Reflecting Together on Race, Privilege, and Teaching: Why Bank Street Needs Stronger Commitment to Teacher Education in Social Justice

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Reflecting Together on Race, Privilege, and Teaching:

Why Bank Street Needs Stronger Commitment to Teacher Education in Social Justice

By

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Abstract

This project explores the need for high quality teacher training in social justice education and the current program in early childhood at Bank Street. The study focuses specifically on critical analysis of race and privilege in education and the need for stronger institutional support in the Graduate School. We researched racial inequality in United States public schools, giving specific attention to New York City schools. We also looked into programs, curricula, and approaches that address this inequality. We specifically focused on teacher education and training in social justice and anti-racism. We then examined Bank Street—its history of commitment to social justice and its outlook today. We looked back on our experience, our conversations with colleagues, and course content in the Early Childhood General and Special Education program, and we found that while many courses discussed cultural inclusiveness, there was limited depth and critical analysis. Guided by our research of the teacher education programs that successfully prepare teachers for racial awareness and social justice, we made several proposals to be integrated into the fabric of the Graduate School of Education.
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Introduction

*We cannot allow our fear of anger to deflect us or seduce us into settling for anything less than the hard work of excavating honesty.*

*Audre Lorde (1984)*
What I remember from our conversation is that I came in having read the article. I had read it, and it bothered me. I sort of felt uncomfortable reading parts of it. These micro-aggressions seemed kind of... overly sensitive. And unfair to people that are just trying to get to know you, to show respect, to learn more. Can’t I be curious where people are from? I mean, I was clearly committing micro-aggressions all the time, certainly in my head ALL the time. I wanted to challenge it. It was uncomfortable.

Right so I hadn’t read the article. But we started talking about it in class. Micro-aggressions weren’t a new idea for me. It’s something I’ve read a lot about and it’s something I think about too. But you’re right. They’re tricky. I wouldn’t notice myself doing it if I wasn’t specifically thinking about it. The conversation was exciting for me. Particularly because we had been discussing something similar in Developmental Systems earlier. I don’t remember what... but this felt like a common theme.

I can’t remember the theme of the conversations either, or why we were talking about micro-aggressions, and we definitely didn’t stay with the topic for very long. It was introduced by the teacher, or we were asked to take the article out, and it was a full-group discussion. I think... It very quickly became more heated, or passionate, or it felt like people really cared to talk about it. I didn’t want to say anything because I knew I hadn’t thought about it enough. The question came up, “Could a black person be racist?”

Right! I really felt (and continue to feel) like a black person cannot be racist. Anyone can have prejudice, anyone can discriminate or have biases, but racism is social structure that is built on the premise of white supremacy. White people may have difficulties in their lives, they might be subject to discrimination, but white people benefit from institutionalized racism— they just do.

I’m still unsure. I’m still unsure about most of these conversations. I don’t really know how to write about it the right way, or talk about it. Do I capitalize ‘black’? Do I say that word or another word? I’m afraid of offending by doing something wrong. I know I do. My dad thinks the definition of racist shouldn’t be about institutions or systems. He thinks racism can run between any two people of different races. My roommate laughs at me for thinking about this. She thinks I’m in a ‘phase.’

So much to say always! I have those questions too. And I probably would have people in my life questioning my reasoning for caring so much if I hadn’t been thinking and talking about these issues (loudly) for a very long time. And I think often what it comes down to
is practice. I get better about pointing out the specifics of racism and micro-aggressions, and then I lose steam and my language gets confused. I try and read and talk and read and talk and read and talk. Which upset me so much about that Practicum conversation. Just when people were really struggling with difficult ideas, it was time to move on. How am I going to get to the place where I can consistently work out my thoughts/feelings/ideas? In a way that is honest? In a way that is rational? I want to listen to others and talk to others without becoming overwhelmed and emotional. Where is the practice piece?

The conversation was cut off. You’re right. It was frustrating. It didn’t make sense in terms of learning – shouldn’t we stay with something that is clearly important to us? I don’t think I would have chimed in during the conversation, but it would have been meaningful. I was surprised at how assertive you were. Though I was confused about how you defined racism, and I didn’t necessarily agree, you seemed like you knew something I didn’t. You also were confident enough to disagree with a black man in the class. Wouldn’t he know better than you?

It’s so interesting because I wouldn’t describe my feelings and understandings about race as confidence. It’s definitely something I am passionate about, and that particular point of contest (can black people be racist?) is a question I have debated with friends in the past, but I do feel like I still have so much to learn. I want to express myself in a way that clearly and completely shares my complex ideas and understandings. It’s frustrating when I can’t fully and successfully do that. What an important skill as a teacher.

So important, but also important to keep questioning and not fully know, but be aware that you don’t know. Which is kind of where we were, right? Sitting there, on the edge of learning more, confused as to why we were moving on to a new topic, with a lot to say, a lot to ask, a lot to feel... Thank god we were together, so we could continue talking. That’s how this all started. From annoyance! and curiosity, and a lot of feeling. These are things we need to talk about, we want to talk about, and we hadn’t been given the space to talk about. So we are making the space, in a way, trying to, and thinking how this could happen for everyone.

Yes! What are the lessons we wish we had learned? What was missing for us? How could it be better taught for others? Psyched to continue to jump into these issues with you—to build a mutual understanding and to imagine a better way to finish an exciting and difficult conversation.
The genesis of this Integrative Masters Project grew out of a conversation sitting in a classroom at Bank Street. We, Giuliana de Grazia and Molly Raik, were two frustrated graduate students, nearing the completion of our degrees. We were frustrated, but also moved. How could we be simultaneously finishing our program at a highly esteemed progressive graduate school and also feel so confused and unprepared to deal with the realities of life in schools; schools in a race-based society? We needed support--what do we know and understand about racism? How do we address our own biases? What is the best way to support social justice as teachers? As young privileged white women?

As a way to turn our frustrated energy into meaningful and productive action, we took these questions and used them as a backbone for designing our Independent Study. We researched the state of diversity and inequity in our nation’s schools. We found patterns and trends in schools that perpetuated racial disparities and injustices. We also researched efforts being made to counter, undo, and heal these inequities. We learned about the many ways that teachers and schools can confront and transform a deeply unjust society. Through this process, we discovered a central theme: teachers are best equipped to build social justice work into their classrooms when they have had the training to both deeply reflect on their own biases and develop these ideas in a community of peers.

After learning about the exciting work that is being done to create more justice in our schools and in society, we turned our focus inward towards Bank Street College. We examined the College’s history, philosophy, and commitment to the idea that teaching is
a means for social change. We reviewed syllabi from a cross-section of required Bank Street courses. We participated in student-led conversations on the topic of race and teaching. We spoke with other graduate students about their experiences here at Bank Street. We found that Bank Street was not keeping its philosophical promise of preparing student teachers to be active forces for societal change. Teachers were neither having experiences that led to deep reflection on race and inequality nor the opportunity to have shared exploration of these challenges.

As we synthesized what we had learned we formed proposals for the future of Bank Street College. Given the state of society and education, given Bank Street’s historical commitment to social change, and given our current experiences at Bank Street, we believe that the college needs to devote energy towards institutional change on the subject of race and inequality. We developed several possibilities for what this institutional change might look like. Our proposed changes are rooted in the understanding that to prepare teachers to be a force for social change, they must deeply reflect on their own biases and develop these ideas in a community of peers.
Racial and Economic Inequality in America’s Schools

*The most crucial of all circumstances conditioning human life is birth into a particular culture.*

*George Counts (1932)*
Why is this project necessary?

Why? It’s hard to know where to start. Partly because I can never remember facts and statistics and partly because I have too much to say. Or rather, I want to say angry, bold, crystal clear statements, but there’s a voice inside that says, “Are you sure?” “Prove it.” “Be careful throwing that kind of language around.” “Who are you to say that? I want to say, “America has it all wrong. We’re messed up, cruel, unjust... selfish. Freedom for who? What does equality even mean, or is it meaningless at this point?” And again, that’s only part of me speaking. An unsure part. There’s another voice that says, “Back off America. Stick to what you know and love: children....” Why? Because I love children, all children, and I want them to... what do I want for them? How do I think life should be? Good? Free? Fair? I don’t know. Molly, help...

I think you’ve hit on something big. I’m reminded of that slogan, “Think Globally, Act Locally.” Learning the truth about the American School System can only make teachers better. The fact is that certain communities are treated differently than others. There are real issues of equity that plague our schools and our children. The tricky part is to find the language and the space as a teacher to address that inequity in a way that is impactful. I think looking inward, at ourselves and at our classrooms is a great place to start. You say stick to what you know and love: children. That’s exactly it. Love the children enough to teach them that they can be impactful too. That they, not matter their age, can act to change things that are not fair.

I think about how powerful children are all the time actually. This is a little tangential, but can you imagine a world without children? The love they generate between people? The understanding they can help stupid adults feel for each other? I think that if my kids could only grow up to be as kind as they are to each other now...if their parents could absorb their kindness, their love for each other, their interdependence, their love of the world and all living things?! The world would be different if kids really internalized some of the work we do in the classroom, the work they do together. But, as you are saying, I need to look more carefully at what we really are doing to build community and relationship, to support their identities... I’m beginning to learn that my efforts are not enough. The world outside the classroom, and the worlds within these kids, these little, little kids, are already full of opinion, preference, bias...

I think about this all of the time. I see so much inequity in the world and I am practicing everyday to hone my vision to see all of the structural barriers to equal access, to justice. I love that word practice. I may know, intrinsically, even viscerally that there is deep, deep inequality in our country and in our communities and in our schools... but even
after years of reading about the achievement gap, the school to prison pipeline, the history of racism in our country, etc, etc, etc, I still don’t feel equipped to compassionately and eloquently argue my point. I desperately need practice. And not just in my classroom. I need practice with my colleagues. With my family. With facebook. As someone who has felt passionately about social justice and anti-racism for as long as I can remember, I continue to struggle with what to say, how, and when...

