer and early Fall of 2013, transcribing interviews soon after I conducted them. All transcriptions were completed by September 30. I spent the remainder of the Fall analyzing the data and writing up my findings. By early December, I distributed my findings for member checks and asked participants to respond by the end of the month. I would like to submit my final dissertation by the end of March 2014 and defend it that semester.

Ethical Considerations

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) state that “we should be as concerned with producing an ethical research design as we are an intellectually coherent and compelling

one" (p. 111). Throughout each stage of my research, I have paid close attention to ethical issues in order to protect my participants and to interpret and report my data in an honest, sincere manner as much as possible. I have already completed both my RCR and IRB training, and before I began my research, I did seek and obtain IRB approval from the OSU Review Board. I have continued to practice ethical considerations throughout my research. I initially contacted an administrator at each school and asked for permission to interview as well as for suggestions of possible participants to contact. During the data collection, I obtained an informed, written consent from each participant before interviews took place, which provided my participants with "autonomy and ability to judge for themselves what risks are worth taking" for the purpose of my research. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 112). I shared with my participants the purpose of my study and informed them that they may withdraw at any time without penalty and that their identity will remain anonymous throughout the entire process. I carefully assigned pseudonyms for each participant and labeled all transcriptions accordingly. All data was secured on my computer in a password-protected account folder.

As the data was analyzed, I employed member checking as a way to further promote ethical concerns. While member checking is certainly important to the validity of my research, it also plays an important role as an ethical tool in order to give participants an opportunity to read how I interpreted their stories and to provide feedback if they are not comfortable with my interpretations. There will be a final opportunity for reciprocity at the end of my presentation when participants will be given a copy of my completed dissertation and a chance to read and provide feedback again.

Trustworthiness

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) define credibility as "to whether the participants' perceptions match up with the researcher's portrayal of them" (p. 112). In my study, I made use of member checks in order to give participants an opportunity to view my portrayal of them and to give input if they felt misrepresented in any way. In addition to interviews, I had participants elaborate on their views of social justice in a writing protocol that provided another method of data collection and opportunity to corroborate my findings. Finally, I met with a focus group in order to strengthen my findings. Creswell (2013) states that triangulation can help "shed light on a theme or perspective" by providing other types of evidence to document specific themes (p. 251). Throughout my reporting of the data, I kept a reflexive journal in order to record my honest responses to my own experiences in order to connect them to my participants' stories and experiences. These journals were used within my narrative analysis to reveal my subjectivity during the research process. I have chosen four entries from my journal to connect with my themes and findings. Through reflexivity, member checking, and multiple data perspectives, I maintained credibility throughout my research.

"Dependability," according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), "refers to whether one can track the processes and procedures used to collect and interpret the data" (p. 113). I have kept systematic notes, carefully-labeled transcriptions, and extensive coding lists in order to maintain the dependability of my research. These procedures are explained in detail in my data analysis chapter, and the material will be available to both my participants and dissertation committee members.

Finally, transferability will rely on the "thick description" that I have provided in my findings. Creswell (2013) sees this type of detailed description in the researcher's presentation of ideas as well as "interconnecting the details, using strong actions verbs, and [providing] quotes" (p. 252). I have tried to pay close attention to the words of my participants both in their written and oral accounts and include lots of details and quotes in order to create an authentic, honest representation of their ideas.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to justify and explain my choice of narrative methodology in order to understand more fully how secondary school Christian teachers consider social justice issues in their pedagogy and how these issues, specifically a focus on the poor, relate to Biblical principles. Data collection methods include individual interviews, follow-up interviews, and a writing protocol. Open and focused coding and reflexive journaling have been incorporated in my data analysis. Personal journaling throughout the process helped me reflect on my own experiences as they connected to those of my participants' narratives. Informed consent, anonymity of participants, and careful data collection and storage are all important ethical considerations that have been made. Credibility, dependability, and transferability, described by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) as "the ability to apply findings in similar contexts or settings" (p. 8-9), has been established through member checking, triangulation—the collection of several data sources in order to avoid misinterpretations, reflexivity, and thick description.

The intent of this study is to contribute to the body of literature surrounding private, Christian school education. If Christian schools are going to fulfill their missions to provide academic excellence founded on Biblical principles, more research needs to be

done on what specific Biblical principles are being included and what, if any, are being neglected. Creswell (2013) states that researchers use qualitative research "because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue," which can only be achieved by listening to people's own stories and being open to new perspectives and connections of ideas (p. 48). I hope I have not only achieved a complex, detailed account of how teachers think about social justice and the Bible but also critically analyzed these accounts in an attempt to uncover ideas that will inspire transformation in our Christian schools.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

I was standing in front of my classroom, having just given the instructions for my Honors students' research project. I was proud of my idea and had constructed it specifically to challenge my upper class, Christian students to broaden their understanding of the poor and oppressed around the world. I asked them to consider a group of people who are being oppressed either by the government or some kind of wider system or constraint beyond their control. We went around the room and gave some possibilities—human trafficking victims, child soldiers, etc., and when we got to Eric, he simply stated, "Why should I care about any of these groups? Can I just do mine on aborted babies?" While I expected some kind of reaction from his classmates, not one person said a word, and everybody stared at me as if to say, "Yeah, why are we doing this?" (Researcher narrative)

One of my main reasons for researching this topic of Christian education and issues of poverty stems from this encounter with Eric and others that followed. When faced with stereotypical comments about the poor, I realized that my idea of Biblical teachings concerning the poor and that of my students were fairly disconnected. I

wondered if any other teacher was struggling with this kind of attitude, and if anyone was purposefully trying to address it in their curriculum. I have since interviewed eight teachers from four different Christian schools and have been quite impressed with their efforts in what seems like an ongoing battle. I am also encouraged that they have not only encountered students like Eric, but also students like Sarah, whose life was changed because of her work as a volunteer tutor for children living in government housing. I have come to realize that working with middle to upper class students in Christian environments has many similarities across Catholic and Protestant boundaries, and that other teachers are as passionate if not more so about the topic than I am. Some teachers have made it their life work to reach the poor and to offer spaces for their own students to develop understanding and compassion for those who are oppressed. At least two teachers design their entire curriculum around topics that engage students in such learning.

After interviewing each of my eight participants and holding the focus group meeting, I self-transcribed each interview and the meeting, and then read through the transcriptions several times using open coding, according to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011), in my efforts to find common themes. I also analyzed school mission statements and writing protocol responses looking for themes. Initially, I discovered 46 codes as I read and analyzed the data. From these codes, I looked for connections and ideas that were prominent, and resorted the data under four major themes. The first major theme is Teacher Perspectives on Poverty. When discussing poverty issues, teachers expressed specific clarifying definitions, connected their ideas to social justice, and communicated desired perspectives they hope to pass on to their students. The second major theme is

Addressing Student Attitudes. Teachers have strategies to combat extemporaneous stereotypical comments that come up in class; they plan purposeful curriculum to address poverty issues, and they recognize the need for and encourage students to have direct experience with the poor. The third major theme is Students' Reactions and Responses to teacher implementation of specific strategies, classroom activities, and direct service to the poor. Students, not surprisingly, respond positively, negatively, and neutrally within the spaces teachers create. The final theme I will present is Personal Connections to Poverty. As teachers shared early memories of interactions or encounters with the poor, it became evident that those experiences greatly influenced how they approach and teach about poverty in their own classrooms. The themes are followed with documentation to support each.

I also analyzed each school's mission and purpose statement, which can be found on their websites, to understand what aspects of its program the school itself wants to emphasize in order to market its programs. The mission statements were fairly broad in scope, using language such as "equips students spiritually, intellectually, and physically" (Baptist school and large ecumenical school) and "build faith, knowledge, and character in the hearts and minds of our students" (small ecumenical school). Only the Catholic school mission statement directly claims to "carry on the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ" as well as "graduate well-educated students who practice Gospel values." After a discussion of each theme mentioned above, I will connect my findings to my document analyses.

Teacher Perspectives on Poverty

As the participants shared how they deal with poverty, they had several strategies in common. When the interview was barely underway, most participants were clarifying and defining who they include when they use the word poor. Through their responses in both interviews and writing protocols, most teachers had specific ideas concerning the poor that they wanted to communicate through planned lessons and activities. Some of these ideas connected specifically to social justice for the poor, and others simply attempted to broaden the students' view of the poor.

Teacher definitions

Several participants, when telling their own stories about their experiences with poverty, wanted to clarify their own personal definitions of who should be included in a discussion about the poor and expanded their definitions to include people other than those who are economically disadvantaged. These findings support the current research that a consensus on the definition of poverty does not exist (Akindola, 2009; Laderch, Saith, & Steward, 2003). Right at the beginning of the interview, Mary interrupted her story and said, "You know, I think poverty goes farther beyond just economic poverty. I think of old people. I think of kids in the foster care systems. I think of kids with disabilities that nobody wants. For me, those people are poor as well…poverty goes beyond economic poverty" (Interview). She cited a verse in the Bible when Jesus says when you feed and clothe the "least of these, you did it to me." Ben also cited this verse and focused on the part that says, "When I was in prison, you came to visit me." So he takes his summer school social justice students to a halfway house and a prison and they talk with the prisoners and "see what a cell looks like and figure out these people are human beings" (Interview). Mitchell pointed out that in the Bible, the poor were

associated with people who were physically unable to work, but in America, even though there is a huge disparity with income levels, “Everyone has a cell phone—a smart phone,” and he includes anyone living on credit who is “living beyond [their] means” as “in trouble on some level” and on the verge of poverty. Mitchell also expands his view to people who suffer from mental illness, which often goes along with people who cannot work. Mitchell, Ben, and Mary all cite Biblical references to help define and understand who the poor are.

Mark uses a book source to frame his definition of poverty. He couldn’t remember the name of the book, but the authors “break down poverty into three different areas: the spiritual poverty—those who don’t know the Lord and are spiritually impoverished; emotional or relational poverty—those who don’t know how to relate well or have healthy relationships with people; and actual material poverty” (Interview). He comments that these different dimensions complicate the issue because “poverty is bigger than just this person is on welfare” (Interview).

One interesting idea that emerged within the participant’s discussion of whom to include among the poor involves the role community plays in a life of poverty. Coach Byrd sees modernization and industry in the late 1800’s as leading causes for the acceleration of poverty. He sees that a poor lifestyle in the country surrounded by family would be a better situation because “everybody worked toward the same goal, which was survival. You have a modest home or hut, but you’re working the land and you had a purpose” (Interview). He compares that situation to one in which the father leaves home 14 hours a day to work a job that makes him “feel like a failure” and keeps him away

from his family. Later he revisited this idea by connecting the poor to the early Christians:

They were the outcasts. If you chose to be a Christian, you chose to put yourself in a socially awkward position with your family and everyone you knew. So to be Christian in America, to be the majority, is so opposite of what it was to be a Christian initially. And I think there is a definite advantage to living a poor lifestyle. Like say if my family could go somewhere in a community of people that were just living off the earth, where my job was to survive and help others survive, I think we could find a happiness that we can't find in America (Interview).

He continued to discuss how American society is not set up for a communal lifestyle and many of us don't even know our neighbors and certainly don't spend time with them. Similarly, Mei points out that the poor in other countries can actually survive better on very little money, unlike in America. She has traveled all over Southeast Asia, and comments that even though these people are "not living well," because "everybody is a rice farmer down on the coast in Cambodia, you are going to be in your community and with your family" (Interview). She sees that the poor in America are much more isolated due to social pressures and lack of options for leading poor, but satisfying lives. She states, "The fact that our middle-class dream is sometimes a little bit out of reach for a group of people stands out to me" (Interview). Both Coach Byrd and Mei see the poor in other countries as better off compared to the poor in America who often lack community and live in isolation.

In contrast, Marge offers a different perspective of the poor in other countries. She took a group of students to several big cities in Europe and commented on the "abject

poverty" they witnessed. She talked about how once you traveled "outside the center of Paris, the City of Lights, all of a sudden it's a very gilded look at what people in the country look like" (Interview). She also compared the poor in Europe to America, stating that many beggars and street sellers go home to some "horrific poverty," in much worse conditions than most people who live in poverty here in America. In fact, at the very beginning of the interview she stated, "Poverty is so relative, so poverty compared to what I live like?" She continued to say that she doesn't think she saw real poverty until she went to Mexico. Her description of the poor in other countries seems to be based on experience in larger cities compared to Mei and Coach Byrd's views of the poor in less-populated areas of the world.

Interestingly, the ways in which participants categorized and defined the poor in their interviews influenced all of their stories and became recurring themes in their narratives.