Sorry Giuls, I don’t know how helpful that was...

I absolutely need to practice. I need support. I need to learn. I need to get uncomfortable instead of avoiding or choosing to be more ignorant and isolated from a reality that impacts everything. I wish I had been learning more over the past two years. I’m in graduate school for god’s sake... That seems to me like the perfect place to practice -- a space where you could find guidance and knowledge and the safety of practicing without immediately offending...or at least offending in a safe space. I think Bank Street kept us too safe, ‘un-real’ safe. That’s not what I need. This unjust world is REAL.
I. Diversity in Schools

In 2014, an estimated 49.8 million students were enrolled in elementary and secondary public schools in the United States. This group of students was incredibly racially, ethnically, linguistically, and economically diverse. For the first time, the population of the country’s public schools was a majority non-white, with white students accounting for approximately 49% of the student body. This change is due, in large part, to the rapid increase of Latino/a and Asian students in our nation’s schools. Since 1997, the number of Hispanic students nearly doubled to 12.9 million, and the number of Asian students jumped 46% to 2.6 million, (Krogstad & Fry, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013).

As our schools have become more and more racially and culturally diverse, they have also become more linguistically diverse. From 1997 to 2008, the number of English Language learners (ELLs) in US schools increased by more than 50% to 5.3 million students (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2011). In 2011 22% of school children aged 5-17 spoke a language other than English at home (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2013).

Schools in the United States are also experiencing increasing diversity in terms of learning style and ability. In the 2008-2009 school year, approximately 12.8% of K-12 students were classified as students with disabilities; approximately 6.4 million children nationwide (Kena et al., 2014). This is an increase of over 64% since 2000, when approximately 3.9 million students with disabilities were enrolled in US schools (Oakes & Lipton, 2007).
Rapid changes in the demographics and experiences of US public school students has led to an extraordinary amount of diversity in today’s schools. Teachers and schools need to adapt lessons, curriculum, teaching style, and philosophy to meet the needs of student body that is rapidly growing in diversity.

II. Racial and Economic Inequality in Schools

Unfortunately, increasing diversity has not led to an increase in equity. In fact, as the country has become more and more racially and ethnically diverse, it has also grown in inequity. The top 1% earned 20% of income accrued in 2011 in the United States. This is up from 9% in 1979 (Alvaredo, Atkinson, Piketty & Saez, 2013). This is compounded by the fact that when comparing total wealth, inequality is 10 times worse. A long history in this country of racial discrimination in the housing market has deeply contributed to this wealth gap (Coates, 2014). The wealthiest 0.1% of families in the US account for 22% of the country’s total wealth (Saez & Zucman, 2014). This massive inequality leaves the low-income community with limited resources and growing numbers. The child poverty rate in the US now stands at 22%. This is the highest rate among developed nations. Of the more than 46 million Americans living in poverty, one third of them are children (Kennedy, 2014).

While America has an increasingly diverse student body, school resegregation in the sixty years since landmark Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, has contributed to pervasive inequality in today’s schools (Kucsera & Orfield, 2014). Schools in major urban areas tend to have higher concentrations of low-income and minority students while schools in more affluent suburban areas tend to have higher
concentrations of white and middle class students (Oakes & Lipton, 2007). School segregation on the basis of race and social class is particularly egregious here in New York. As housing in New York City, particularly in Manhattan and Brooklyn, has become more and more expensive, low income families and families of color have been forced out of their neighborhoods and into enclaves with especially high rates of poverty. As most NYC school children attend schools in their neighborhood, segregated schools have become more prevalent.

The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, a research group directed by Profs. Gary Orfield and Patricia Gándara based at UCLA, published a report in March 2014 on the “extreme” school segregation in New York City. Some of their major findings included:

- Urban schools are becoming more and more racially segregated: In 2010-2011, despite their 35% metro enrollment, white students comprised only 15% of the enrollment in urban schools, but 60% in suburban schools. During the same time, the share of minority students were more concentrated in urban schools than in suburban schools.

- Schools that are overwhelmingly minority enrolled, also happen to be overwhelmingly poor: In 2010-2011, 46.4% of city schools were classified as “intensely segregated”--that is, that 90-100% of enrolled students were minorities. Further, in those “intensely segregated” schools, 80.4% of students came from low-income households. The overall percentage of students from low-income households during the same period was only 52%.
Student exposure to other races: In NYC, the typical white student is exposed to 68% other white students, 7% black students, 9% Asian students, and 15% Latino/a students. A typical black student is exposed to 51% black students and only 12% white students—despite the fact that the overall metro share of enrollment is 35% white and 22% black.

Exposure to low-income students: In 2010-2011 the overall percentage of students from low-income households was 52%. White students were exposed, on average, to only 24% low-income students while black and Latino/a students were exposed to 70% low income students.

(Kucsera & Orfield, 2014)

The findings of the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles suggest that New York schools are not only segregated on the basis of race, but also on the basis of class. Black and Latino/a students are over-represented in schools with high percentages of students in poverty. This segregation is compounded by significant inequities in allocation of resources and opportunities.

III. Unequal Funding, Resources, and Opportunities in Schools

Most states tend to spend less money per student on poor and minority students than on affluent white students (Oakes & Lipton, 2007). Again, New York State has a particularly bad record when it comes to equal funding of public schools. Per pupil spending was a whopping $8,733 higher in 2012-2013 for students in the State’s 100
wealthiest school districts than in its 100 poorest districts (Alliance for Quality Education [AQE], 2015). This gap in spending translates to major inequities in school resources.

Underfunded schools in poor districts tend to have larger class sizes, fewer elective classes such as art, music, and P.E., and fewer students support programs for ELLs and students with special needs. These schools also tend to have higher rates of teacher turnover and fewer teachers with college degrees in the subjects that they teach (Oakes & Lipton, 2007). According to the Children’s Defense Fund’s 2012 Portrait of Inequality, “Fifteen percent of teachers in schools with the most Black and Hispanic students are in their first or second year of teaching compared to eight percent of teachers in schools serving the fewest Black and Hispanic students.” All of these factors contribute to the famous racial and economic “achievement gap.”

Not all states spend less money on students in poor school districts. New Jersey actually spends more per student in low-income communities than in high-income ones. This progressive spending plan has led to notable graduation rates that outperform New York for all groups of students including low income students, students with disabilities, English-Language Learners, black students, and Hispanic students (AQE, 2015).

Unequal funding, resources, and opportunities all contribute to the national gaps in achievement. White students perform higher than black and Latino/a students in every subject tested at every grade level. Similarly, economically advantaged students outperform low-income students (Oakes & Lipton, 2007; Kena et al., 2015). This so-called “achievement gap” has been greatly debated over the past several decades of American politics. Despite national attention to the problem, unfortunately it seems that
in some respects the gap is only growing. The 2014 edition of The Condition of Education, an annual publication released by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) stated that “In 2013, some 34 percent of 25- to 29-year-olds had earned a bachelor's or higher degree. Between 1990 and 2013, the size of the White-Black gap at this education level widened from 13 to 20 percentage points, and the White-Hispanic gap widened from 18 to 25 percentage points” (Kena et al., 2015).

IV. School Policies that Contribute to and Perpetuate Racial Inequality in Schools

Recent literature has focused on policies in schools that not only contribute to the racial achievement gap, but also perpetuate it. Zero-tolerance school discipline policies, particularly common in schools with high rates of black and Latino/a students lead to higher rates of suspension which in turn lead to higher rates of dropouts and incarceration (NPR Editorial Board, 2014). This phenomenon has come to be called the “school-to-prison pipeline.”

Zero-tolerance policies refer to school discipline policies that mandate harsh punishments like out-of-school suspensions for certain behaviors, many of which were formerly treated as small infractions. Black students are suspended from schools at rates three times higher than their white peers and suspensions have increased by approximately 10 % since 2000 (Nelson & Lind, 2015). While boys are more likely to be suspended overall, when comparing suspension of girls, black girls are six times more likely to be suspended than white girls (Bates, 2015). Disturbingly, this trend is not only relegated to high school students. In fact close to 50% of preschoolers that are suspended
more than once are black, though they make up only 18% of the population of preschoolers (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014).

Another consequence of the rise of zero-tolerance policies has been the inclusion of the criminal justice system inside school discipline policies. Instead of behavior intervention plans, counselling, or a practice called restorative justice that aims to repair the harm from criminal behavior through community engagement, these schools tend to involve the police. For example, students who have been involved in school fights or written up for “disorderly conduct” can be arrested or referred to law enforcement (Nelson & Lind, 2015; Bates, 2015). These policies further entrench students in the criminal justice system, increasing the likelihood that they will be incarcerated and will be unable to complete high school.

In January 2015, Attorney General Eric Holder and Education Secretary Arne Duncan released a statement criticizing zero-tolerance policies and providing information about “positive discipline” strategies. Holder stated, “A routine school disciplinary infraction should land a student in the principal’s office, not in a police precinct,” (U.S. Department of Education Press Release, 2014). Unfortunately, for many students of color, this is too often the case.
Approaches to Addressing Racial Inequality in Schools

Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword...