Social Justice Connections

When asked to respond to a Gutierrez (1983) quote in the writing protocol that strongly connects solidarity with the poor to a Christian's "authentic worship of God" (See Appendix E), all participants who responded agreed with Gutierrez on some level. However, it became clear through their writing responses that a couple of teachers interpreted solidarity with the poor with simply having compassion for them. A few strongly agreed with Gutierrez as evidenced by Ben's statement, "The Christian understanding of God can't be understood outside of justice" (Writing Protocol). Mei expanded this idea in her writing protocol with her statement, "The idea of inequality opens the door to evil treatment of others" (Writing Protocol).

As I analyzed other data responses as well, several issues related to social justice emerged. One common idea related to social justice that several participants discuss is the importance of not showing favoritism to people who are wealthy as an important Biblical theme. Coach Byrd commented that Jesus "opened his life" to all types of people, poor and wealthy, and he sees Jesus "on the side of poverty" (Interview). Mei also sees that most of the Biblical teachings on poverty are related to justice.

I think about when Jesus talks about people waiting to take their favorite place at the table, and he recommended that they don't. Let somebody else honor you…there was a context of favoritism of people that were wealthy and looked nice. They were taking the best seats. So clearly he was teaching that's not how you determine who should be honored (Interview).

Both Mei and Cheryl in their interviews referred to a verse in James from the New Testament that says, "Pure religion is this: to help the widows and the orphans." Cheryl states that Biblical teachings not only illustrate the compassion people should have for widows or orphans, but that "he valued them as equals to everyone else, even though society did not" (Interview). She also cites James 2:17 that says, "Even so faith, if it hath no works is dead." She concludes by saying, "A heart full of gratitude for the grace freely given by Christ will be to care for the poor" (Cheryl, Writing Protocol). Both women agree that a system that favors people because of their wealth and status is not based on Biblical ideals.

Coach Byrd and Mitchell both connected Biblical ideas to social justice as well. Mitchell commented that several books in the Old Testament contain passages "full of judgment of God's people because they refused to use their wealth to take care of people

who could not take care of themselves…some of the prophets saying that God's people were giving lots of sacrifices and supposedly worshipping, but because they were not caring for the poor, it was meaningless" (Interview). Coach Byrd echoed these ideas referring to the same passage in Isaiah which also says, "Seek justice, correct the oppression, bring justice to the fatherless, [and] plea the widow's case." To Coach Byrd, the message is clear that "God was bringing judgment of the people of Israel because they were not abiding by those laws that were in place" (Interview). These men assert that helping to correct injustices concerning the poor is an important part of a Christian's duty.

As far as the poor in today's society, several participants connected an unfair structural set-up in America as one reason for poverty. Coach Byrd sees many more economic barriers whether it be race or social barriers: "Opportunities are not as plentiful to those in poverty and you really have to fight to make something of yourself as far as making something like the American dream" (Interview). Mei connects some of the issues that Coach Byrd addresses to a wider historical pattern. She admits she "has never really put research to this," but she believes that a lot of the poverty, especially for African Americans, stems from the Great Depression and the male leaving the family. From there she connects the current situation to a generational pattern. She also believes that "capitalism is actually based on justice…on the requirement of a contract being honored," and she blames the unethical behavior of individuals who abuse the system as creating the most recent economic downturn (Interview). Both participants acknowledge that individuals in poverty feel trapped in the current system and, therefore, unwilling to do much to change their situation.

Coach Byrd also addresses the generational issue, stating that people in poverty "were brought up in an atmosphere of not high achievement, not academic achievement, but how do we survive." But while he admits that there are structural issues at the root of poverty, he moves his views to the role of individual choice as well and states that there is "nothing people can do about poverty unless the people in poverty want to get out." He thinks "a lot of people are comfortable where they are at and they don't want to fight the system…they don't want to try to dig their way out of it" (Interview). Mark works directly with the poor in his city and he also attributes part of the poverty situation to generational poverty. He sees children who saw their parents who didn't have a strong work ethic, "or they lived off whatever government systems and they never saw their parents work a day in their life," and the children see that that kind of lifestyle is "doable" and continue in it as well (Interview).

Cheryl shared an example of a woman from her church who worked herself out of welfare, but sees that type of situation as rare. More often than not, she sees many poor people in America who "don't have much ambition or motivation to get out of it" because they know if they make too much money, they won't qualify for welfare benefits." Cheryl believes that "the system is broken," and although she is not sure how to fix it, she believes there needs to be "an incentive to get a job and work their way out of it" (Interview). And Ben sees the main problem relating to the "role of education" and tries to help his students understand that "where you live does not give you equal education opportunities." He believes that until the education system can be improved, inequality cannot be erased (Ben, Focus Group). It seems that these Christian educators see various flaws in the current systems at work in America that either don't equip the

poor with the necessary skills to be successful or don't encourage people to strive to improve their current poverty status.

And while most participants agreed that the Bible promises judgment on Christians who do not help the poor and oppressed, another aspect emerges involving the poor's responsibility to help their own self-improvement. Mark agrees that the burden to help does fall on the Christian, but "we need to be doing something responsible, saying yes, we want to help, but there's also accountability on your part" (Interview). Mary agrees that "social responsibilities accompany rights—they go together. You don't just get the rights. If I want to be a free person, then I have to accept the responsibilities that go with that." She also believes that our current system "rewards" staying in poverty and that is why she is committed to the Lassalian Catholic tradition that is dedicated to providing an education for the young, "especially the poor," in order to break that generational cycle of poverty (Interview). Several participants see that one aspect of the current system that needs addressing is the inequality of education that the poor receive compared to those who can afford private education.

Mitchell suggests that "when you are dealing with poverty, especially kids, you have to create a whole other culture to change their way of thinking." He bases his ideas on a book he has read in which the author states that you try to change the culture from the inside through the kid and then bring the parents into activities at night (Interview).

Along with a broken welfare system, an unjust educational system, and the idea of generational poverty, several participants criticize current forms of Christian charity as ineffective ways to help change the system. Marge sees the Christian mission to address poverty as a "long term" rather than short term endeavor. She states, "That's where we

fall short in that we feel if we go to Mexico for the week [and help the poor] that we…can check that box." But she sees that passing out shoes to orphans will not be that impactful because those shoes will wear out and "we won't be back" (Interview).

Mark echoes that idea when he describes Christian charity as a "dropping bomb mentality of helping the poor." He comments that Christians like to go on mission trips or have a day of service, "and it makes us feel good"; however, when the Christians leave, they "haven't taught [those helped] how to use their resources…and haven't made the effort to build relationships with [the poor] in the midst of it (Interview). Coach Byrd describes it as "when you throw money into a community, you're likely to get a building that doesn't need to be built." He bases his idea on a book *Toxic Charity* written by a man who has been involved for years in the charity industry. He believes that the only way to help the poor is to spend time with them… "but to do it for a day or a week…I don't think any real change can happen as a result of that" (Interview). Mitchell agrees and sees donating money and things to charity as "cosmetic." He wishes "there was more of a sense that what people were doing was impacting beyond just being emotional…but nobody wants to take somebody into their house…or invite a homeless person into a living situation that changes their life" (Interview). Clearly, one important common element among participants is the need to build lasting relationships with people rather than simply giving donations.

Mei refers back to the historic idealism during the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies and their war on poverty. We should learn from history, and she states that "simply throwing money on the problem is not going to solve it." She also criticizes more conservative administrations and states that something has to "break through besides just

two extremes." She says that the U.S. needs to develop "sustainable programs" that teach people skills, keep them in their own communities, and somehow pay for themselves. She sums up the beliefs of several of the participants when she says, "We've already proven we can't continue to just put money on a problem…and it doesn't seem to be helpful for the people either. [It's] more like a paternalistic 'I'm-the-good-guy-throwing-money'" that isn't healthy for the recipients either (Mei, Interview).

Although I anticipated some skepticism from participants in their writing responses concerning Gutierrez's liberal theological stance, everyone responded positively and some brought up related ideas in their interviews. Many of these issues were shared by participants, and while some had very strong feelings about the broken system, all agree that as Christians we need to be contributing to the alleviation of poverty in the world.

Desired Outcomes for Students

Not surprisingly, teachers have specific ideas they hope their students will uncover through their curricular activities and discussions about poverty. Most of the desired messages related to poverty teachers hope to communicate to their students fall within three categories: understanding Biblical compassion, letting go of the "American Dream," and recognizing a greater system at work.

Helping students build a Christ-like compassion for the poor was a recurring theme throughout my study. One important notion that Ben highlights in his Social Justice class is that the Bible teaches Christians not to be greedy, but to share willingly with those who need it. He focuses on the passage of the rich young ruler and hopes students understand the theme: "Woe to you who are greedy." The problem, he says, is

not that they are wealthy, but "that [their] wealth is more important than a willingness to help somebody" (Interview). Since he has a wide range of economic backgrounds sitting in his class, he takes time with the story of the rich young ruler to help students understand it is the greediness that is the problem and that as Christians, we are called to give generously to those in need. His idea is to address the obstacle to compassion in order to clear the way for transformative thinking.

Cheryl hopes her students understand that "to minister to others is to be Christ-like." She continues, "Christ has called us to minister to the poor and to not have respect of persons based on what they have and what they can do for us, but how we can serve them" (Interview). Similarly, Coach Byrd comments, "The call of Christians, especially in America—we've been given so much—is to not get bogged down with what we have, but to release that and to provide for people who cannot provide for themselves. To me that is the message of Christianity and the nature of God: to help protect and provide for people who can't do it themselves" (Interview). Mary says that she spends a lot of time telling the students, "Let's do a mission collection for this," understanding that raising money and "trying to raise awareness" are two straightforward ways to help students develop compassion and commit to the mission of helping the poor (Interview). Mitchell frames this idea of compassion in terms of community. He wants students to understand that "we are all in it together and that the community is only as strong…as its weakest link" (Interview). All of these participants highlight the need for Christians to demonstrate compassionate responses to the poor.

Mark explains one principle he tries to communicate with his students is that God's love for them is unconditional, and we need to continually be reminded of that fact when we begin to judge others for their own poor choices.

I think we forget that with our own interactions with the poor, as we see the poor abuse [the system of welfare], we think that now that you've abused that, you don't deserve my help. Many of us have abused God's [compassion] and yet God does not say, "Ok, there's the line and you can no longer participate in my grace." So I think we've got to keep coming back to that idea of how much has been given to us; therefore, how do we give it to others (Focus Group).

Mark emphasizes the compassion that God shows all people and that simply out of gratitude to Him, we should return that treatment to others without judgment. Similarly, Ben states, "Loving the emotionally and financially poor gives us a glimpse of how God loves us. A god that only loves the perfect is not the Christian God" (Writing Protocol). Ben takes the discussion to a basic idea of loving oneself first before one can love others. He states, "If we can love ourselves even when we are poor and imperfect then that allows us to do the same" (Writing Protocol). Both men connect an understanding of God's compassion to a person's ability to show compassion to oneself and to others.

Another important idea that teachers desire for the students is to encourage a lifestyle change in recognition that American materialism is not God's goal for their lives. Mei describes the society in which we live as a "pleasure society," one in which "people are trained to think about what they are owed and what they have a right to." She continues to say that "in our pleasure-oriented society, we aren't fostering a lot of self-

discipline" (Interview). She tries to communicate that a simpler life can be an alternative to the fast-paced, technological one in which most of her students live. Cheryl also wants her students to understand "happiness is not in more stuff and the newest thing—shoes, phone, car," and she hopes her students see their excess as opportunities to do something for others (Focus Group). Ben also wants his students to be introduced to the concept of a simpler life, one lived closer to God:

I think the kids believe, "Unless I have accumulated wealth, I will not be happy. And there's nothing wrong—God really wants me to be happy." And what they've done is connect their idea of happiness with wealth. So if a kid could just have a paradigm shift that wealth doesn't guarantee this—and then given models of people who live a simpler life…Simplicity has a great reward to it. If you can offer them an alternative because in some ways they are afraid to let go of all the new things. The amount of things. If you could just help them disconnect their idea of happiness with the cultural one that says more is better—that's what I'd like to see (Ben, Focus Group).

Mark specifically would like for students *"to understand that success is not—or that even education is not—I get a good education so I can go to a good college so I can get a good job, so I can have a wife and children, so they can have a good education…and there's this cycle—it's very narcissistic…I come back to this statement. I've not cared for the poor. I've not given any thought to my vocation in the sense of God's calling on my life. How does my vocation reflect my love for Christ? You have this life the Lord has given you, you have this foundation, this education, but don't think that just living the American Dream—the good education, the good job—that this is really what God has called us to do* (Mark, Focus Group).