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (1865)
I felt very unsure of what to expect. A weekend of immersion in racism, in undoing racism, but for me, in racism: my own. I arrived and was told that our group of about fifty would stay together, in this big circle, in this bland conference room, for almost all of the twenty-ish hours we’d be together. That in itself made me uncomfortable. Why was I there again? I was probably the least knowledgeable, least experienced person in the room. Would I have to speak up? Would I say something stupid? Would I offend someone because I’m just so ignorant? Why did I sign up for this again? Why was I there? I sat on a chair with two empty spaces on either side, giving myself the space to shuffle through my bag, organizing papers, pens, chapstick, and such. Giving my eyes and hands an occupation to keep me safe from the group. But my attention was elsewhere. No eye contact. No engagement. Stay safe for as long as you can, stay busy, keep organizing, look at your phone, don’t connect until you absolutely must. These are your last few moments before the workshop begins, and likely, you’re exposed.

I can really relate to that feeling of exposure. And it comes back to me at strange and really unexpected times. Last night I went to a “Liberation Seder” that my friend hosts. It was about fifty people, all sitting around a table talking about ongoing struggles for social justice and their relation to Passover--our great liberation story. These were people, many of whom I know and love, all of whom are activists, teachers, people who I admire. I am rambling. The point is that even in a space that should feel calm and safe, speaking up can be so hard. The problems are so complex. Will I really be able to articulate what I mean? And if I don’t, will I accidentally say something wrong or offensive? Will I expose myself to be more affected by the daily messages of racism/sexism/classism than I thought? Anyway... I want to hear more from you! What happened next?

Next? Well, it began. For most of the twenty hours, I was rapt. The trainers fascinated me; their humility and strength, their ability to make us all feel part of something: the horrible race-based system we live in and a select group committed to finding and living on our ‘growing edge.’ That language is what made me connect. I could do that. I could be where I am. I could even be on the most challenging edge of who I am. It made me feel alive to exactly who I was as I knew myself. It didn’t matter that I was just beginning. I let myself take it in, sit inside me like a sea-worn stone or a guilty stick of butter or a handful of diamonds. I took it in, wrote about, slept on it. I spoke very little. I sat in the fear. I mentioned the fear, and I wanted to cry. I exposed myself, and it was ok. I survived, growing. Do you know what I mean by ‘growing edge?’

Thank you for sharing that. Growing edge... is that the actions that you can take, the
small efforts that you personally can do to challenge the gigantic and systemic power of racism? That the problem is so big and so expansive but the challenge for us is to make it personal? To affect change in our own space--the only space we really can? At the seder last night one guest posed the question to the group... “Is it hubris for us to spend time worrying about injustices overseas when we have so many problems right here at home? Don’t we have limited resources?” The answer as I see it speaks to that idea of the growing edge. No it’s not hubris because the work is not mutually exclusive. Any work I do towards justice here is an act toward justice everywhere... to paraphrase Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

I love that. Justice is this immense, universally relevant idea, and it is also acutely personal. Which reminds me... in that workshop, I felt a strong connection, a strong, visceral connection to being black, and then I crushed it with judgement, with shameful mis-identification. Who was I to try to empathize with, to try to relate to, something I was not? I am not black. Can I understand an aspect of their suffering? Can that compassion push me to care more? I’m still not sure. This is what happened. Maybe you can help. One of the trainers was talking about being black and having skin that made him a non-white. He felt like a sore in the landscape of white. He felt that he was immediately seen as lesser because he was black. He felt this every day when he was younger. He told the stories of people trying to bleach themselves, trying to scratch their color off when they were young. I hated this. I hated that people felt that way and that I didn’t even know. I thought I...I thought I was so weak that if I had been black and I had felt that way, I probably would have killed myself. And, here’s the part that made me think this way, the part that might be a wrong way of thinking. I recalled the feelings of self hatred I had for my body, the feelings of being stared at and considered a stain on a tapestry of beautiful people. I recalled having a chronic eating disorder and a delusional mind that made me feel everyone was always looking at me and judging me as disgusting, unlovable, gross. And, I did everything in my physical power to change it, until I was hospitalized -- forced to stop destroying my body. That, perhaps one of my worst experiences, came into my mind, and I sent it running. How dare I try to empathize, to understand. That must be wrong to do. This is not about me. Ugh. What do you think? What do I do with that feeling of compassion and simultaneously no right to be compassionate?

No no no, it’s not wrong. At least it’s not something that you can control, so we feel the feelings and also recognize that in some ways it creates a false association. I don’t mean that associating is wrong, just that it is not complete... this is hard. And I didn’t thank you--your honesty consistently astounds me... so thank you! I recently read that one of the most successful adaptations that capital-R Racism has made over the past fifty years
is the association of racism as bad and not-racism as good. That people think about racism as something you do. It contributes to the fragility that I and I believe many white people feel when thinking about race/racism. “I am a good person and therefore cannot be racist.” The reality is that it is much bigger than us and what we do. I guess what I am trying to say is that guilt is not a feeling that drives us to action. It’s a feeling that makes us want to push all our feelings down and not deal with them. Asking all your questions--what makes me think that? why did this association arise? That’s important--in my experience, the more I think and learn and feel that I “know” about racism, the more questions and fewer answers I have. And now I feel myself spiralling down into more and more questions and bigger and bigger topics...

What is the role of an ally? Which spaces are appropriate for white voices in issues of racism? When is it time to step up? When to step back? I often find myself trying to step out of my space of privilege and to consider the perspective of people of color only to be told or to later realize that making assumptions about others is another trap of racial injustice. And that is what we’re getting at right? Pick up the tools for analyzing the impact of racism and other oppressive systems. But more importantly, use those tools for reflection and more reflection and more and more...
As outlined in the above section, American children attend schools in a system that is fraught with with structural inequalities. The achievement gap persists as conditions, resources, and opportunities are allocated unequally based on students’ racial and socio-economic identities. And yet, looking at just the achievement gap can be greatly misleading. A long history of sociopolitical, economic, and (im)moral decisions from housing discrimination to Jim Crow era segregation to the mass incarceration of black men have led to segregated communities, extreme income inequality, and a situation that Gloria Ladson-Billings refers to as the “Education Debt.” That is, the accumulation of years of oppressive policies that has contributed to drastic educational inequity over time (2006). There is clearly a great deal of work that must be done in order for public schools to achieve the promise of an equal education for all American students.

Yet, despite the deeply rooted inequalities in schools, many approaches exist to address and resist the structural racism in American society and in American schools. Teachers and schools are implementing multi-cultural, anti-bias, and social justice education curricula aimed at empowering students to embrace diversity and fight inequity. Teacher networks and affinity groups have been created with a commitment to supporting teachers as they struggle against institutional inequalities. Many graduate school teacher training programs, including Bank Street, outline social justice work as a major tenet of their programs. Social action research, courses on multicultural education, and an emphasis on personal reflection as a means for growth are some of the ways that these schools support their student teachers’ development. Finally, several organizations have been formed in response to a growing need for teachers to be trained in the areas of
diversity and anti-racism. The following section outlines these different approaches to fighting against racial and economic inequality in schools.

I. Multicultural Education, Anti-Bias Education, and Social Justice Education

Children are not only living in an unequal society, but they also develop an awareness of race and ethnicity at a young age, and they make assumptions based on what their society teaches them (Soto & Swadener, 2002; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). By three years old, children have already developed in-group preferencing (Bronson & Merryman, 2009). Soto and Swadener note in “Towards Liberatory Early Childhood Theory…,” that while “it has taken a whole ‘oppressive village’ to systematically educate young children to internalize the stereotypes and hatred of racism…at the same time these research projects helped make the case that early childhood education is truly a window of opportunity for equity, social justice, and reconstruction” (Soto & Swadener, 2002, p. 44). The belief of many early integration advocates that merely participating in a diverse environment would improve multicultural relations, termed the “Diverse Environment Theory,” has been shown to be a fallacy -- multicultural relations in schools only improve with both a diverse environment and engagement of issues surrounding diversity (Bronson & Merryman, 2009). Early childhood teachers need to be prepared to address these issues in the classroom.

Multicultural education, anti-bias education, and social justice education were developed from an understanding that curriculum needed to be designed to give students the tools to resist society’s racist and classist messages. These curricular frameworks overlap significantly with one another. For the purposes of this study we will define
multicultural education as a fusion of the definitions developed by Banks and Banks (2009) and the anti-bias curriculum (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011). Multiculturalism “incorporates the idea that all students--regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics--should have an equal opportunity to learn in school” (Banks & Banks, 2009) and that such an education should emphasize action in response to discrimination and prejudice (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011).

In framing the scope and structure of multicultural education, James Banks and Cherry Banks (2009) outline five dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture and social structure. They define multicultural education not only as curriculum content of a number of cultural groups, but also as a curriculum that values a democratic, student empowered pedagogy that works to fight inequity (Banks & Banks, 2009; Ogletree & Larke, 2010). The anti-bias curriculum similarly seeks to explore similarities and differences, empowering students to explore their own identities and actively resist biases (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011).

Multicultural education and an anti-bias curriculum opens a dialogue about issues of inclusion, unfair privilege, and discrimination. It also functions as a social critique and an exploration of power (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011; Oakes & Lipton, 2007). Bree Picower notes in Using their words: Six elements of social justice curriculum design for the elementary classroom (2012) that in practice, classrooms that implement strong social justice curriculum will touch on six major elements: self-love and knowledge; respect for others; issues of social injustice; social movements and social change; awareness raising;
and social action. She notes that in many classrooms, teachers tend to focus on the first two elements--exploring the identity of their students and embracing the diversity of the classroom. Picower argues in “Using their Words,” that social justice curriculum cannot just be relegated to the “can’t we all just get along” approach which focuses solely on developing identity and a respect for diversity. Teachers need to move past an appreciation of diversity to teaching the issues of injustice that impact how different identities are treated differently. After learning about issues of injustice children can then focus on people who have fought for change, on activities that can help raise awareness in their communities, and then finally on specific actions that they can do to affect change (Picower, 2012).