Another less prominent but somewhat common theme among several of the teachers was the desire for students to understand a system is at work that may not be just. For Ben, he tries to get his students to realize that if a person has been in a really poor education system, by the age of 18, they are at a disadvantage "because of the system." He wants his students to realize above everything else that there is more connected to poverty than just individual choices (Interview). Mei tries to get her students to see that corrupt behavior within a capitalistic society creates a lot of the injustice in America. Others made vague references to how the issue of poverty "is bigger than the bum on the street…it's more than just [making poor choices]" (Mark, Interview) and that "there are millions of reasons why poverty exists and millions of reasons why you can't get out of it…the world is a complicated place" (Mitchell, Interview). At least on some level, most of the participants want their students to see that bigger picture of poverty.

Many of the participants also discuss the challenges to students' understanding of a greater system at work as well as trying to dispel the American-Dream mindset in our culture. Stronks and Blomberg (1993) argue that, based on the research of Robert Coles, children who are raised in Christian homes with Christian values struggle with more traditional values that promote an individualistic, "get-ahead-at-any-cost" mentality (p. 49). They further argue that even Christian schools can promote mixed messages through a success-driven curriculum that includes "love your neighbor" chapel sermons along the way. Ben recognizes the "American system" that tells students, "If you work hard, you will end up [successful]," which again contributes to students' stereotypical views that often come out in class (Focus Group). Similarly, Marge discusses the same mixed message and comments, "Our kids are torn because they know what Christ expects

doesn't always line up with what we, as upper-middle class Americans expect" (Interview). Their own parents expect them to work hard to attain independence and then the pastor will turn around and ask them to take care of others.

This message is echoed by Mitchell who said, "With Americans there is a strong sense of self-reliance, that's not only difficult because that means you don't want to accept help, but there's also a sense that people don't want to give help. We don't want to help others because they need to learn to help themselves" (Interview). Coach Byrd believes that that the American value of independence also contradicts the Biblical view of community. He says, "The way it's set up in American; the whole system is isolating…the first century Christians' communal lifestyle encouraged the attitude—what's mine is yours, what's yours is mine. But that is definitely not how it's set up in America" (Interview). Clearly, Biblical values of charity and community and cultural values of individualism and *pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps* attitude clash, resulting in misunderstood and often judgmental student attitudes towards the poor. These cultural attitudes and values are the ones that participants would like to dispel.

Addressing Student Attitudes

All educators have encountered a variety of attitudes from students concerning lessons and activities in the classroom. Sometimes those comments come unexpectedly during a lesson on a completely unrelated topic. Other times, carefully designed lessons evoke as many responses as there are students in the room. A first-year teacher might be taken aback when responses seem harsh or negative, but the veteran teachers I interviewed had an arsenal of strategies to help address surprising, judgmental, or even inappropriate comments from students.

Combating Stereotypes and Judgmental Attitudes

When teachers in Christian schools face unexpected judgmental or stereotypical comments from students such as "the homeless are leeches—they should go out and get a job" (Mark) or "people are poor because they've made bad choices" (Ben), teachers attempt to challenge their students' thinking in several ways: using the Socratic method, directly communicating information, engaging students in a purposeful activity providing alternative stories, or a combination of these. All of their strategies have the same goals: to complicate the way students see the world and to broaden that view as well.

Direct Instruction and the Socratic Method. Mary had experienced judgmental comments from two of her male students the very week I interviewed her. Although these types of comments were not commonplace in her English classroom, she has encountered stereotypical remarks before, but never as direct and seemingly uncompassionate as on this day. She was clearly affected by these students' comments.

I was talking about Martin Luther King and the March on Washington. This kid pops up and says, "Yeah? Well we shouldn't be doing anything about Affirmative Action. That's their problem and the churches should be handling it and not the government." They were very fixated on policy—Affirmative Action—those kinds of things, and I was trying to get them to the underlying causes and how Affirmative Action came about. (Interview)

Mary's first approach when faced with a judgmental attitude towards the poor involved using the Socratic Method. She asked questions such as "what was going on" and "what problem(s) was affirmative action instituted to address?" While some students came to a conclusion that education is important and not everyone has had or continues to

have equal access, the two initiators in the class "were combative" throughout the discussion. So she moved from a Socratic approach to one of direct instruction. She "pulled out the Catholic teaching card" and said, "Here's what Catholic social teaching says about the poor." Unfortunately, these boys sighed and "just kind of went whatever…" (Interview).

Interestingly, Mei was also discussing the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington when she encountered stereotypical views of race and the poor.

I opened class with a clip of Obama speaking on the stairs of the Lincoln Memorial. And I showed them just the clip where Obama says, "The work is not over yet" and that there is a fence still about opportunity not being there. And so I was getting the kids to try to figure out what he was saying, and then I ended up bringing up an earlier discussion we had about the result of the Zimmerman verdict and Obama speaking out after that. So I was giving them some statistics and asking what do you think about these statistics, where prison sentences are so much greater, the numbers of the incarcerated are so much greater for particular races? And one of the boys said, "Well, isn't it because they do drugs and they're stealing." So he had a very clear stereotype of what the cause of it was.

Mei introduced a historical event and when faced with a stereotype, she also used a combination of direct instruction and the Socratic Method. She recognized that the student did not have "much of a view of wider facts, so I didn't try to convince him there were other causes. I just said, look statistically." As she gave more statistics to the class, she asked her student, "Do these statistics show us a problem? Can we at least see that

there's a wider problem to solve here?" She said that finally the student admitted that yes, there must be a problem here.

Neither Cheryl nor Mitchell could recall a stereotypical comment coming up in class. Cheryl teaches science and focuses on her subject matter and Mitchell, who clearly lets his students drive the conversation in his Bible classes, states that it is simply not an important issue in his students' lives. He said, "Their care for the poor would be overshadowed by their care for people's rights or other economic stuff" (Interview). Both were asked how they would address a stereotypical comment in class, and both responded that they would use a direct-instruction approach. Cheryl said, "I would say that we don't know their whole story and that we need to love them as Christ did and we need to be kind and tender-hearted…Christ loves them and wants us to reach out to them" (Interview). Similarly, Mitchell said, "I would remind them that the world is a complicated place and there are millions of reasons why poverty happens and millions of reasons why you can't get out of it. I would encourage them to be humble in their thinking about those things because most people are one or two paychecks away from being in a bad place themselves" (Interview).

Purposeful Activity. Ben recalls how he hears comments such as people "have made bad choices. They got pregnant too soon; they started using drugs; they broke the law" (Interview).

One time we played a game, and in the game I had the kids line up outside and I told the kids, if you come from a family where you are living with your biological mom or dad, please step forward. Then I went through a series of things. If you came from a family where growing up, you had more than 10 books in the house, if you have health

insurance, if…Well, by the time the whole thing is over, you could see that some kids, by the time they're high school juniors, they are way out there and some kids are way back there. Some of the kids didn't realize; it's not just the choices I make—it's the choices other people make. (Interview)

After years of encountering these stereotypes about the poor, Ben has incorporated an activity to help students visualize another perspective than simply blaming poverty on individual choices. He was able to help them broaden their views to at least include the knowledge that other factors are involved in the existence of poverty.

Marge admits to holding her own stereotypes at times. She recognizes that kids are "black and white," believing that "if you are impoverished, you are obviously doing something wrong….You aren't working hard enough." And she acknowledges that she has felt this way at times because she has come from a lower-middle class economic background, has worked multiple jobs at times, and has been able to rise to a higher middle-class lifestyle. However, she recognizes that some people "have done everything seemingly right, and it still doesn't work for them" (Interview).

When a [stereotypical] comment comes up… I tell them, like anything in my class, you need to back up your opinions with some facts. So once you understand and research the impoverished, then we'll have the conversation. You don't get to make blanket statements about people. You don't get to just throw things out without having facts to support them because this is what I heard at the dinner table or this is what I heard on the news we watch (Marge, Interview).

Marge was the only participant to openly acknowledge her own stereotypes and assumptions about the poor, and while she does not combat her students' stereotypes

through any kind of activity or instruction, she challenges them to back up their ideas with research. So, in essence, she is challenging them to engage in an independent purposeful activity to discover the truth for themselves. Now, whether any students have taken her up on this challenge, I don't know, but she doesn't just let her students get away with such comments. Her conclusions that many of her students' stereotypical comments are from home was echoed by several of the other participants. Mary observed that "much of [the prejudice] is what they hear at home" (Interview). Ben echoed, "You can almost hear the kid repeating what was said at the kitchen table" (Interview). Along the same line, several participants stated that students' stereotypes stem from a lack of experience with people living in poverty. Mei states, "I think if students haven't interacted first hand, then it's more about people being lazy and not working hard" (Interview). Mark agreed, "I think it's hard for them to get at a context or to relate that to how [the poor] are living" (Interview).

Offering Alternative Stories. Another way a couple of participants try to combat unexpected stereotyping in their classrooms is by providing students with another story—one that might challenge the biased ones they've heard at home.

One thing that irritates me a lot is when students say that the homeless are leeches and that the homeless should go out and get a job, and they identify the problem as being so black and white when, in fact, many of the homeless have mental health issues that go unaddressed for years and years. Or they have an addiction that they are struggling with and falling into the cycle of being homeless. So when kids talk about someone living on the streets or begging for money as worthless or as lazy, I try to communicate what the story might be behind the person you see on the street.…Tragedy,

mental health issues, people being devastated by major life changes.…So I try when that time comes up to illuminate them to the larger areas. (Coach Byrd, Interview)

Coach Byrd combats stereotypical attitudes of the homeless in his classroom by offering alternative stories for his students to think about. In a fairly direct approach, he tries to provide them with possible narratives other than laziness for people's homelessness in an attempt to broaden students' narrow views.

Similar to Coach Byrd, Mark attempts to dispel stereotypes with alternative stories—one from his own experiences—rather than just offering a "blanket taking-care-of-the-poor-kind-of-thing."

I can't remember how [the conversation] started, but I was able to share with [my students] something I was trying to deal with. I had a neighbor at the time where I was living—it was a fairly low-income area and I had a guy that would come by wanting jobs to earn some money, and so we kind of developed a relationship. And I put it out there to the class and asked them how they would respond to this situation because he came often needing money…I was trying to get them to think through a real-life situation (Mark, Intervew).

Mark purposefully lives in low-income areas with his family because he feels like God has called him to minister side-by-side with the poor. He was able to offer his students this real-life situation and complicate their views about people living in poverty.

Overall, teachers are willing to openly address stereotypes and to push their students into a little bit deeper thinking on issues of homelessness and the poor. Most see these encounters as opportunities to broaden their students' views but, perhaps, stop short of helping students recognize the greater system at work in society. They help students

understand that homelessness is more than laziness and that poverty is not simply a consequence of individual choices. However, most participants still focus the problem on a very basic, family level of influence rather than point to a larger, societal problem. Mei came closest to questioning the system with her prison statistics, and in the next section, her purposeful classroom activities are certainly geared toward helping students understand the historic and societal influences and structures that contribute to poverty.

Purposeful Curriculum Activities

In order to discuss the ways in which the participants implemented purposeful lessons concerning the poor, I am going to borrow the metaphors for teaching and learning from Badley and Hollabaugh (2012): teacher as transmitter, facilitator, or catalyst.

Transmission metaphors invoke traditional scenes of students sitting in long rows of desks and the teacher at the front of the class lecturing in order to pass down the important knowledge to the next generation. And while today transmission metaphors "carry strong negative connotations for some," lectures and rote memorization "both are essential for some forms of learning" (p. 55). While the majority of curriculum practices shared in the interviews do not fall under this metaphor, a few planned lessons do fall under this category. During one lesson, the teacher shows the film "God Bless the Child," as a way to transmit what "the spiral of downward poverty looks like." In another lesson, the teacher takes students on buses around the city and points out ways adults are taking responsibility and making a difference for the poor today. Even though the information in both situations is directly "transmitted" to students, both lessons still utilize alternatives

from the traditional classroom metaphor. Many of the participants made clear statements that lecturing about issues concerning the poor is not effective.

Several of the lessons planned purposefully by teachers fall under the facilitation or guidance metaphors. Badley and Hallobaugh (2012) describe situations where "learning comes primarily from within students but teachers seek to put in place optimal conditions for learning" as those included in facilitation metaphors (p. 57). Several teachers design individual lessons or entire units around issues of inequality and injustice in hopes their students will be enlightened to some of the truths about their world.