Louise Derman-Sparks’ anti-bias/multicultural curriculum (AB/MC) focuses specifically on the Early Childhood classroom. Despite the difference in age of focus, her seven learning themes mirror Picower’s shift from identity awareness to social injustice to action (Derman-Sparks, 2011; Picower, 2012). The paraphrased AB/MC learning themes: 1. Develop authentic identity based on “personal ability, interests, family history, and culture,” 2. Value the range of diversity (physical and social) among people, 3. Build a capacity for caring for others, 4. Understand and respect differences and similarities among people beyond immediate settings and race, 5. Learn to identify and challenge stereotypes and prejudices in environment, 6. “Commit to ideal” that everyone deserves health, safety, and resources, and finally 7. Work together for social justice in classroom and community (Derman-Sparks, 2011, p. 9-10). Derman-Sparks and Ramsey’s vision for an anti-bias classroom differs from Picower’s only in the
developmental age of focus. Picower’s focus is on the elementary classroom, so much of her design centers on the social studies and history curricula that teachers can adopt in their classrooms. Derman-Sparks and Ramsey are writing about early childhood—building a capacity for caring for others and understanding differences beyond the immediate surroundings are challenging themes to teach to young children whose worldviews tend to be self-oriented. Yet, like Picower notes, these learning themes must move past just caring for others and recognizing difference—teachers need to build on those ideas to help children recognize and challenge inequities.

Multi-cultural, anti-bias, and social justice education can be an effective and critical approach to addressing the systemic inequality and injustice that exists in our schools and society at large. The approach, when implemented consciously and appropriately, develops critical thinking skills in students and builds on students emotional and social competence (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2011). As effective as multicultural education can be at inspiring students to be active change-makers, in order for it to be implemented in earnest, teachers need ongoing training and support. Multi-cultural, anti-bias, and social justice education demand that teachers are deeply self-reflective, open to multiple perspectives, and culturally competent (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010). Good multicultural education doesn’t come with a step-by-step, how-to approach. It seeks to resist systems that are far-reaching, subtle, and complex and thus, it is an approach that requires complex understanding on the part of teachers.

Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensoy (2011) write in their article, “OK, I get it! Now tell me how to do it!” about the paradox of training teachers to be multicultural
social justice educators-- teachers understand the need for multicultural education intellectually, but they feel lost when attempting to teach it. Teacher training programs, they argue, need to provide teachers with the space for “deep and sophisticated analysis, self-awareness, inter-group experience, and on-going education.” They cannot just “tell you how to do it.”

II. Teacher Networks: Groups and Conferences

One way for teachers to find the support necessary for developing strong social justice curriculum in their classrooms and in their school communities is through work with like-minded educators in teacher groups and networks. These groups serve to lift up conversations about developing stronger multicultural, anti-bias, and social justice curriculum in classrooms.

One major teacher network in New York is the New York Coalition of Radical Educators (NYCoRE). NYCoRE’s mission statement positions itself as a “group of current and former public school educators and their allies committed to fighting for social justice in our school system and society at large, by organizing and mobilizing teachers, developing curriculum, and working with community, parent, and student organizations. We are educators who believe that education is an integral part of social change and that we must work both inside and outside the classroom because the struggle for justice does not end when the school bell rings” (New York Collective of Radical Educators, n.d.). NYCoRE attempts to achieve these goals through Working Groups, Affinity Groups, and their Annual Conference.

Working Groups meet monthly around specific topics in social justice education.
Some working groups affiliated with NYCoRE: high stakes testing group, teach dream (focused on the experience of undocumented immigrants in the school system), curriculum group, new teachers group, adult educators for social justice.

NYCoRE also supports three affinity groups: Anti-racist White Educators Group, Educators of Color Group, and NYQueer (an affinity group with a focus on issues of gender and sexuality as they relate to school communities).

III. Diversity Coordinators in Schools

One way in which some New York City schools work to embrace the diversity in their communities is to create the role for a Director of Diversity or Diversity Coordinator. According to a review of job descriptions and an article from the National Association for Independent Schools, most schools’ diversity directors review and develop curriculum throughout grades, hire people of color, work to train teachers or provide the faculty with training, and reach out to the parent community to share information, opportunities, and support (Ferron, Hill, & Romney, 2008). A diversity director ensures that a school is upholding its commitment to diversity and helps solve problems as they arise. Diversity practitioners have been hired in independent schools and public schools.

One important role of a diversity director would be to include parents and families in the school’s efforts towards diversity. Parents need to be sufficiently educated and involved to support the school’s mission. This may include coordinating seminars, giving presentations, and offering resources. A diversity director would be the best school employee to meet the challenge of parents holding beliefs separate from those of the
school, or the belief that school is not an appropriate place to impart opinions about social justice. With the clearest understanding of what the school is doing and why the school is doing it, a diversity director serves to facilitate a healthy and strong relationship between families and the school.

IV. Graduate Courses on the Subject of Racial Inequality in Schools

There are a number of graduate schools of education that require their students to complete courses focused on social justice, race, or equity. For example, Stanford’s Graduate School of Education has a two credit course in its Elementary Degree Program called Educating for Equity and Democracy, as well as a course called Ethics in Teaching, both of which fall under their required course grouping of Social and Psychological Foundations (Stanford University, 2014).

Harvard Graduate School of Education has a yearlong course called Leading through Difference, as well as semester long courses called, Cultural Explanations for Ethnic and Racial Inequality in Education, Critical Race Theory in Education, and Dilemmas of Excellence and Equity in K-12 American Schools. HGSE boasts many other courses connected to themes of Social Justice and Culture in their course catalog (President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2015a). Furthermore, the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, has an Office of Diversity and Minority Affairs dedicated to recruiting and supporting minority applicants (President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2015b).

UMass Amherst’s College of Education developed a program devoted to Social Justice in Education. Their required courses include opportunities for intensive reflection,
historical and theoretical understanding of the current educational and social practices, and the tools to assess and design socially just educational programs (University of Mass Amherst, 2009).

Though few graduate schools of education in NYC have required courses focused on social justice, race or anti-bias education, CUNY Graduate Center offers a degree in Urban Education with a number of relevant courses. For example, in the Spring of 2015 the following courses are being offered: Intersection of Policy and Structural Inequalities, Language, Culture, and Disability: Psychological Perspectives, and Culture Identity and Education (The Graduate Center, 2015).

University of California at Riverside has a Masters Degree in Education with a Diversity and Equity Emphasis. Its students are required to take core courses focusing on the history of education in the US, civil rights in the US, urban education, gender in education, diversity, and multicultural special education (Regents of the University of California, 2015).

The graduate schools above exemplify a range of programs with varying forms and standards. However, they all provide their students with significant opportunities to explore issues of race and social justice. Many other colleges and universities around the country have implemented courses, and it is time for New York City, one of the country’s most diverse intersections, to take the lead in requiring student teachers to prepare themselves for their ever-diversifying society.

V. Social Action Research

A well-researched strategy for promoting multicultural education and social
justice education in all settings (diverse and non-diverse) is to implement Social Action Research in teacher trainings (Martin, 2005; Warren, Doorn & Green, 2008; Levine, 2000). Teachers that reflected on their communities and the problems those communities were facing expressed more interest in social justice education and felt more capable of being change agents (Warren, Doorn & Green, 2008).

Social Action Research is form of research that has been developed in teacher preparation programs as a way to better train teachers to actively engage with and attempt to work to solve the problems that they see in their communities (Martin, 2005). Action researchers identify a question or problem that they would like to research, develop a plan for studying the issue, collect data, and reflect on their findings. The critical component of action research as it relates to other forms of research, is that researchers not only analyze and reflect on their findings, but also develop an action plan based on their findings. Teachers that perform action research use their own setting--its context, its community, and its issues--as a basis for research. The process is reflective and collaborative and findings are directly applicable and meaningful--providing teachers with a route forward towards change.

Research on the efficacy of action research as a method for teacher development has found that after completing an action research project teachers felt that they had developed into more expert teachers. They felt the process had made them more reflective of their own practice, more qualified to act as change agents, more willing to seek solutions to classroom issues, and that they had developed a deeper engagement with their students (Warren, Doorne & Greene, 2008).
VI. Organizations and Trainings Committed to Exploring Diversity and Anti-Racism

Over the past two decades, many organizations formed in response to the growing diversity in the United States. These institutions often took on the label of “trainings” to help individuals and groups become more aware of their society’s diversity and to explore their personal presence in that society. However, the organizations’ specific intentions and methods varied greatly. By looking at these aspects of four organizations that are active in New York City, as well as their impact on participants, it becomes clear that participation in these efforts can generate personal and institutional change.

A. The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond: Undoing Racism

The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond is one of the most well-known anti-racist organizations working nationally and internationally. It was founded by Ronald Chisom in 1980 with the mission of developing an anti-racist movement in New Orleans. The organization approaches the problem of racism as one that is deeply systemic. Racism was created by people and is dependent on the external and internal oppression it has caused; thus, the problem is current, cyclical, and as it was “done” it is able to be undone through community organizing and activism.

The People’s Institute has developed an intensive two or three day workshop that is held nationally approximately ten to fifteen times per month. The workshop primarily includes presentations by trainers and large group discussions. Participants are challenged to explore the Institute’s analysis of power and racism and to consider their roles within a
race-based society. Participants are encouraged to develop themselves as leaders and agents of change through community organizing.

The People’s Institute has influenced the lives of 500,000 people (The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, 2015b). Testimonials from their website, www.psib.org, claim that people who complete the workshop develop new understanding of their professions and the roles they play within a race-based society. One testimonial from Joyce James, the Executive Commissioner, Texas Health and Human Service Commission, Center for Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities, claimed that Undoing Racism has influenced the whole child welfare system in Texas (The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, 2015a).

B. Dismantling Racism

Dismantling Racism is an organization started in the 1990’s by two community organizers, Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun. With the belief that people are socialized to perpetuate a racially divided society rife with inequality, Dismantling Racism tries to develop leaders to intervene, educate, and organize for change. The organization intends to build anti-racist community and reduce personal prejudice. (“Dismantling Racism Works...,” 2015)

Initially, Dismantling Racism was a one day workshop; however, it is currently divided into phases that include an assessment, a more extensive workshop, the creation of a plan for change, ongoing support, and personal reflection. The organization also offers individual coaching. Throughout the program, participants are educated about the
historic basis of racism and asked to grow their personal awareness through introspection and practice. The workshops include presentation by trainers, discussions, videos, role playing, and the development of skills to confront the racism in one’s society and to build inclusive communities (“The DR Process,” 2015).

The Dismantling Racism website boasts a list of the organizations they have worked with in the United States, which include the Orange County Rape Crisis Center in North Carolina and the University of Chicago’s Urban Teacher Education Program in Illinois. They also name a number of places where they have given presentations. In the Aspen Institute’s 2002 report on the best Trainings for Racial Equity and Inclusion, Dismantling Racism fell into the top ten national programs. At that time, after ten years of work, it had reached 300 participants through its six day workshops (Shapiro, 2012, p. 66). There were no testimonials shared on the website.

C. SEED

SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) is an organization developed in 1987 by Peggy McIntosh and Emily Style. It was founded at Wellesley College, and today it is the largest nationwide professional development project led by peers. SEED chooses to emphasize the role teachers play in the continuation or transformation of racism. By placing teachers at the center of the process for change, they are supported in the goal of creating classrooms where child-centered learning can truly exist; a school climate embracing the inclusion of diversity, multiculturalism, and gender-fair community; a community that is asked to look within themselves in order to create better relationships with others (Shapiro, 2002, p. 89).
Unlike the other trainings, SEED is an organization dependent on the work of teacher volunteers. There are week-long, residential summer institutes at which educators are trained in order to return to their school to lead monthly seminars for faculty and/or community. The seminars are largely built on formulaic discussions, held in circles, during which participants explore their individual and institutional biases over a period of time. SEED believes teachers must become authorities on themselves. As Emily Style suggests, the participant must create a “mirror” and a “window” for herself (“Project Summary,” 2013).

On the SEED website, many participants share powerful testimonials about their experiences. Teachers develop a greater awareness of all voices and the ability to listen attentively. They feel prepared to confront the challenges that rise from their diverse communities. Statements show that teachers see transformation in their classrooms; their work directly reaches their students and helps them develop closer relationships and deeper conversations. There is also impact on choice of curricular materials and school collegiality (National SEED Project, 2015).

D. Border Crossers

Border Crossers (BC) is a program developed twelve years ago in New York City. On the website, www.bordercrossers.org, the organization names the specific issues in the city, such as the segregation, the low percentage of teachers of color, and the racial inequity students experience. BC claims that with such unhealthy diversity and racial injustice, educators need to be trained to be “leaders of racial justice in their school and communities” (“Who We Are,” 2015). The organization began with student-centered
practices, but after a decade realized that teachers were unable to meet the challenges of diversity in their classrooms.

Border Crossers executes their mission primarily through partnering with specific schools for long term professional development; however, public workshops and seminars are also offered. Their methods include discussions and practice through role playing. When Border Crossers partners with a school, they can cater their program to meet the specific needs of a community (“What We Do,” 2015).

Border crossers has collected small amounts of data to show their impact. From one workshop, 94% of participants said they could implement strategies in their classrooms the following day and 84% of participants said they felt more prepared to “turn racial incidents into teachable moments” (“Talking about race,” 2012). Many testimonials show that teachers gain access to a supportive community and the ability to directly implement what they practiced during workshops into their classrooms. According the numbers on their website, they reached 85 teachers through workshops, and over 700 teachers through school trainings in the 2011-12 school year (“What We Do,” 2015).
Bank Street History and Relationship to Social Justice

Our children, our student teachers, and (except for momentary visions), we ourselves, are subject to this illusion that we have inherited the true, the good, and the beautiful. The other is still the “barbarian.” This general ethnological view of culture is our conception of the human concept of “the world” in which our student teachers find themselves and of which they should at least begin a detached scrutiny.

...

Can we place our student teachers in situations that will allow the learning process to take place so that they can make at least the first moves towards understanding the workings of a current culture: not only the objective processes by which it functions, but the no less powerful ideologies that control or permit this functioning? This is our problem.

_Lucy Sprague Mitchell (1935)_
So why Bank Street?

Honestly I wasn’t really convinced that I wanted to teach. My passion at the time was summer camp—I dreamed of directing my own—ideally a camp that was scholarship run and open to all applicants regardless of income. But I had been teaching for a year and a half at my current job and I knew that a teaching degree would help me out. Okay now the real part. If I wasn’t sold on teaching as my dream job, then why Bank Street? Why the 70k education.

A few reasons spring to my mind. The first was that I never liked school. Not as a Kindergartener, not as an adolescent, definitely not as a college student. Part of me wanted to go with the path of least resistance—get it over with—get the degree and move on. But I also wanted to give myself the best chance at enjoying school and learning from it. And I really did (and still do) believe that Bank Street was going to be that program. I grew up across the street from Bank Street and it had always been synonymous with progressive education—the way my family taught me that education should be... that I wanted it to be. So I took the plunge and here I am.

Why Bank Street? I had moved to NYC. I was a certified Montessori teacher with a job and the knowledge that a masters degree in teaching would increase my salary and make me eligible to be a head teacher. I believed and still believe deeply in Montessori education, and part of my respect for her philosophy comes from her insistence that the teacher is also a scientist, constantly observing, learning, questioning... I wanted to learn more about early childhood education to become a better teacher, to feel more confident in my choice to be a teacher of young children, rather than a professor or doctor or something more highly regarded (perhaps more impactful?) in our society. But, that doesn’t quite answer, Why Bank Street? I wanted a school I could get to easily, a school that would challenge my Traditional Education, a school that respected the real child more than the academic or intellectualized child. I knew NYC was a different place, a more diverse place, than any other I had taught in, and Bank Street promised me a connection to society and experience that I felt I could really grow from. But, I still wasn’t sure, so I took my first course without registering. It was the course that got me hooked. And, in a way, it misled me to believe Bank Street was more powerful, more transformative, than I have experienced since then...

Yes. I felt that too. I mentioned that Bank Street was a place that “meant” progressive education. I think for me that meant that I believed it to be a place with somewhat radical ideas. I knew a bit of the history of the school. How it had rebelled against a traditional model and had put the child at the center of its approach. I don’t know if I imagined this or if it was told to me but that rebellious counter-culture nature is what
sucked me in. I hated the way public schools were being treated in the media. I grew up in NYC public schools and I believed deeply in their necessary place in a healthy democracy. I wanted to be an advocate for public schools and I wanted to learn how to do that in a powerful way. I really always did see teaching as social justice work. I hoped (whether realistically or not) that Bank Street held a similar vision.

I honestly didn’t know much about public schools, and I still can’t claim to be very knowledgable. I cared most about quality education. I didn’t know how it could be provided for everyone. I was mostly dissatisfied with my own public school education prior to high school, and I blamed the teachers, primarily, for not challenging me, for not being smart...kind of awful judgements I placed on them... But, I felt lost in a public school in which interest in learning was ‘uncool’-- there was no place for my curiosity; it was hard to respect a part of myself that I knew I really enjoyed. But anyway... I was lucky, looking back... but so judgemental! And I still was coming to Bank Street. After that first class I questioned the capacity of my classmates intellects. Are some of them really in graduate school? A classmate once asked if Pennsylvania was in upstate New York. What?! I’m digressing. But truly... Bank Street was different for me and challenges my intellectual snobbery.

I think that’s what I keep coming up against also. I came to the school with big ideas about what it was... fantasies really. The truth is that there were some great, transformative, beautiful moments and there were many moments that felt lacking. But that’s why we’re here right? Wondering what pieces of the fantasies we might be able to make realities for the next Molly’s and Giuliana’s.
The previous sections provided an overview of the racial and economic inequality in our nation’s schools, as well as some of the effective work being done to prepare teachers to make positive change in their classrooms and communities. This section focuses on Bank Street College of Education, the graduate institution in which we are both enrolled. Here, we explore how Bank Street historically and currently identifies as a place actively committed to social justice.

Bank Street College was built on a strong foundation of social justice and democratic commitment to community. The following essay briefly examines Bank Street’s foundational documents, its history, and several influential voices that have shaped and grown the college’s practice. By exploring the ideals that have been carried through its history, it is possible to clarify expectations for what kind of educational institution Bank Street strives to be.

Bank Street’s “Mission” and “Credo” define the institution’s deeply rooted purpose as a bridge between students and teachers, as well as school and community. Its founders exemplify a powerful devotion to social change achieved through knowledge, activism, and continual self-development. A close look at the college’s “Mission,” “Credo,” and history reveal what Bank Street intends to offer its current graduate students.

I. Bank Street College’s Mission Statement and Commitment to Creating Change

Below is the text of Bank Street’s mission statement, as found on the current website:
The mission of Bank Street College is to improve the education of children and their teachers by applying to the education process all available knowledge about learning and growth, and by connecting teaching and learning meaningfully to the outside world. In so doing, we seek to strengthen not only individuals, but the community as well, including family, school, and the larger society in which adults and children, in all their diversity, interact and learn. We see in education the opportunity to build a better society. ("Mission," n.d.).