Ben's entire Social Justice class revolves around these very issues. He creates activities that help students experience real-life issues that broaden their views. For example, after a day of riding city buses downtown and working at the Salvation Army and other homeless shelters, the students return to the school and begin an evening and night at a "mock shelter." Students are given the equivalent amount of money they would receive if they qualified for food stamps. They must walk to the nearest grocery store, buy what they can, and return to the "shelter." Then boys go to one room, girls in the other, and the lights are out at a strict 10:00pm. At 6:00am, everybody has to get out and vacate the place. For 24 hours, students experience certain aspects of what homeless people might experience. When they return to school on Monday, he has everyone write a story about someone they met during their experiences, giving students an opportunity to reflect deeper on their learning.

One of [the students] told the story about a woman who goes through the line [at Salvation Army] and gets her food—a few minutes later, the woman comes up to one of the kids and says, "Could you just give my daughter a plate without her having to go

through the line?" And as my student was talking about the situation, my student wasn't sure "was that girl who was their age so embarrassed that she's at a homeless shelter—a soup kitchen—asking some kid from a private school, would you feed me? Is that why? I hadn't even realized people my age are homeless" (Ben, Interview).

Ben organized the day's events and experiences for his students, creating a space in which they can experience another way of life and begin to develop a slightly broader view of how other people live. Until students can get to a place of even surface understanding, it would be impossible to discuss with them the possible injustices in our current society.

In one project, Ben creates learning disability exercises in order to help students understand how other people experience learning in school. He will begin lecturing, and at some point, start a movie in the background that will distract his students in order to simulate a deficit disorder. For another lecture, he provides instructions for students that are written the way people with dyslexia would read them. For the culmination of this unit, he asks students to figure out where their prejudices lie and decide how they will learn about that particular handicap. Students are given freedom to choose what they want to experience.

A kid was blind for a day. He puts a blindfold on, has to shave, get his breakfast, go downstairs, have somebody meet him, and take him to his first class. What's it like to be in somebody else's shoes? So one of the things about poverty that is the theme of the class is experience. Students are invited to go 40 hours without eating food. All the water you want, no toothpaste, no breath mints. Most kids can't do it, and when they realize, I couldn't even do this for 20 hours…they start to see that hunger makes every part of who

you are. You can't concentrate, you can't sleep, you start to get headaches, and you couldn't perform as an athlete (Ben, Interview).

Other than facilitating experiential learning activities designed to build empathy in his students, Ben tries to point out to his students that happiness does not depend on how many material possessions one has. He introduces students to Aristotle and his philosophical argument about happiness. He uses Aristotle because students can relate to Aristotle's ideas that everyone wants to be happy, and that many believe "if only I was popular…"

And a lot of the kids can say, I can see that—if only I had more friends—if only I was captain of the football team or the cheerleading squad. Other kids buy into his thought that if only I had things, I'd be happy…According to Aristotle, really true happiness comes from the 3rd path—which is one of virtue. The kids have the same reaction…Darn it! I really thought I'd be happy if I was popular and wealthy. So, we are going to weave in something that is Biblical with a little bit of philosophy. And one of them I find kind of supports the other. If the kid struggles with "because the Bible says so," well, he's heard it from a different perspective already. Usually the kid nods, that's right. (Ben, Interview).

Clearly, Ben provides numerous opportunities for his students to develop broader perspectives of different people in the world as well as to help students contemplate truths of Biblical teachings about the poor and material possessions. He guides his students, but allows them space, and the experience itself appears to be more powerful than a simple lecture could be.

Mei also infuses teaching about injustice and the poor into many of her U.S. History units. She uses games, simulations, and role playing to help students grasp some of the complex ideas about economic injustice and unfair systems.

We play a game so that they get the idea of the Carnegies and the Rockefellers—how they are making monopolies and the ways they are making monopolies. [Students] are into the game…they are just trying to win the game, and then one of the things they realize is that the game is really unfair. So we talk about the phrase "It's a dog-eat-dog world"—the idea that that's just how life is….so then I question that and say, "Is that really true—that that's how the world works?" (Interview).

Mei connects this activity with the idea of capitalism. Her premise is that capitalism is actually based on justice, but requires a contract being honored. She tries to get her students to understand that if you don't honor a contract, you "don't have any trust in business." Then she connects that idea to ethics and trust. She provides her students a hands-on learning experience and then facilitates a discussion that allows students to critically think about the situation and help them understand that there are "catalysts of actual injustice of people doing unethical things" during economic down turns. "[Captialism] doesn't work if the rules are not being enforced" (Interview). So she connects ethics and economic injustice and addresses some of the structural issues involved in the creation of poverty.

In her Industrial Revolution and Progressive Era units, she discusses how people and organizations were developed to address the injustices developed during the Industrial Revolution. Students are given the opportunity to research one organization like Salvation Army or Red Cross and see what problems these groups were and still are

trying to solve. She asks them questions such as “Does that give you a thought about what you’re doing today?” Or she reminds them that in giving blood—in one hour—you can help three people. “That’s not a bad hour of your day.” She further challenges them, “What are the ways you can help people as a way of life?” She then points out that not everyone has to be a professional lawyer or doctor, and opens the possibility of their future in an organization that truly makes a difference (Interview).

In her 1920’s unit, she specifically focuses on student’s personal responsibilities with their own finances.

And where I really draw some lessons is we do a Stock Market game. So they are getting all crazy purchasing stocks. It just fuels their energy cause I play this game where every day represents one year of the Stock Market. So the days’ prices go way up and it gets fanatical how much money they’re earning. And we look at the causes of the crash and causes of the depression and look at the life lessons (Interview).

At one point, students will come in and learn that the stock market has crashed and that they have lost all their money. She is able to help students think about the repercussions of debt, credit, and compound interest. Her hope is that if students understand the importance of saving when they are young, they can let the compound interest work in their favor. She also designs experiential lessons, such as during the Depression unit. Students are asked to go without certain things—not to the extreme as Ben challenges his students, but she asks them to go without snacks in between meals and not to use any technology for a few days. She not only wants them to consider what it is like to go without, but also to build character in helping students learn how to deal with not having everything they want. “Can you actually find ways to improve your life?” she

challenges her students. She hopes they will find some joy in simplicity and discover that relationships might actually be more significant with face-to-face conversation (Interview).

Clearly Ben and Mei purposefully guide students to discover truths about poverty, about injustice, and about treating others fairly and compassionately. Marge plans a smaller, but purposeful lesson designed to help facilitate students' thinking about economics and poverty. Marge incorporates one exercise into her World History class.

The kids do an exercise on what does the world look like when we shrink it down to a hundred people. It's basically a percentage and my kids then had to anticipate how many are white? American? How many are Christian? They had a whole list of things. Then we watched a really short video. They learn that 50% of the world is malnourished, and 53% live on less than two dollars a day. And so my kids started having a little bit of conversation about poverty. Eighty percent of the world lives in substandard housing.…They are shocked at almost every level. The fact that half of the world lives on less money than they spend on their way to school at Starbucks, it's such a hard thing for them to wrap their brain around (Marge, Interview).

This activity opens the dialogue for Marge's students to consider what the expectations for Americans and our obligations to the rest of the world should be. Similar to Mei and Ben, she creates an exercise that helps students visualize a reality that they were oblivious to, and through that exposure, broaden their world view a little. But she does not simply state the facts. She gives students an opportunity to consider their existing knowledge and then when those ideas are contradicted in the video, she asks open-ended questions to help them process their new knowledge.

Mark and Coach Byrd fall under the third teaching and learning metaphor: the catalyst. In catalyst metaphors, according to Badley and Hollabaugh (2012), "teachers are to insert pedagogical grains of sand and thereby irritate their students' thinking…Teachers in this role consciously weave hard-to-answer questions into the course materials and instructional plans" (p. 62). Both men ask very difficult questions to their students in hopes that students will question the world in which the comfortable middle-to-upper class life they've always known and challenge their existing world views.

Mark, in one of his Bible classes, tries to get his students to understand the concept he labels "gospel" or "kingdom living," which references Jesus' challenge to the rich young man to "go and sell all you have and give to the poor" (Interview).

So I try to get them to understand that as a believer, sometimes as a good Christian kid, the mindset that they've been trained—maybe their parents haven't said this, but we want you to go to a good private school, so you can get a good education with a Biblical basis, so that when you try to sign up for college, you get a good college scholarship, so you won't be in debt and so you can get a good degree so that when you get out of college, you can have a good job, so you can provide for your family, so you can have that nice house and car—just living a nice life—is there anything wrong with that? No, but is that gospel living? Is that really living out what Jesus has called us to do? What is the point of our education? Why do we do this? So [I'm] trying to get them to think bigger picture (Mark, Interview)

Mark wants his students to come to a realization about why they want to get a certain degree or become a doctor to determine if selfish ambition or Christ-centered

living is at the heart of their goals. He completely challenges a lot of their, and probably their parents', tightly-held beliefs in hopes that some students will question their ideas and that their own lives might be transformed in some way.

Similarly, Coach Byrd asks challenging questions concerning their views of giving to charity and short-term missions.

In government there are many issues that intermingle into the subject of our government, so we talk about poverty. I try to once a week bring a question that they have to think about. The easy answer to the question, is charity worth doing, is yes, well, why? What does it look like to help? If you help in that way, aren't you hurting them in this way? So I try and just play Devil's advocate as much as possible just to make them think about what we are doing. Especially at a Christian school, what are we doing and how are we doing it? Does it need to be re-thought? Does it need to be approached in a different way? (Interview).

All of these activities, lessons, and discussions reveal these participants' desire to challenge their students to think outside their narrow views and see the world in a different light. They create spaces through different curricular activities because they want their students to live responsibly, humbly, and compassionately just as Jesus Christ modeled throughout his own life. They want students to understand that poverty is often a result of an unjust world. And they want students to recognize that there are historical, sociological, and economic factors continuously at work in their own lives and in the lives of others'.

Other than the obvious theme of broadening students' ideas of the world, a couple of other themes related to poverty emerge from the participants' narratives concerning

their purposeful lesson planning. As part of broadening their students' thinking, they focus on specific aspects that they feel are most important. One of those aspects is to consider the excess in their own lives and how they should respond to the wealth they have. As Ben interpreted the story of the rich young ruler who couldn't sell all that he had, the story isn't about having wealth, but being greedy. The problem isn't that you have money, but that "you won't even share." The rich young man said, "If I have to choose between God and my wealth, I'll pick my wealth. That's the greed" (Interview). So he hopes they will gain an understanding that they need to be generous to those who do not have, that instead of judging others, they will have compassion for them. Similarly, Both Mark and Mei try to offer students a look at their future and that instead of pursuing high-paying jobs, they consider meaningful paths they might take to truly make a difference in the world.

Another theme that Coach Byrd and Mark specifically focus on is the minimal effects of short-term charity work. They both want kids to understand that helping the poor should not be something that is simply "checked off the list" of accomplishments or that is done in order to make oneself feel better, but that the most effective kinds of ways to reach out to the poor is through the development of meaningful relationships—to become involved in the ongoing events of their lives.

Mei purposefully designs lessons that address themes incorporating both personal and societal issues of poverty. Through her monopoly and stock market simulations, she offers her students the opportunity to see how greed, how unethical behaviors, and how structural components in society can and do play a role in how poverty is perpetuated. She also connects individual behaviors to helping the poor, but she attempts to show how

individual actions affect the greater community. All of the teachers have assumptions and ideas about poverty and about how society approaches the poor, and their purposeful lessons are clearly efforts to address these ideas and create spaces for their students to deepen their own understandings about the issues.

Student Need for Experience

All four schools have some required service component embedded in their curriculum. In one school, hours are required for specific courses. In two schools, a total number of hours are required for graduation, with a certain amount of those dealing directly with interacting with the poor. The fourth school has two days during the year set aside for service projects in which all of their students participate. The message is clear: unless these middle and upper class students have direct experience with the poor, they will have difficulty understanding other issues related to poverty and social justice. In some instances, students can choose to be part of groups that serve more frequently than required, and other students choose to complete more than the required amount of hours due to their own fulfillment in service to others. Whatever the extent of a student's experiences with the poor may be, Marge captures much of the sentiment of the other participants with her statement, "We must work hard to open our kids' eyes and hearts to the responsibility to step outside our secure walks and meet these people where they live" (Writing Protocol). Their ideas about the importance of experience is supported in the research (Engebretson, 2009) as one possibly effective way to help students better understand issues of poverty.

When students are beginning to reach out to lower socio-economic individuals, most teachers observe a lack of knowledge on the students' part. Ben observes that when

he takes his students to downtown shelters and asks the students to interact with the poor and homeless, that some kids "have no skills" (Interview).

It's like saying take this hockey puck and score a goal. The student says, "I don't know how to skate. I don't know how to talk to someone who is poor and is missing their teeth. So you can see some kids get out from behind the desk and sit and talk and that person reaches and holds their hand, and the students let them hold their hand. Other kids, they'll stay in groups, they'll stay back; they just don't know what to do with poor people (Ben, Interview).

Similar to Ben, Cheryl expresses her students' lack of experience in these types of service situations. Her students went to a homeless mission downtown and were asked to eat lunch in the cafeteria with the people who were staying there.

I would say that it was a stretch for most of the kids, that this was kind of a new experience for them. We have worked with some more urban schools that have children in poverty and we actually got to read with some of the children. That's a favorite for the high school kids…We have also served at the Baptist Home for children and have cleaned apartments and just seeing the places the children live was an eye-opener that some of these children are not only different than they are, but they have very dire situations and they're in this group home alone. So I think it helps them put a face on some of the circumstances the poor are in and it helps them have compassion for others (Cheryl, Interview).

Teachers recognize how important it is for students to be given opportunities to get to know people from different backgrounds than themselves. Mark states clearly, "I think that because of the socio-economics of our student body, that most live in middle

class areas of town, that true poverty issues are hidden a little more…I think it's hard for students to get at a context or to relate that to how others are living…There's almost this disconnect of how they live and what is the Christian responsibility" (Interview). One way Mark's school tries to offer students experience as a homeless person is through an activity sponsored by a local downtown shelter. He says the school tries to encourage students to attend the optional activity because it provides "exposure that our kids need to see what it's like to be homeless." They discover that "not everyone who's here deserves being here" (Mark, Focus Group).

As Christians, students are taught at church and at school that service to the poor is important in their spiritual life, but as Mark and others point out, their own lives are so different that they need direction in how to carry out that mission. Mary believes that "coming up with options and new ways and different things to do and ways to get kids involved in service and in understanding the social justice issues" is not only her job, but her passion (Interview). At her school they hold Service Saturdays, and students disperse to places like Catholic Charities or nursing homes and provide whatever services are needed. Clearly, schools are trying to get students out of their comfort zones and at least be exposed to different people.

Mary, Ben, and Mei express the possible transformative effects that service can have on students. In fact, Mary states that "transformational education…must be experiential" (Writing Protocol). Mei has observed that students who "haven't interacted first hand," typically express more stereotypes "about people being lazy and not working hard." Mei sees fear at the root of the problem and that "the best way I've ever seen to address stereotypes is to go meet people" (Mei, Interview).

For example, we have the opportunity to go with the kids and make some PBJ sandwiches and take them to homeless on the beach and interact with them. When students are actually in the moment of service, their stereotypes really aren't being affirmed. I think those are really good moments, positive moments when they are having their stereotypes broken. I think they are always surprised at how appreciative and friendly the people are when they give out their PBJ sandwiches (Mei, Interview).

Ben observes that, to be really effective, students need to be "worn down" so they can feel "what it was like to have to work so hard, to take the public buses, and to stand out in the heat waiting for food." These experiences are much more effective as he jokes that when graduates come back they tell him, "I still remember that shelter experience. That taught me. I don't really remember any of your lectures" (Ben, Focus Group). Ben also commented that when students visit places and meet with people, "They can now see that the poor are not a problem; they are a person" (Writing Protocol). Another example of how experience has been effective relates to Ben's "walk in somebody's shoes" class project. Students who chose to walk in a poor person's shoes and try to live off the government food stamp program often observe that it's not enough. Ben overheard a conversation between two students where one student overhears another one begin to criticize the welfare system, and his student says, "I've tried living off it a week [and it's impossible]" (Interview). So having the opportunity to have experiences can be effective in dispelling stereotypes and judgment, both in and out of class.

Overall, teachers have many strategies for combating stereotypes, broadening their students' perspectives, and offering them opportunities to engage with and learn from the poor. While some teachers develop more purposeful curricular activities and

lessons to address issues of poverty, all of them do encounter occasional opportunities to address specific student attitudes and stereotypes, whether during class discussions or service projects. Although a few specific encounters with student attitudes have already been mentioned, the last section of the chapter will be dedicated to analyzing student attitudes further as they react to teachers' specific lessons, discussion topics, and service opportunities.

Students' Reactions and Responses

My advisory girls walk into the shelter for abused women and children. We are here for a service project, and while everyone is excited to miss a day of school, they cautiously enter the building, unsure of their mission there. We are instructed by the volunteer coordinator that we are needed to give common areas a deep cleaning. Despite the fact most of these girls have little experience with cleaning, I give some instruction and they enthusiastically get to work. Soon the coordinator comes back in and asks if a couple of the girls will babysit a toddler while his mother goes out for a job interview. Two volunteer and pretty soon the entire group is surrounding the sweet little girl and giving her attention. Then another student finds some information on abuse in America and begins reading. She shares with her peers and we have a thoughtful discussion on the topic. They had no idea the extent of the problem and when we left the shelter that day, I believe each one was a little bit more compassionate and understanding of a set of circumstances they had never even thought about before.

Whenever students encounter new ideas that do not match up with their experiences, their responses cannot be predicted. While participants shared their stories and student responses to both purposeful curricular activities and required community

service, student reactions to each fall under typical categories: negative, positive, neutral, and, in some cases, transformational attitudes.

Anytime a teacher has required service, some students are not going to be cooperative. Both Mitchell and Mark have witnessed negative attitudes during community service activities. Mitchell recalls that during class project day, students ask questions like "What are we doing this for?" and "Why are we doing this?" He also observed that those types of service projects are often not involving students working with the poor themselves, but perhaps stocking shelves in a food pantry or mowing an elderly lady's home or cleaning a shelter when the people are not present (Interview). Similar to Mary's students who got upset during their discussion on Affirmative Action, Coach Byrd observes that those students who view the world as black and white "get irritated and angry at times" when issues about poverty emerge in class discussion.

When kids are going at it, there was one point where a football player and a girl, again, a quiet girl, they were giving their opinions back and forth. And the football player undercut her a little bit. And I corrected him and said, "If we are going to have conversations like this, you can't do that. You have to at least hear her argument. You don't have to agree, but you aren't going to lash out" (Coach Byrd, Interview).

Although these students may eventually be reached, initially all three teachers experienced negative emotions from them—whether anger or apathy—towards subjects relating to the poor. Hopefully, through more experiential learning and exposure to people other than themselves, these students' stereotypes will eventually be dispelled.

For example, Mark has encountered "not bad attitudes" when serving with students but responses that are more neutral and "maybe standoffish in the sense of I

don't know how to interact with these people. It's not an 'I'm better than you' attitude,' but more of 'I just-don't-know-how-to-interact attitude'" (Interview). Another response that Mark has encountered that would be difficult to categorize as either positive or negative is what Mark describes as "a checklist mentality." Students serve briefly in some capacity and feel good about it. "We did what Christians are supposed to be doing—doing nice things" (Interview). In this case, the response is more out of some duty that can be checked off a list of things to do and not necessarily positive or negative.

Several teachers cited very positive student attitudes, especially in response to community service projects. At Cheryl's school, students are required to participate in a school-wide community service day. She talks about how her students "have very good hearts and are willing to serve" (Interview). She also comments, "I don't sense anyone feeling they are better than anyone else or an unwillingness to serve. They understand that Christ has asked us to serve others and that is a way to show leadership. And that Christ loves those people as much as he loves us" (Interview).

In the same way that Coach Byrd encountered angry responses from students during his discussions involving poverty issues, other students in those conversations were "curious" and wanted to find answers. Coach Byrd describes them as kids "that are kind of off center, out of the spotlight, kids daring enough to ask questions" and who will "find a greater depth to their Christianity" as they explore tough topics (Interview). Several of the teachers related students' positive responses to their spiritual maturity. Mitchell discusses the positive attitudes of students who have chosen to serve the community by joining "Servant Group," a group specifically designed to serve the poor.

I think most of the kids that are in Servant Group are believers—they know what they've gotten themselves into. One time we had a little block party on the campus of the camp, and people came and we gave them shave ice and popcorn and played games. [The students] come with a good kindness. If you go to Servant Group Camp with them, sure it's hot outside, it's dirty, it's dusty because it's summer, but there's a real kindness students show to the kids and parents [whom they are serving]. They are very welcoming to them in a nice way. It's really nice to see kids that way (Mitchell, Interview).

Mitchell also comments on positive responses from students when it comes to donating money and items for different charities. Some students not only respond with kindness and generosity, but are so touched by their experiences that they respond in a transformative way. Mei relates a story about a student who graduated from high school and wrote Mei a note several years later explaining that the student had earned a Master's degree in social work. The student attributed part of her decision to "those days we did tutoring" in the government housing complex (Interview). Mark recalls a specific student whose class project had involved going to a nursing home. She enjoyed the experience so much that she continued to volunteer at that nursing home throughout high school, and that after graduation, that experience "influenced her pursuit of education—what she's going to do in college." As Mark summarizes, "The experience changed her mindset." He admits that not everyone will respond in this way, but that teachers need to "dangle those opportunities" for "those who are going to get it" (Interview).

Teachers encounter a variety of student responses to discussions, lessons, and service concerning the poor. It seems like those students who are forced to take part in service projects do not have the same responses as those who willingly volunteer. Also,

teachers connect spiritual maturity to positive attitudes among students, and they all recognize that students who do interact one-on-one with people in poverty may eventually be able to dispel some stereotypes and ultimately develop a deeper compassion, and perhaps even cultivate a life-changing direction towards a career in social work. Interestingly, none of my participants mentioned any negative parent responses to their lessons concerning the poor even though several participants cited parental influence on students' stereotypical attitudes. Both Ben and Mark acknowledged in their interviews that some of their lessons that challenge students' ideas about consumerism and materialism probably contradict ideas students hear from their parents, but neither expressed concern that their positions at the school would be at risk for taking a stance, which they both feel is Biblically supported.

Overall, each participant acknowledges that working with middle and upper class students in a Christian environment certainly has its challenges when it comes to issues surrounding poverty. Although many participants frame the problem in terms of social, cultural, and individual conditions, Mei highlights a spiritual one as well. She writes, "A pursuit of God will result in disturbing our ways because he is love and his ways are merciful. The way to God will take the form of depending on him, and giving up our ways. And the same grace that saved me must be shown others. As a Christian educator, this means my life must show his love and point students to depend on Jesus. It means that I am about building character as well as intellect, so that students' abilities are used to benefit others and not just themselves" (Writing Protocol).

Personal Connections to Poverty

Most of the teachers shared at least one early experience that they remembered concerning their interaction with the poor. After considering the stories they chose and listening to their classroom narratives as well, it became evident that those experiences helped shape their perspectives, their desired goals for students, and even the language they used throughout their interviews.

Mitchell shared very little about early memories of poverty. He grew up in the country and stated that nobody was that wealthy. He finally thought of one classmate that was made fun of at school because she smelled and was never clean. He had no personal connection to her, however, and did not seem impacted by her plight. As a Bible teacher, Mitchell would have opportunities to discuss the Bible, but he allows his students to guide discussions and makes no purposeful decision to bring up issues about the poor in class. His limited childhood exposure to poverty could explain his limited curricular activities.

Conversely, Mark had radical experiences with the poor growing up. His father was a police officer who often patrolled the poor side of a mid-sized city. When he saw needs from the people living there, he involved his family.

I remember one time we went and just helped upkeep a widow's yard. I was probably 8 or 9 years old at the time. And we would also take kids from the children's home to church. We'd go out there and spend some time playing basketball with the kids. We would have them over for the holidays like Thanksgiving or Christmas. We'd have a meal for them. So that was really good for me to see the needs of kids who didn't have a mom or dad or in a shelter in difficult situation (Interview).

Currently, Mark continues that tradition by purposefully buying a home in a rather poor area of town in order to establish relationships with the people there. Also, he incorporates specific readings and designs purposeful lessons in order to help students question their traditional, typical views of Christians and "charity work." His own father modeled a non-traditional Christian approach that emphasizes real relationships with people, so Mark is not only critical of short-term mission work, but critical of typical, materialistic, societal views that many Christians buy into.

Mei, herself, grew up just above the poverty line. She was a bus rider as a child and she remembers seeing a well-dressed man who used to wear a tuxedo and carry an instrument case, and at one point thought he might have been a symphony player, until she continued to see him in the same outfit.

And I remember when my mom would talk to me like when we would go to the pool—the public pool, and we'd see that man, she would always kind of strategize out loud. "And if we ever need to, we are going to come here and shower." And she would talk about ways we could deal with being homeless or not having money (Interview).

Mei's experiences were much more personal than some of the participants in that she faced at least the possibilities of being poor and homeless. It is no surprise that many of Mei's curriculum units contain objectives that connect with helping students understand America's economic system, the injustices that arise, and the possible solutions to the problems.