In this statement, it is clear that the teacher is bound to the society in which he or she teaches. The teacher is meant to connect “teaching and learning meaningfully to the outside world,” to “strengthen not only individuals, but the community as well...in all their diversity.” Bank Street is not an education for mere personal gain; rather, one’s growth must be inextricably tied to one’s environment, one’s community. Bank Street student teachers are not being prepared to continue strengthening the status quo; they are not being asked to learn how teaching has been done traditionally and to bring the same skill set into a static future. Bank Street students, according to the college’s mission, should experience an education in which they will be part of change. They are becoming part of a movement, through education, “to build a better society.”

II. Bank Street College’s Statement of Practice -- Bridging Self and Community

The college website’s welcoming page currently boasts a quote from the founder, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, “Our work is based on the faith that human beings can improve the society they have created” (“Graduate School of Education,” n.d.). This sentiment is
also a central theme in Bank Street’s current “Statement of Practice.” Found in the Graduate School website’s “About” section, the goals for graduate students include:

◦ Integrating Human Development and Subject Content to Enhance Student Engagement and Learning

◦ Be Able to Mediate the World for Children

◦ Meet Educational Needs and Support all Learners

◦ Collaborate With Colleagues, Families, Schools, and Communities

◦ Execute Action Research for Innovation


Looking more closely at the “Be Able to Mediate the World For Children”, we see that one way in which students supposedly meet this goal is through the college, “Providing opportunities for us and for our graduate students to learn from direct experience... Some examples of this are the Long Trips taken by faculty and field trips in advisement and course work” (“Statement of Practice,” n.d.) In other words, graduate students need to interact with environments outside of the classroom. The college also intends to meet this goal through “Engaging graduate students in sharing and connecting their diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences to their course-work and fieldwork experiences” (“Statement of Practice,” n.d.). Part of the ability to mediate the world for children lies in having real-world experience or knowing their society first-hand, while also knowing themselves and others through creating relationships. The work is meant to be deeply personal, interpersonal, and experience-based.
Also in the “Statement of Practice,” Bank Street states the intention that graduate students will learn to “Collaborate With Colleagues, Families, Schools, and Communities.” Here are a few examples of how Bank Street intends to meet this goal:

- Identifying our own value systems and perspectives, and investigating those of others.
- Encouraging graduate students to reflect on their roles within and across communities.
- Helping graduate students find ways to both have voice and make space for others towards the creation of engaged, respectful, and responsive communities.
- Engaging graduate students in exploring a range of perspectives through methods such as case studies, scenarios, role-plays, and skilled dialogue to raise and address biases and barriers, and build bridges to understanding. ("Statement of Practice," n.d.)

The above examples point further to the significance of self-knowledge and relationship. They suggest that in order to collaborate, students need to explore their own biases and be capable of exploring the diverse perspectives of other people. This work is not only done through writing and reading, but through conversation, enactments, and relationship. Moreover, the goal of collaboration runs from our most intimate relationships, to those with our colleagues and students, as well as the relationships with our students’ families and communities. This goal connects directly to the goal of basing work on principles of Social Justice. To meet this goal, the college suggests students must practice, “Working together to understand the impact of oppression, inequity, and
injustice on educational contexts, including our own, through actively participating in ongoing conversations and activities about these issues with each other, with our graduate students, and with the larger world” (“Statement of Practice,” n.d.). Bank Street expects its students to look deeply at their classroom environment while also participating in the greater discussions of societal injustice.

III. The College’s Credo -- Improving the Society that we have Created

At Bank Street, there is the expectation that this education will shape how you live in the world in a very personal, even visceral, way. The college’s “Credo,” written by Lucy Sprague Mitchell, invites us to consider: “What potentialities in human beings—children, teachers, and ourselves—do we want to see develop?” (Mitchell, 1916)

This is a serious question. The question itself, speaking to our shared humanness, gets right to the heart and truth of what we expect from education, what we expect from ourselves. Though, it is not immediately apparent that the following credo relates to this paper’s focus on race and social justice, the piece is a telling illustration of the thinking Bank Street is rooted in and what it still displays for all to read on its current website:

- A zest for living that comes from taking in the world with all five senses alert
- Lively intellectual curiosities that turn the world into an exciting laboratory and keep one ever a learner
- Flexibility when confronted with change and ability to relinquish patterns that no longer fit the present
- The courage to work, unafraid and efficiently, in a world of new needs, new problems, and new ideas
Gentleness combined with justice in passing judgments on other human beings

Sensitivity, not only to the external formal rights of the “other fellow,” but to him as another human being seeking a good life through his own standards

A striving to live democratically, in and out of schools, as the best way to advance our concept of democracy

*Our credo demands ethical standards as well as scientific attitudes. Our work is based on the faith that human beings can improve the society they have created.* (Mitchell, 1916)

The last line of the “Credo,” brings us back to the “Mission” and “Statement of Practice:” “human beings can improve the society they have created.” Do many graduate students enter the college with this faith, or at least a desire to believe that such is true? If one looks at the college’s history, the founders and faculty turned their faith into action.

IV. History of the College and its Roots in Social Justice

Bank Street was conceptualized and established in the Progressive Era, a time when some believed in “the deeply political nature of education, through which people could create a better world and a truly democratic society” (Nager, & Shapiro, p. 12). In 1916, Lucy Sprague Mitchell founded The Bureau of Educational Experiments (BEE) with Wesley Mitchell and Harriet Johnson. Their intention was to create an environment for children in which children could be studied and adults could study children.

In 1930, BEE moved to a new location in Greenwich Village, where it expanded to eight sites. Great focus was placed on developing teachers that would recognize and promote the development of the whole child (intellectual and social), while also developing teachers with a keen understanding of themselves and their relationship with
society (Mitchell, 2000). It is during this decade that Lucy Sprague Mitchell led the first “long trip” for student teachers, a tradition that lasted through 1951 and has resurfaced in a new form over the last two decades.

In 1950, BEE was renamed as Bank Street College of Education, and in 1954 The School for Children opened with one class. In line with the founders’ commitment to diversity, Bank Street supported the formation of Head Start, and in 1966 The Early Childhood Center was founded in mid-town to work with whole families in all areas of need: education, economics, health, and community. For the next two decades, Bank Street partnered with Project Follow Through to support families of young children in “economically disadvantaged areas” (“A Brief History,” n.d.).

Since 1980, Bank Street has founded departments and services within the school and partnered with many institutions outside of its building, most of which support research, teacher education, and the needs of children and families carrying the undue burden of a stratified democracy. Given this brief history of Bank Street’s first 100 years, it appears that the school has in many ways remained true to its founder’s hopes. Nancy Nager and Edna K. Shapiro’s (2000) book, Revisiting a Progressive Pedagogy, illuminates Bank Street’s philosophical development, and its current use of the Developmental-Interactive Approach.

V. The Developmental-Interaction Approach, John Dewey, and Education through Experience

The Developmental-Interaction Approach grew from the many educational, scientific, and social philosophies of the twentieth century and Progressive Era. The
approach is described as “the changing patterns of growth, understanding, and response that characterize children and adults as they develop and the dual meaning of interaction as, first, the interconnected spheres of thought and emotion, and, equally, the importance of engagement with environment of children, adults, and the material world” (Nager & Shapiro, 2000, p.11). Nager and Shapiro outline the interplay between these philosophies in the book’s first chapter, “The Developmental Interactive Approach to Education: Retrospect and Prospect.” The authors credit John Dewey as the largest influence on Lucy Sprague Mitchell.

Dewey emphasizes the necessity of “experience” in his philosophy of education. His philosophy “is found on the idea that there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education” (Dewey, 1938, p. 20). Dewey describes experience using the metaphor of “growing.” He writes, “Experience is a moving force. Its value can only be judged on the ground of what it moves toward and into” (Dewey, 1938, p. 38). However, “growing” is not only applied to the individual child’s growth, for Dewey’s experiences are real interactions in which the child and what he interacts with are affected. “An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment...” (Dewey, 1938, p. 44). This idea leads to the social nature of experience, and his statement that “...all human experience is ultimately social: that it involves contact and communication” (Dewey, 1938, p. 38). Thus, Dewey’s theory of experience includes our interdependence: the individual can never be entirely separate from his
environment. This *interactive* aspect of Dewey’s philosophy directly informed the Developmental Interactive Approach.

Barbara Biber, a leading researcher in Bank Street’s early years, credits John Dewey and George Counts with inspiring the founders of Bank Street to see the school and the society as social places needing great change. The social aspect of education was given salience at Bank Street, and not only the interaction between children in the classroom, but the teacher’s and child’s relationship with the world at large. Nager and Shapiro explain how the theory of child development was challenged by the impact culture made on children and adults. Culture, or context, and individual became inseparable, and the developmental-interaction approach held this unity as primary. The authors go on to note the change in today’s classroom, “...many more children are growing up in poverty, and a greater variety of family configurations is represented” (2000, p. 32). This fact, as well as other diversifying factors call for a new measure of inclusion, and a new level of teacher exploration of their own hidden assumptions about education and society. Nager and Shapiro name the challenge for teachers: “The charge is to be more aware of biases and tacit power, more wary of generalizations” (2000, p. 33).

After describing the history of Bank Street’s philosophy and its creation of the Developmental-Interaction Approach, Nager and Shapiro conclude the chapter and begin their volume with the suggestion that “A more differentiated and culturally responsive understanding of development will provide a stronger basis for our practice” (2000, p. 33).