Coach Byrd recalls a basketball camp on a Lakota-Sioux reservation that he went to for several years in a row. He was a young adult at the time and had never seen that

level of poverty before. He remembered children walking over a mile to the camp with no parental supervision.

We encountered a lot of kids. You could tell their clothes were worn several days in a row. Their hair was matted. We had been warned about lice. But when they showed up, they were so needy for love and attention and just to be held. You'd be talking to one child and another child would climb on your back and just hold on to you. There was one small child that just wanted to be held, so one of our high school helpers held him for well over an hour and he didn't move, like a baby, but he was five or six years old. The first girl I met was Umpo—which means sunrise in the Lakota-Sioux language, and she was so sweet and loving and wanted to have conversation and to me that showed that the kids may not have a whole lot but they have a big heart. They have dreams and a lot of aspirations and they want to connect with people (Interview).

Throughout his interview as Coach Byrd discussed different facets of poverty, one theme that continually emerged was the isolation associated with poverty in America, and he compared that to the sense of community practiced by early Christians in the church. They were not wealthy, but they all shared and experienced communal living. When he discusses poverty in class, he tries to complicate the issue for students. He also criticizes short term missions, which do not promote lasting relationships, and he focuses on how the wealthy classes often take advantage of the poor, uneducated ones, which leads to the isolation of the lower class.

Marge shared a mission trip to Mexico that she took years ago and believes that the poverty she saw there far exceeds any she has witnessed in America.

The idea that they are living literally meal-to-meal or day-to-day—abject hunger was a big part of it, and the lack of basic necessities whether it be food or clothing or shelter across the board in large, massive numbers. I mean we have homeless here in the U.S. and I know that's a very large number but to see large communities of people living without basic necessities is probably something I found somewhat shocking for the first time (Interview).

Although she doesn't design many lessons specifically to address issues of poverty, the ones she shared specifically address poverty in terms of world statistics and experiences. Throughout her interview she commented that poverty in other places was much more devastating and she wants her students to understand how extensive poverty is throughout the world.

Ben's personal experience with poverty involved doing some volunteer work after college on the west coast of Alaska in an Eskimo village.

That was the first place I experienced poverty. There was no indoor plumbing, at times no electricity, obviously no water, and subsistence-type of living, and yet the people who were there just changed my perspective, and I ended up staying in the village for five years instead of going back to school to earn my business degree. Poverty was not associated by those people as oppressive. Poverty was more simple. We chose to live close to the land. We share what we have. We go through hard times; we don't complain about it. When we have had good times, when the hunt is good, we share what we had (Interview).

Ben's theme of simplicity is evident in his desire for students to see past the American Dream and all of its materialism and consumerism. He offers them an

alternative to that kind of lifestyle by sharing the stories of others who have lived content lives in very simplistic conditions. He has seen that kind of living first-hand and truly believes it to be the more rewarding.

Document Analysis

While these Christian educators are clearly interested in broadening their students' minds about the poor, most seem to be acting in isolation rather than under the umbrella of an institutional framework, with one exception. Only the Catholic school requires an entire course in social justice, and both teachers I interviewed continually emphasized a larger program in place through both the service learning and the theology curriculum, which work together to help students wrestle with and develop awareness of a Biblical perspective of poverty.

It seems clear that any curriculum unit or lessons focused on poverty in the non-Catholic schools is due solely to the individual teacher's desire to communicate such ideas to his or her students. The mission statement of each school reflect its own areas of emphasis, and only the Catholic school explicitly states that its mission is for its graduates to "have hearts and minds committed to the service of others, especially the poor" (Catholic School website). And while in the description of the school it states that it provides a "college-preparatory program," its mission to help students live a "purposeful life" remains the emphasis in the single mission statement. It is the only school that singles out a specific Biblical principle at all, and the other three schools make no mention of the poor.

The Baptist school's mission statement is very general, but its philosophy is very different from the others in its focus. It is clearly a mission-oriented school that wants to

spread “the gospel of Jesus Christ beginning with our students and extending to their families, communities, state, nation, and world.” Unlike the other three schools whose students mainly attend Christian churches, with a few exceptions, the Baptist school’s purpose is to bring non-Christians to their program. The school, in turn, hopes these students with convert to Christianity and “take Christ’s message of faith, hope, and love to the entire world” (Baptist website). The philosophy of the school clearly reflects its main purpose.

Interestingly, the Catholic and Baptist schools, both of whose mission or philosophy statements have a broader focus on the outside world, were the schools in which two of my participants highly integrated social justice lessons in their curriculum.

The larger ecumenical Christian school emphasizes a “partnership with involved parents” and “an accredited college preparatory education that is founded on Biblical principles” but does not state explicitly what any of those principles are. The smaller ecumenical school also focuses on a “partnership with parents” and the desire to develop students’ “hearts and minds…to the glory of Jesus Christ.” When the reader peruses the entire school philosophy that follows the mission statement of both ecumenical schools, which are three or four paragraphs, they boast programs “centered in Christ” (Small school) with “the Bible as its foundation and standard of truth” (Larger one), but do not contain any specific truths that are emphasized in their program. Also, both of these schools’ philosophies focus on nurturing the individual, but do not discuss a more outward perspective of the individual’s contributions to his own current or future communities. While two of the teachers from these schools incorporate short class

periods or brief discussions to social justice topics, no strong foundational curriculum seems to be in place at either one.

Conclusion

Overall, Christian educators are interested in issues concerning the poor. Their own personal experiences have influenced the way they plan lessons and, at times, entire units around structural, individual, and communal aspects of poverty. They see the importance of broadening their students' view of the poor and encourage face-to-face interaction with people in order to help dispel stereotypes. They challenge their students to question accepted norms in society and even in their own families in hopes that students will develop a greater compassion for, and in some cases a solidarity with, the poor.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Parents at our school lavish their children with stuff. Seniors are especially lucky. They get cake, cookies, hot chocolate, and smoothies delivered to school at least once a month. Recently the football moms gave their sons a large basket full of goodies. My friend says her son's basket sits on the kitchen counter barely touched. They already have all they could possibly need. Not only are goodies heaped on our students but also a kind of parent insulation "protects" them from any foreign idea that might encroach on their comfortable, white-privileged lives. The result of such an upbringing includes fear of anything different, an inability to interact with people different from them, and the absence of gratitude for what they do have. In fact, I wonder if parents ever made their child sit down and write someone a thank-you note. My guess is mom did it for them. At our school, moms constantly call or text their children throughout the day, drive to school to deliver any "needed" items, such as homework, club fees, or KFC, and show up in their short tennis skirts ready to fill out their child's college application.

Parents call their kids out of school for somewhat privileged reasons, too: haircuts, tailor visits, special lunch dates, the opening of the local, trendy snow-cone

Begin *shack, sleeping in after a late-night concert, one–week cruises, etc. Parents have this ideal experience they want their children to have in high school, but what about their child's spiritual life? And between all this extravagant living, who's got time to think about the poor? Sure, they'll give $20.00 for the fund-raiser; they'll give $100.00 if their kids can have a free dress day, but what about giving time and energy to help others?*

My own middle-class upbringing was so different from theirs, and I wonder how I have lasted six years at my current school. Thankfully, an older colleague who has a lot of experience teaching private school students said to me, "Just think of the possibilities if you can win the hearts of these students with the resources and power that's available to them. They have the means to change their world." And then I ask myself, where's your faith? God can do anything. (Researcher Journal).

The purpose of this study was to explore Christian school teachers' understanding of Biblical principles about poverty and how they connect their beliefs to their classroom practices. I have discovered through my research that Biblical ideas about the poor and social justice play an important role in many teachers' views of poverty and in their ultimate desires for their students in the breaking down of stereotypes, the development of compassion, and the hope of a less materialistic lifestyle.

As I reviewed and analyzed my findings in Chapter 4, I implemented steps one and two of Dantley's critical spirituality framework, which involves critically reflecting and examining current practices of schools. I discovered that the underlying existence of privilege has a lot to do with existing stereotypes and misconceptions about the poor as well as a Christian's role in poverty. Philpott and Dagenais (2011) noted that new teachers who actively teach about social justice can encounter a lack of support in their

schools and eventually give up their practices altogether. In their study, they concluded that most schools left social justice issues up to individual teachers to address if desired. While their study focused on the disparity between the "the widely held views of social justice in academia and the views of social justice that circulate broadly in schools," their conclusion that "clearer understandings about the purposes and implications of social responsibility and social justice education" are needed, as well as documented for all stakeholders to understand, applies to my research as well (p. 96-7).

Some of my study results confirm that comfort and privilege among Christian school students are challenging obstacles teachers face. Harper (1969) points out that often Christian education exists for "nurture" and "the private life of persons" (p. 395), ideas that are certainly evident in my previous analysis of school mission statements. He urges Christian educators to create programs with a "significant urgency" as to the need for social justice in our world as well as an outward focus to the larger community (p. 398). Finally, he suggests that with action must come reflection in order to continually examine the program's work for effectiveness.

Harper (1969) explains the challenges of Christian education and the implementation of social justice education because "the struggle for social justice involves risk-taking, conflict, the confrontation of powers, the use of coercion, and the possibility of violence" (p. 391). He continues to point out that the Protestant church "has overstressed the gospel of personal purity and individual self-fulfillment at the expense of social solidarity and improvement of the whole society" and has "grown economically comfortable and socially privileged" (p. 392).

Educators who do begin to implement stronger curricular practices that examine privilege and power in our society need to consider the costs of teaching these concepts to students who are benefitting from that privilege and power. Turpin (2008) finds that teachers will encounter feelings of "guilt, anger, and despair as students discover the inadequacy of their self-understandings…and theological and faith formation shaped by dominant narratives that ignore social realities of oppression" (p. 141). Furthermore, Philpott and Dagenais (2011) found in their study that "fears of offending parents or influencing the beliefs of their students" were present in many of their participants (p. 94), and although none of my participants expressed such fears explicitly, one stated informally to me that he always allowed students to share their own opinions, which has apparently kept parent complaints at bay. Turbin (2008) agrees that "student agency and capacity for critique must be honored" during difficult discussions on privilege and oppression "lest dialogue…become reduced to attempts at counter-indoctrination" (p. 142).

Other participants, most of whom have had many years of experience, seemed to be confident in their facts, statistics, and personal experiences, which would be difficult for parents to dispute. While parents at our school regularly complain when their child receives a lower grade than expected or when their child reads a work of literature that contains language they deem inappropriate, because the message of the Bible is so strong with regards to poverty and social justice, even if a parent was unhappy with a teacher's lesson, he would have difficulties getting the teacher in trouble with the administration.

According to Brady (2006), an "education for peace and justice" is essential in Christian programs, and in order to "live justly," a person must have compassion for the

poor, work together among a community of like-minded people, and become an advocate for the poor, building relationships that lead to the empowerment of those living in poverty (p. 8). Her ideas are foundational for a Christian program that works towards actively promoting social justice. All the participants in this study agree that developing compassion for the poor is necessary for any progress to be made in breaking down their students' existing stereotypes and misconceptions about people in poverty. Furthermore, some teachers provide opportunities for students to work side-by-side with people suffering from poverty in order to build relationships with the poor and broaden the worldviews of their students. And several participants not only acknowledge the importance of community in the fight for social justice, but have designed activities and lessons that promote the idea of connectedness as essential to work among the poor, evidence of Dantley's third stage involving pedagogical practices that promote democratic culture. Overall, foundational ideas in the promotion of social justice are well established among the participants.

A closer look at my findings, as I implement Dantley's (2005) critical spirituality framework in order to consider current practices, reveals a few areas that merit further discussion: the role of short-term missions and charity work, existing negativity towards social justice from Christians, the role of a white-privileged system in private Christian school communities, and the reliance on God and his power in the possible spiritual development of students.

Short Term Missions

Several participants who expressed concern over short term mission trips are supported in the current research. Corbett and Fikkert (2009) discuss the harm that short-

term missions can do in other parts of the world. They discuss the importance of determining whether people living in poverty need some kind of immediate relief from disastrous conditions, rehabilitation which should involve people in their own recovery efforts, or development which involves a "life-long process" (p. 168). Unfortunately, most church groups seek to bring some sort of immediate relief to a group of people (i.e. medical supplies, clothing, food), instead of working toward the development of relationships that will contribute more to a permanent solution to the problem. These sentiments are echoed by Mark who calls it dropping "bombs of resources" and then leaving without helping the people understand how to use their resources (Interview). And Mei emphasized the need for "sustainable programs" that help people feel "connected" to a community. While Christian groups usually have wonderful motives for traveling abroad in hopes of helping people, they view poverty as a "deficit" (Corbett & Fikkert, 2009, p. 166), and therefore, come across as paternalistic rather than relational.