VI. The Developmental Interactive Approach as a Lens for Multi-Culturalism
One example of their hope put into practice is found in the chapter by Linda Levine (2000), “Everyone and Everything is in my Class Now!” Levine discusses the benefit of teachers being exposed to an anthropological perspective to inform their teaching. She too notes the diversification of classrooms and stresses the educator’s responsibility to counter the trend of “prevailing school practices reinforcing existing societal inequities” (Levine, 2000, p. 97). She stresses the need for teacher self-reflection. “Nothing is more basic to multicultural understanding than learning how each of us is positioned by virtue of a particular mix of origins, aspirations and options to view and address the world” (Levine, 2000, p. 103). She describes several practices that bring students closer to understanding their stance in the world, their perspective looking out at their students, classroom, community, and society. It is unsurprising that Lucy Sprague Mitchell, in her construction of a social studies curriculum for student teachers, also focused on this necessary practice.

In “Social Studies for Teachers,” Mitchell outlines practices that will give teachers direct interaction with society and reflection on this interaction. She suggests that teachers stand at an intersection and take down objective notes for an hour of what they see passing. Later, they sit down and reflect on the notes, analyzing how different occurrences made them feel, what they thought of, and why they might think in such a way. In 1935 she wrote, “We feel we must experiment on ourselves, before we can plan experiences for others” (Mitchell, 2000, p. 135 ). She does not limit her discussion to teachers alone. Mitchell felt that social understanding is necessary for everyone and that it must have a place in all of education. “...the problem of social understanding is as wide
as the world of human beings and there is no theoretical reason why colleges and agencies for adult education should not regard social understanding as a part of education” (Mitchell, 2000, p. 136).

VII. Current Leadership and Dedication to Social Justice

This past December, we read in the words of the college’s current president, Shael Polakow-Suransky (2014), a similar sentiment of “trying to make sense of,” the recent grand jury decisions related to the deaths of two young black men. He reminded the college that Bank Street is a community dedicated to social justice, and therefore it is our responsibility to reflect on our society’s racism, how we connect with our students, and how Bank Street creates a socially just community with curriculum, student teachers, and community impact reflecting the college’s ideals. Shael’s message to the college demonstrates that to this day, Bank Street must be a community to act against injustice. He writes, “We have the power to create a real dialogue around very difficult questions and through this discourse, we have the ability to build resources and partnerships to create action” (Polakow-Suransky, S., 2014).

Bank Street College of Education has a long history showing a deep commitment to community. To take action towards making change and having a positive impact, powerful voices within the college such as the founder, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, and the current President, Shael Polakow-Suransky, suggest that teachers must explore deeply within and without through reflection and experience.
Our Experience at Bank Street

I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to “order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: “I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action”; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a “more convenient season.”

Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail (1963)
So now that we’ve nearly completed our program... how do we feel?

It’s a tricky question. I think that since I never really have enjoyed being a student, I have more negative feelings than are really fair. I will say that I’m sure that I’ve had a more fulfilling experience than I might have had at a different school. But of course, that being said, when I think about this project, my feelings about education, and the work I want to be doing to promote social justice, I am just as confused as ever. Okay that’s not really fair either. But I do think that any clarity that I have gained has been in large part because I personally sought it out.

I, too, have such mixed feelings about the past few years. As someone who usually LOVES being a student, and happily holds herself to a high standard, I feel I’ve let myself down...or has Bank Street let me down? I think it’s both. I feel Bank Street has wasted a lot of my time, and I have wasted a lot of my time daydreaming through classes with plenty of information I could have acquired were I inspired by the teacher. I feel I have wasted a lot of money, and I also feel proud of nearly completing a degree that required a serious commitment. I feel like a complainer, and I feel like we are actively seeking out the education we want for ourselves and want Bank Street to deliver to all students. I feel much more aware of who I am and what challenges we face in our society, and I fully intend to keep learning, but I also feel pretty sure that had I been taught five more courses by Professor B, I would be in a much better place.

Haha I feel you on that! Wow. Professor B’s class kicked my ass. It’s the worst grade I got at Bank Street and I can say without hesitation that it was my best experience. Action research! That was huge. Thinking deeply but also personally about an issue in my school was probably the true genesis of this project. At least for me. She really inspired me and pushed me to think more deeply and more passionately about who I wanted to be as a teacher. Loving children was no longer a good enough reason to teach.
And I also hear what you’re saying about feeling like there was a lot of time and money wasted. I mean I think that is DEFINITELY true. And yet, as someone who has had many moments of “I hate this!” for the past three years, I feel like today I am just as happy that I did it as I am that it is (almost) over. And I am so (!!!) excited about the work we’ve been doing both in our schools and at Bank Street... particularly the work at Bank Street. It feels important and powerful and I have learned a lot. Maybe it was self initiated but context is not to be looked over. This work happened here at Bank Street.

True. There was something, or some people, at Bank Street that have allowed for us to be where we are now. Over these years, many beautiful and challenging truths or questions
or experiences have unfolded within the context of Bank Street classes, Bank Street conversations, and those many opportunities to reflect on ourselves. I treasure that. It had me hooked, in Professor B’s class, to look at myself, my education, my notion of education from a very different perspective. I had to question what I considered to be good. I guess I wish this feeling were more consistent throughout the experience -- that more teachers were able to lead us into these deeper questions and more honest reflections. Were they afraid to stir things up? To depart from moderate, comfortable stances? To take risks? But again, I can’t just point to the teachers. That’s not fair. I feel we’ve learned, perhaps only in this last year, that as much as the faculty and curriculum determines our experience at Bank Street, we, primarily, make up the school. We are creating our educations, our experiences, our lives and selves. I don’t know. Something like that...

A call to action! I like that. Totally. It all needs to feel relevant. Dewey and constructionism and the reflective process... those are all powerful tools and important lenses for teachers to have. And I’m happy, grateful even, to have learned in an environment that was built on those ideas. It’s the relevance piece though. Professor B’s class was so meaningful not only because she challenged us to think more critically, but really because she challenged us to take that critical lens to our classrooms. This year was exciting for me because I took myself out of the passive role of the student and I MADE it relevant. Because I couldn’t stand not being invested anymore. So yes. The student needs to be active. I’m (so!) lucky that I had you. And Professor N. And Professor A. And all of those COS/Anti-racist ally folk with me this year as I asked the questions and looked for the answers that felt relevant.

Gratitude. Yes! That was my Social Action Research project -- ha! I too am so grateful for the people you mentioned, as well as others. So many teachers at Bank Street demonstrated flexibility and passion. I feel that many of them really tried to view us and treat us as human beings. When I was going through a hard time, separate from school, many offered their support, their understanding. Such connections made a world of difference. But, truly, the work we’re doing now, the conversations we’ve had, and the challenges you’ve made more clear to me make up one of the most powerful parts of this experience. I needed to have someone to reflect what I was thinking, to reflect it and question it! I look up to you as someone who knows much more than I do, who has much more experience, and I’m grateful you’ve had patience with all of my naivete. Thank you, Molly.
I: Our Program

The previous section outlined Bank Street’s history of a strong commitment to community and to social activism. Institutionally, the College devotes itself in both its “Mission” and its “Statement of Practice” to a vision that education should be a means for bettering the world. In this section, we write about our experience at Bank Street as we come to the end of our program. We write in this section with a lens that is in many ways limited by our personal perspectives. We are two young white women of relative economic privilege. Our courses have been specific to our program—Early Childhood Special and General Education Dual Certification. Yet, while we understand that our experiences are not universal, we will attempt in this section to highlight some patterns and trends that we feel show a disconnect between Bank Street’s goals and its practice.

As degree candidates for dual certification in Early Childhood Special and General Education, we have studied at Bank Street over the course of three years and have accumulated 54 credits. Our program requires 19 courses in addition to our advisement and fieldwork experience. A glance through the list of our required courses turns up course titles like Curriculum in Early Childhood Education: Developing Learning Environments and Experiences for Children of Diverse Backgrounds and Abilities, Mathematics for Teachers in Diverse and Inclusive Settings, and Early Childhood Practicum I: Observing a Child Through Family/Cultural Contexts. A survey of syllabi—course goals, readings, topics, and assignments—also shows a dedication on the part of professors and instructors to design courses with issues of diversity and cultural inclusiveness in mind.
II: Our Courses

Despite the commitment to these issues in the syllabi and in the required readings, our experience in these classes painted a different picture. “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice” by Derald Sue et al. (2007), the article that we referred to in our opening conversation, is unfortunately just one of several articles that we have been exposed to in Bank Street courses without being given the opportunity to question, reflect on, and struggle with in a deep and complex way. Two courses most clearly demonstrate the disconnect between the courses’ supposed commitment to teaching about diversity and our experiences: “Early Childhood Practicum I: Observing a Child Through Family/Cultural Contexts,” and “Developmental Variations.”

Early Childhood Practicum I: Observing a Child Through Family/Cultural Contexts (Practicum), is a two credit course that is the first half of a year-long course focusing on observing, working with, and reflecting on one’s practice with a single child and family. As noted in Appendix A, there are at least four required readings that highlight the importance of teachers being culturally responsive and aware professionals. Though the readings raised provoking questions about how we relate to children and families with different backgrounds, our class-time was never devoted to significant discussions related to the struggle of being sensitive to others and honest with ourselves. Discussions on the readings were student led, and thus most likely guided by young teachers unpracticed in holding a space for challenging topics. Often, readings and discussions were included on the agenda, but never carried out during the class. One
might think we only needed more class-time, but when truly important and impassioned conversations developed, they were cut-off. If a course’s goal states that “Students will analyze their own cultural biases and points of view that affect objectivity in observation, interpretation, and perspective taking.” (Colon & Lesser, 2014) there must be a serious commitment to following through with the hard work necessary to meet it; merely stating and repeating that an anti-bias perspective is crucial to working with children and families is very little help to a student teacher.