Harris (2014) explains these contrasting attitudes of social justice in terms of social contexts, using the grid and group approach. Depending on how a group views the role of power as either hierarchical or egalitarian and how a group views the importance of the individual in its community will guide the group's view of social justice. Since Americans typically embrace individualism above all else, they see "resources as raw materials to be competed for in an open system" (p. 11). Since Christians also encounter Biblical views that embrace an egalitarian view of society, they do feel compelled to pass on resources to those who lack them. The results of my study reveal the pull between American and Biblical values and the contrast of American and Western European countries' values to that of Central and South American ones. Groups that are considering

short-term missions abroad need to have an understanding of how their own societal beliefs will influence and may even hurt the cause they seek to help.

Existing Negativity Towards Social Justice by Christians

Other reasons exist for the lack of widespread teachings of social justice in Christian schools today. One reason Christians focus on short-term missions and service projects is because they feel the alleviation of immediate suffering through the provision of needs—whether it be food, clothes, or medicine—is sufficient. However, by not addressing the political aspects of structural oppression, the fight to meet people's needs continues to be an uphill battle. Sider, Olson, and Unruh (2002) point out that "one of the crucial ways we love our neighbor is to promote the structural arrangements that nurture the goodness and wholeness of social life intended by the Creator" (p. 93). And while a few minorities might join the Glenn Beck attitude that "caring for the poor was good," but anything more than helping individuals is on the "slippery slope" to socialism, "forced redistribution" and eventually "Marxism" (Wallis, 2010, par. 6), most would be willing to admit a Christian's responsibility involves more than simply giving to charity. Wallis (2010) argues that "private charity wasn't enough to end the slave trade in Great Britain, end legal racial segregation in America, or end apartheid in South Africa," all of which involved "vital movements of faith which understood the connection between personal compassion and social justice" (par. 11).

Another argument is that Jesus' role was not that of political reformer against the Roman Empire, so his own followers should restrict their own involvement in the political and social movements. Sider, Olson, and Unruh (2002) argue that this point of view "misunderstand[s] Jesus' unique calling and situation (p. 95) and that in America

people have open access to political involvement, which should be used as a tool to achieve justice. Just as Jesus worked within the confines of the world in which he lived, Christians need to take advantage of any tool available in order to promote God's compassion and justice in the world.

Moreover, Christians often focus on personal sin, which involves individual moral choices. But that "limit[s] the scope of the Transformation God desires" (Sider, Olson, & Unruh, 2002, p. 94)—sin also exists on a social and structural level, which must be addressed as much as on an individual one. The Bible consistently states that God wants his people to be concerned about and work toward a politically and economically just society. Sider, Olson, and Unruh (2002) further argue that one cannot remain neutral about political issues because to do nothing supports the status quo. To promote justice is to live in obedience to God—A Christian's most important act of love.

White-Privilege

There exists another reason why Christians may ignore their calling to advocate for the poor: ignorance. Johnson (2006) describes our world as one that "encourage[s] people to use difference to include or exclude, reward or punish, credit or discredit, elevate or oppress, value or devalue, leave alone or harass" (p. 16). Privilege is a result of being a member of the dominant group and the majority of students in the private, Christian schools of my participants are from privilege, as evidenced by many participant descriptions of a mostly white student body. Johnson also states, "Privilege grants the cultural authority to make judgments about others and to have those judgments stick. It allows people to define reality and to have prevailing definitions of reality fit their experience" (p. 33). The results of my study reveal these attitudes as students make

judgments about people in poverty, blaming their condition mainly on individual choices and stereotyping certain races in the process, views passed on from their parents. Mei pointed out that this kind of privileged system directly opposes Biblical teachings about not favoring certain people over others, and she cited Jesus' warning to his followers not to treat the wealthy better than anyone else. She says that "the biggest thing I think of in the Bible relating to poverty is also related to justice" (Interview).

Johnson (2006) points out that privilege, in America, is directly related to race and capitalism, two points that came up during several interviews. Both Mary and Mei encountered negative attitudes from their students who view Affirmative Action as unfair and unnecessary. These students from privileged groups feel "culturally authorized to interpret other people's experience for them… [and] to impose their own views of reality" (Johnson, 2006, p. 109). In order for more effective transformation to take place in the Christian mission to end poverty, teachers will need to consider having more discussions centered on privilege and the system that is at work in the world.

Interestingly, two participants, Marge and Mei, brought up capitalism in their interviews, both connecting it to a positive approach to economics when carried out properly. Mei believes that the reason capitalism is failing is that people operating in it are choosing to act immorally and take advantage of the system in place. Marge acknowledges that in order for capitalism to work, a large portion of the population will live at lower economic levels, but she points out that extreme poverty is actually a drain on the system. In contrast, Johnson (2006) sees capitalism as a major influence in the creation of privilege for some, and, therefore, oppression of others. He believes that moral considerations do not even factor into the equation because "profit is profit" and

since the profit comes from the difference between the cost of labor and the price of the goods, “the cheaper the labor, the more money left over for [the ones in power]” (p. 43). As a result, the system produces large gaps in wealth and power among the people in a capitalistic society.

Donnelly, et al. (2005) points out that while many people are taught about racism, “white privilege remains hidden in our society” (p. 8) because acknowledging it would mean a condemnation of our current system. The main challenge in teaching about white privilege is the fact that most whites have no idea about the “structural advantage” they profit from (p. 8). It may be a concept that most Christian teachers have not been exposed to or ever thought about. As a result, until teachers and students are made aware of the system, it will be difficult to make headway on the fight against poverty and oppression.

For Christians, the inability to understand the system in attempts to alleviate the injustice may have far reaching spiritual consequences. Sider (2005) states firmly, “Those who neglect the poor and oppressed are really not God’s people at all” (p. 58). God cannot “tolerate [the] exploitation of the poor and disadvantaged” as evidenced by his destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities mentioned in the Bible who had turned their back on those suffering (p. 59). He equates economic oppression with sin and hopes that Christians “will allow this important Biblical truth to fundamentally reshape our culturally conditioned theology” (p. 63). Chubbuck (2007) acknowledges that while acts of service and volunteerism are “much needed in society,” they “can mask the need for more controversial critical analysis and activism needed to transform unjust structures and institutions” (p. 258). Christians have bought into cultural ideas of success and power, and as a result have been blinded to the greater truths of how the system works

and their responsibilities as children of God. The schools involved in my study clearly encourage their students to get involved in service projects and help people in poverty. If they can also incorporate an element of structural criticism into their curriculum, they may be able to do more to help students understand a Biblical perspective of the poor.

Teachers can emphasize in their classes this structural criticism in small ways such as reminding students that their buying power makes a difference on the path to justice—that they can choose not to buy products made in sweatshops and instead to support the fair-trade market products. Or on a larger scale, teachers can encourage student research about victims of injustice and create assignments, such as writing a letter to a congressperson, that encourages a step toward activism in their own lives. Teachers need to actuate a passion in students for justice by bringing social issues to the forefront and giving students the opportunities to reflect and engage. As Johnson (2006) reminds, "Every oppressive system feeds on silence" (p. 144). Educators can break the silence in little ways and must be prepared to cause some discomfort in students. As "an unavoidable part of any meaningful process," Johnson continues to state that historically social movements begin in such discomfort (p. 145). Although laying the ground work will be uncomfortable and challenging, such pursuits could result in an individual's personal choices or in a greater societal movement.

Reliance on God

Brady (2006) reminds Christian educators that it is God who invites us to "work as partners with [Him] and each other" in order to address the problems of poverty (p. 356). We need to affirm God's power and presence in the world as the one "who mentors us in the ways of peace and justice" (p. 357). Iselin and Meteyard (2010) argue that one

important aspect educators must “embrace” in their curriculum is the “mystery and paradox” of the Christian faith. While the participants of this study did not verbally express ideas about God’s role in the spiritual development of students with respect to poverty issues, the fact that many of them incorporate a variety of lessons in attempts to help students broaden their worldview as well as transform their tightly-held beliefs about poverty does reflect a faith in the goodness of humankind and the possibility for hope and change.

One way that educators should consider in order to help students connect in a more spiritual way after their experiences with poverty would be through self-reflection. Only two recipients, Ben and Mary, mention incorporating a reflective element in their approach. Ben gives his students a chance to reflect after their long day of working in soup kitchens, and then he asks his students to share with the class something significant that they’ve learned. At Mary’s school, students are required to complete a self-reflection each year in which students address questions such as what did you learn about yourself that you like and what did you learn that you don’t like? Bamber (2011) discovered in her study on transformative service learning that “critical reflection alongside immersion in an unfamiliar setting and the development of authentic relationships are identified as key transformative processes” (p. 355).

Several participants shared some very creative approaches to giving their students opportunities to experience a different view of poverty. Algera and Sink (2002) suggest that if teachers finish these lessons early enough to provide students time to reflect on what they have learned and “how it can be applied to their lives,” it could do a lot to promote the spiritual development of students’ inner lives. A reflection time could also

provide opportunities for God to work in their lives through the revelation of spiritual truths in quiet moments.

Research Questions Revisited

For my concluding discussion, I will revisit my two research questions and make some final conclusions. My first question stated, "How do Christian educators create 'pedagogical spaces' in order to address issues of poverty with their students?" This question directly corresponds to Dantley's stage three, Performative Creativity.

I found that teachers challenge their students' tightly-held stereotypes of the poor by offering alternative narratives and viewpoints to examine the existence of poverty that go beyond the idea that the poor are lazy and don't want to work. Teachers lead tough discussions in which the possibility of conflict and even anger exists, and they ask students difficult questions in order to allow them the opportunity to think a bit more critically about the poor. Furthermore, my participants use experiential learning, role playing activities, and simulations in order to help students gain a better understanding and hopefully show compassion along the way as they recognize some of the challenges that the poor face daily. Overall, teachers use nontraditional methods when addressing issues of poverty, although on a few occasions teachers mentioned that direct instruction became necessary when students seemed uncooperative and unwilling to participate. In conclusion, the importance of serving and working with people living in poverty seemed the most significant way teachers create "pedagogical spaces" for students to expand their views of the poor.

And while teachers do not seem to overtly connect the Bible to classroom lessons, Biblical principles clearly play a significant role in what they want their students to learn.

A couple of teachers mentioned that simply pointing out or quoting scriptures to students is an ineffective way to communicate ideas to their students. However, when they discuss what they hope their students will learn, they connect their ideas such as a simpler life and compassion for the poor to Bible stories.

My second question stated, "How do teachers' own beliefs and practices about poverty influence their curriculum and classroom practices?

Teachers' personal experiences with poverty directly influence their curriculum and classroom practices. Those participants who encountered very personal connections with poor people early in life incorporate social justice teachings to a greater extent into their lesson planning than those teachers whose early experiences with poverty are limited. However, all participants either encountered stereotypes in class or worked with students during service projects and recognized the limited view students seem to have about the poor. They all have specific tactics that they employ in order to help students broaden their views.

Another factor that influences how teachers teach about poverty stems from their beliefs about the causes of and solutions to the existence of poverty. Mei, who grew up in a fairly low-income situation believes that poverty results from factors like a corrupted capitalist system, the historical experiences of African Americans, and the individual greed of those in power. As a result, she focuses a significant amount of time to helping her students understand how these factors influence poverty.

Both Ben and Mark believe that people in poverty are victims of a generational cycle that needs to be broken, so they focus discussions and activities around the idea that the problem is greater than simply an individual's choices in life and that outside

influences do make a significant impact. Coach Byrd sees the Industrial Age as an important factor in creating poverty in America, which led to a lack of community and to a further isolation of the poor. His discussions center on the importance of community, and he challenges his students to reconsider how early Christians lived in poor, but highly communal groups.

It's no surprise that teachers' own personal experiences and beliefs about poverty highly influence how and what they teach in their classrooms about poverty. Another factor that bears repeating involves the schools' mission and philosophy statements themselves. Only two participants have curriculum that systematically address poverty issues and both of their schools' mission statements do point to the desired goal that their graduates will influence the greater community in significant ways.

Implications for Educators

My participants' narratives can provide insight for both Christian school and public school educators into some of the challenges teachers face when presenting poverty topics in the classroom as well as offer some creative and thought-provoking ways to help broaden students' understanding of the poor. This study also supports other findings that higher socio-economic students need to have opportunities to interact with people in poverty in order to debunk existing stereotypes (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2009; Turbin, 2008). It is important that all educators understand the responsibility of schools to be avenues of transformation that promote positive social change.

As I witnessed in my focus group meeting, when teachers meet together and discuss the topic of social justice, they can inspire one another and become energized. Ritchie (2012) found that establishing social networks for teachers of social justice

education is essential to sustaining teacher practices by "offering support when teachers feel isolated, giving teachers models and resources for innovative teaching strategies, and providing venues for sharing…one's practice" (p. 127). Teachers are interested in doing more to raise awareness among their students, but they often don't know where to begin because their pre-service teacher education programs may not expose them to theories and methodologies necessary to implement a social justice curriculum into their own courses. Furthermore, if schools themselves don't support such programs, teachers may fear adding something new and possibly unwanted (Ritchie, 2012). Hopefully, this study provides a small glimpse into what some teachers are trying to do to help students understand the injustices of the world in which they live.

Christian educators, with Biblical teachings on their side, should feel empowered and encouraged to implement social justice awareness into many aspects of their curriculum. This study provides several strategies, curricular activities, and service projects that some Christian educators have implemented in order to help establish a more just society. Christian schools need to design and implement a social justice curriculum in their program, especially if a Christian's school's mission is to provide a Biblically-based program, in order to provide a more complete picture of the world God intended. Moreover, a critical look at the data could lead to Dantley's stage 4, Transformative Action, which may require a complete restructuring of schools today.

Implications for Future Research

While the results of this study are based on a small number of participants, the purpose was to understand how Christian educators understand Biblical principles of poverty and connect them to curricular and classroom practices. Future research could

explore reasons why some teachers do not incorporate social justice in their Christian school curriculum. Another idea for research could involve a comparison of public school and Christian school curriculum concerning the teaching about poverty or a comparison between U.S. schools and those in other countries. It would also be interesting to study mission statements from a variety of Christian schools throughout the United States to see how many contain elements that reflect an emphasis on social justice issues. More research needs to be conducted regarding the effectiveness of social justice curricula in schools to determine new strategies in the fight against oppression and injustice. Studies that ask graduates to reflect on their own experiences as high school students could shed light on both the presence and effectiveness of current teaching practices about poverty. Also, research with current students in high schools could add an interesting perspective on the topic. Furthermore, talking with administrators about their own goals for teacher curriculum on poverty could provide a broader scope of understanding. Finally, future research needs to consider the benefits that upper-socio economic students can have as they develop relationships with those living in different conditions. As some of my participants point out, people who are economically poor often experience satisfaction in working hard and living closely within a tight community, and those who set out to "help" the poor can and do benefit from the experience through a mutual process of sharing and learning. Further theories that might be implemented include critical race, feminist, and equity theories.

Final Thoughts

The Bible teaches, “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (Luke 1:3).

Teachers at Christian schools have an extra burden to help their privileged students understand a Christian's responsibility not just to help the poor but to modify their own lifestyles as they work towards transformation of our greater system of privilege and oppression. A couple of Christian teachers in my study have examined their own personal beliefs and curricular practices concerning teaching about poverty in order to develop creative lessons and programs based on Biblical principles that will challenge students to align themselves with the poor as they become more aware of the responsibility that they have as people of privilege to promote justice in their own communities and the world. Clearly, my results reveal the complexity of teaching about poverty in Christian schools. Teachers' own biases, stereotypes, and assumptions complicate their classroom approaches and activities as they wrestle with their students' stereotypes and sometimes judgmental attitudes. Although participants have various approaches to addressing issues of poverty in their curriculum, they do provide at least some opportunities for their students to discuss issues when they arise and have ideas in place to combat negative stereotypes and judgmental attitudes. They recognize that a greater system is at work concerning the situation of the poor and that the Bible sends a clear message to Christians to stand up for justice and make a difference.

My research has greatly impacted my own teaching as well as my direction in the future. I have been encouraged to reflect on biases and assumptions that keep me from truly exploring topics such as white privilege with my own students. My results have urged me to propose a school-wide plan for an integrated social justice curriculum and for more incorporation of social justice topics in teacher professional development and pre-service education programs. I am interested in continuing my research in the area of

teaching privileged students about poverty in hopes of aiding in the transformation of poverty education in the future.

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APPENDIX A: EMAIL TO ADMINISTRATOR

Dear Administrator,

Hi! My name is Cathy Bankston, and I am currently a Ph.D. student at OSU-Tulsa and an English teacher at Metro Christian Academy. I am working on my dissertation proposal at this point and am especially interested in how Christian educators address the topic of poverty with their students. Most of the research available on Christian education concerns the general integration of faith and learning, or biblical integration, but there seems to be a gap in the literature with respect to biblical integration and issues of poverty (other than occasional service projects). Since one of Jesus' central teachings involves a Christian's responsibility to the poor, I would like to dig deeper to uncover how secondary Christian schools address this issue.

I am interested in finding teachers whom I could interview about their curriculum and their personal views concerning Biblical principles and poverty. The interview would probably be 45 minutes to an hour, with a brief follow-up by phone or email. This part of my research would probably not take place until next Fall, but I need to have willing participants before I go in front of the OSU Review Board to get permission.

Would you be able to recommend two teachers from your school who might be good candidates for my research? Would you be willing to grant me approval to speak with them? I appreciate your consideration and response (when convenient). Thank you for taking time to read my email.

Sincerely,

Cathy Bankston

cbankston@metroca.com

918-850-5615

Appendix B--Email to Potential Participants

Dear Christian Educator,

Hi! My name is Cathy Bankston, and I am currently a Ph.D. student at OSU-Tulsa and an English teacher at Metro Christian Academy. I am working on my dissertation proposal at this point and am especially interested in how Christian educators address the topic of poverty with their students. Most of the research available on Christian education concerns the general integration of faith and learning, or Biblical integration, but there seems to be a gap in the literature with respect to Biblical integration and issues of poverty (other than occasional service projects). Since one of Jesus' central teachings involves a Christian's responsibility to the poor, I would like to dig deeper to uncover how secondary Christian schools address this issue.

You have been recommended by your principal as a possible candidate. Would you be interested in participating in my dissertation research? Participation would involve a 45 minute interview at a location of your choice, a brief writing activity, and a 45-minute focus group meeting with other participants. I appreciate your consideration and response either way.

Sincerely,

Cathy Bankston

cbankston@metroca.com

918-850-5615

Appendix C—Interview Questions

1. Describe an early experience you had in which you encountered people living in poverty? Can you think about your first experience of encountering a person in poverty? Please tell me about it.

2. Tell some stories from the Bible that come to mind when you think about the poor and oppressed.

3. Tell about a time when an issue concerning the poor came up unexpectedly in your class.

4. Describe an experience outside of the classroom in which you and your students encountered people in poverty.

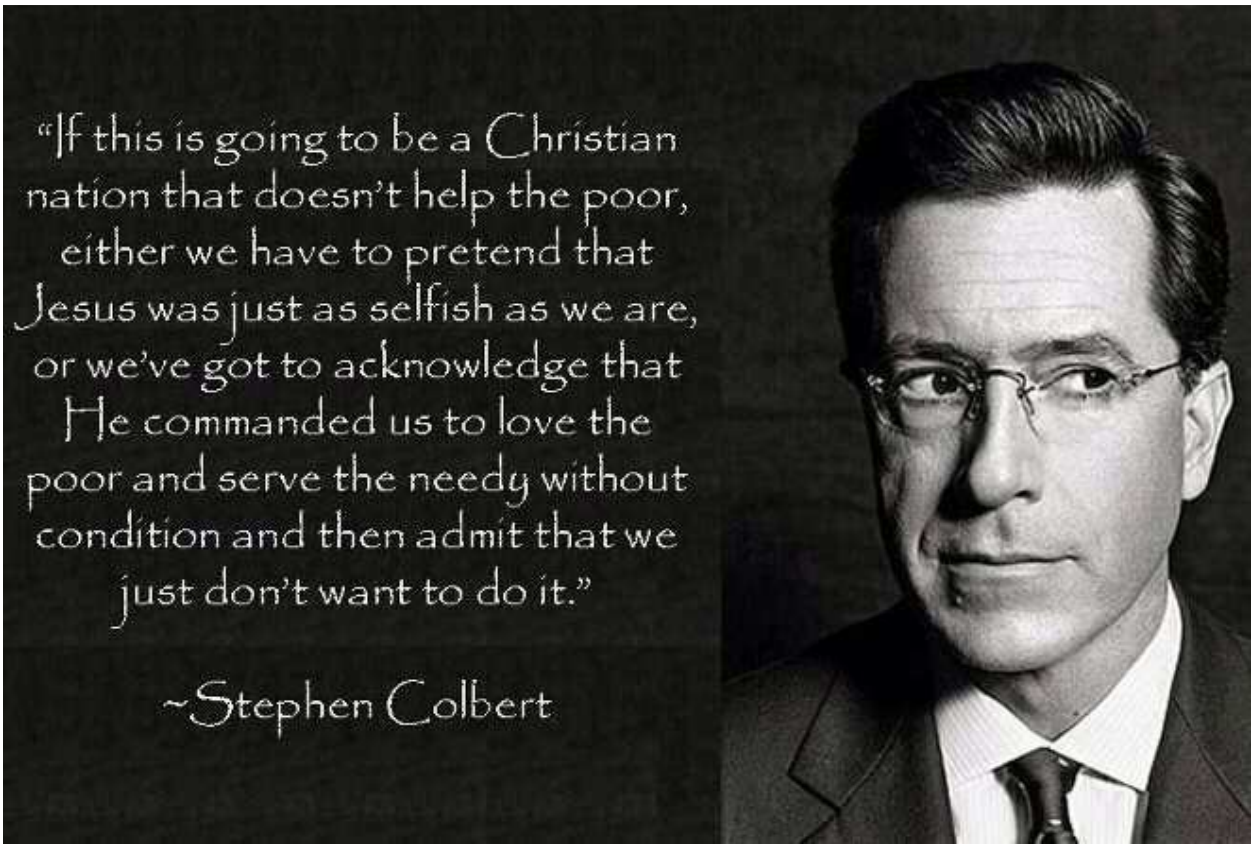
5. Describe some attitudes that you have encountered from your students about the poor and how you addressed them.

6. What do you consider the major reasons for poverty today?

7. For those who live in poverty, what do you think might help them the most?

8. Please describe ways in which you address issues of poverty in your teaching (or in your classroom). How have your students responded?

Appendix D: Focus Group Questions



1. What is your initial reaction to this quote?

2. What motivates you to teach students about poverty issues?

3. Do you feel you dig deeper into American structural issues that create poverty?

4. What are some specific insights or knowledge that you want your students to gain when it comes to poverty in American society?

5. Do you think that poverty in America can be transformed, and what would it take?

Attachment E: Writing Protocol

Please respond to the following prompt:

Gutierrez (1983) states, “To know God is to do justice, is to be in solidarity with the poor person” (p. 52). He continues by arguing that when a person does not take action on the side of the poor, that individual is denying faith in the power of God and his word. Firmly put, Gutierrez states that “there is no authentic worship of God without solidarity with the poor” (p. 51).

As a teacher in a Christian school do you agree/disagree with this quote? Please write about ways in which this quote does/does not relate to your work. Please describe any examples you might have from your own teaching experiences.

Appendix F: Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Thursday, June 27, 2013 IRB Application No ED13124

Proposal Title: Poverty as a Curriculum Topic

Reviewed and Exempt Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 6/26/2014

Principal Investigator:

Catherine Bankston

5332 E 22nd St

Tulsa, OK 74114

Kathryn Castle

235 Willard

Stillwater, OK 74078 The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

'!fi-The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.

2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.

3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@.okstate .edu).

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Shelia Kennison, Chair Institutional Review Board

VITA

Cathy Bankston

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: POVERTY AS A CURRICULUM TOPIC IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Major Field: Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2014.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Educational Leadership at Troy University, Troy, Alabama in 19989.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in English and Education at Tulsa University, Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1991.

Experience:

English Teacher, Metro Christian Academy, 2008-Present
English Teacher, Charles Page High School, 2006-2008
Freshman Composition I and II Instructor, TCC, 2006-2008
English Teacher, Hawaii Baptist Academy, 1993-2005

Publications and Presentations:

McCutcheon, Deborah, Teske, Paul, and Bankston, Catherine (2008). Writing and cognition: Implications of the cognitive architecture for learning to write and writing to learn. In *Handbook of Research on Writing*, 451-470.

Bankston, Catherine. (1999). Building Creative Characters. In *Classroom Notes Plus*.

Bankston, Catherine & Liesa Smith (2012) Reflection and Re-Visioning the Relationship between Theory and Practice, Presenters at OESA Conference, Stillwater, OK.