The online course catalog states the purpose of Developmental Variations: “This course is designed to increase participants' awareness and understanding of the educational, social, cultural, linguistic and developmental implications of disability from diverse and historical points of view” (“Developmental Variations,” n.d.). The course powerpoints through the social and legal history of disability in the United States and the specific “variations” teachers will be likely to encounter in their classrooms. It began with two readings about ableism and labeling, as well as a reading response and reflective paper on personal experience with disability: “Sticks and Stones . . . and Words CAN Hurt: Eliminating Handicapping Language” by Alice Ann Darrow and Glen W. White (1997) and “Eliminating Ableism in Education” by Thomas Hehir (2002). The articles and the assignment provided a rich opportunity for reflection, and the teacher used class-time for a large group discussion. The articles reminded us that our society had labelled people as “morons,” as “insane,” (Darrow & White, 1997) and that “...in the eyes of many educators and society, it is preferable for disabled students to do things in the
same manner as non-disabled kids” (Hehir, T., 2002). Given these opinions, does equality exist in our society? Can it?

The classroom felt like a safe place to delve into the uncomfortable arena of how we relate to people with differences, and yet, we let the opportunity pass. As a class, we didn’t challenge ourselves and each other to swallow and digest the sad and unjust information we had been presented with about our society’s, and perhaps our own, relationship to diversity; rather, we treated it like any other lesson: made a few comments and moved on. Do we need a little more time and space to challenge ourselves? Do we need a teacher to make that challenge a priority? Another article, “Discarding the Deficit Model: Ambiguity and Subjectivity Contribute to the Disproportionate Placement of Minorities in Special Education” (Harry & Klingner, 2007), was assigned and given even less attention. I wonder if anyone in that class pushed themselves to care about the injustice presented in that piece. Due to the explicit focus on difference in this course, it seems like a perfect opportunity for students to thoroughly examine developmental variations with a consistent eye on themselves, each other, and their society at large.

We know from our research that in order for teachers to be confident and successful as they navigate issues of race, racism, and social justice in their classrooms, they need to have training that is devoted to building understanding around complexity (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2011). Racial inequality as it exists today is rooted in history and is characteristically more subtle, disguised, and complex than the “old fashioned” racism of the past (Sue et al., 2007). It is for these reasons that opportunities for reflection and conversation about issues of race and inequality in teacher education programs are so
necessary. If new teachers are to enter schools and classrooms that are faced with increasing diversity and inequality, then they need to be supported in their development of the skilled vision and dialogue required for both resisting structural racism in their own lives as well as teaching young children to do the same. It was disappointing to observe a disconnect in our classes between courses’ stated goals and the extent to which we felt these goals were left unmet.

Looking back, several courses at Bank Street offered us opportunities that were richer than the experiences described above, but still left us with only an introduction to the work we now see to be so critical to our development as teachers. The following two courses give examples of good conversations, material, and assignments without sufficient follow-up or depth to help us establish real meaning.

Language Acquisition and Learning in a Linguistically Diverse Society took off with an enthusiastic reach towards stirring students minds to think differently about the diversity apparent in language and the powerful connection between language, culture, and identity. There was an initial reflective paper on our personal development of language with prompts such as, “What biases do you think you have regarding languages, language acquisition, learning and language use?” (Costa, [syllabus], 2013) Readings and small group work followed this assignment based on a handful of articles, each focused on a culturally based language difference. Everyone was asked to choose the article of most interest to them, to participate in small group discussions with readers of other articles, and to have a large group discussion touching on some of the ideas that came up in the small groups. This was a rich activity, as was the visit from a former
student who presented the culture/dialect of a region in California. Each of these experiences that occurred early in the semester seemed to prime us for thinking about language as a more complex, diverse, and personal part of being human.

The foundation for more work was set by these initial experiences, but the continuation of this work never happened. The course lost its connection to questions of bias, and of personal relationship to different languages and cultures. Sadly, my memory of the last ten classes includes nothing near as important and transformative as those first few days. Again, was there too much other information to be covered? Did we tire as the semester went on? Could the more academic, and also necessary, course content not be interwoven with a strong connection to language in our society? Why did the course lose its momentum?

Another course at Bank Street gave a similar feeling of incompletion; work left not only undone, but only partially begun. The one credit course, Working with All Children and Families is meant to be an introductory course; however it can be taken during any semester. The main text for the course is a beautiful book, The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down written by Anne Fadiman, a journalist weaving together the perspectives of Western Health Professionals and a Hmong family to portray a complex intersection of culture and care. The course requires that its students read the book, there are in-class conversations and reflections in which the book can be discussed, but there was little expectation that everyone actually read the book. Discussion felt half-hearted: some eager to engage, others waiting for the conversation to end. How could such an excellent text be given a greater presence and really used as a touchstone to experience a
The course did, however, demonstrate a way for all to participate by having long small group discussions on the last day. Groups of four or five talked about personal experiences for a full hour. The time was reflective and connective. Then, it ended, as did the course; we never sat down with those people again. Good conversations started, ended, and along we go...

Two courses we took stand out to us (for significantly different reasons) as exceptions to this trend at Bank Street: EDUC 530: Foundations of Modern Education (Foundations) with Professor B and EDUC 892: Developmental Systems I: Connecting Research in Early Development to Practice in Early Childhood Education with Professor A.

Developmental Systems was a two credit course taken in the autumn of our final year at Bank Street. It showed us the impact a teacher can have on the delivery and success of a course. Though the content of the Developmental Systems wasn’t heavy in material related to social justice and anti-bias education, the teacher keenly followed her students’ interest in this topic, offered extra resources, used extra time for discussion, acknowledged the upsetting current events during the semester, and let us know that our interests, particularly in social justice and diversity, could take an eminent place in her classroom. She didn’t shy away from the topic of racism when it was raised, and she encouraged us to deeply engage in our personal development outside of the classroom. The teacher may not have designed a course in which anti-bias education was a primary concern, but she did an excellent job of demonstrating how a teacher can adjust her agenda to meet the more critical need of her students. Her class invited dialogue between

*life-determining conflict between cultures?*
students as well as with the teacher; all work and feedback was read and responded to with thoughtful questions and suggestions. Her teaching stood out as refreshing, brave, and interactive.

Foundations is a three credit course, and one of the first courses we took in our three years of study at Bank Street. From beginning to end, this course was rich with experience connected to social justice and diversity. The class began with an introductory activity about our names. We reflected and shared, breaking the ice, but we also tapped into our identities, origins, and cultures. We also did an introductory activity naming differences and similarities between ourselves and the peers in our small groups. Early in the course, we each shared for five minutes about an artifact from that was representative of ourselves. Again, the activity required reflection and communication that revealed similarities and differences. We were growing a diverse and connected class community.

Foundations was continually led with a passionate voice, urging us to connect the reading we were doing to our past and current experiences. We were asked to design and execute and a Social Action Research project that empowered us to see how our work could activate change in the very communities we were part of. We reflected on and built a page long theory of what education was for us, and we wrote essays on the Bank Street classic: John Dewey’s *Experience and Education*. The course included readings by Diane Ravitch, George Counts, and an array of philosophers impacting the history of education. It also drew our attention to the professor’s work of creating a diverse learning environment in a public school in Montclair, New Jersey. We watched videos and discussed the challenge of such an endeavor from the perspectives of the children, the
teachers, and the school community. This course most thoroughly addressed that which we want more of at Bank Street: the multifaceted and powerful personal and community exploration of diversity and social justice.

III: Supervised Fieldwork

Outside of coursework, the major piece of the Bank Street experience comes through work in student advisement and fieldwork. Conference groups meet weekly for two hours. It is an intimate setting—a small group designed to build trust and to bring depth to conversations that new teachers can have as they reflect on their fieldwork. By design, conference group could be a place that allowed for both the space and the safety for conversations about the intersections of race, gender, class, and other identities as they exist in our classrooms. Our conference group was a powerful space for us to develop as teachers. We listened to each other’s stories, learned from others’ experiences, and gained key information related to the field. The seven of us became friends as we learned about each other’s personal lives and approaches to education. We also developed trusting and respectful relationships with our advisor. It was a meaningful and influential experience. It was not, however, a space where we explored cultural competencies or systems of inequality in depth.

IV: Extracurricular Work in Social Justice at Bank Street

As we began our final year at Bank Street, we became more and more aware of the perceived gaps in our training. We were well versed in the Developmental
Interaction Approach and Progressive pedagogy, but we felt underprepared for the activist aspect of teaching.

What biases are we bringing into our classrooms? How can we design more inclusive and diverse classrooms? What is the framework for a curriculum that empowers children to see injustice and work to change it?

Feeling disappointed and perhaps a bit discouraged, we sought out conversations about race and social justice at Bank Street. We knew that our perspectives were only our own, so we spoke to fellow students and faculty. We wondered if our experiences were unique or were they part of a larger institutional trend.

We found that we were not alone. Fellow students in classes mentioned similar stories--articles that did not get discussed, insensitive comments made by students that were not addressed, and meaningful moments that were passed over. One student told us a story of a guest speaker in a class using a term that many might find outdated if not derogatory to describe a student’s ethnicity. The comment went unaddressed.

We were disappointed in what we saw as a trend at Bank Street, but we were also feeling energized. We grew more passionate about finding spaces to think and talk about our feelings, our biases, our apprehensions, and our hopes for our teaching. While we were exploring these ideas and seeking out spaces to support our thinking, a national discourse was taking place on the subject of systemic racism and policing tactics. The deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, the decisions not to charge the officers involved with a crime, and the events that followed in Ferguson, New York City, and around the country added urgency to our search.
We organized a community conversation with representatives from the Council of Students (COS) and the Bank Street Anti-Racist Allies that asked the question, “How can teachers talk about Ferguson in the classroom?” By chance, our conversation took place the day after the decision was made not to indict the officer involved in Eric Garner’s death. Seventy people came to the discussion--students, faculty, and alumni as well as teachers and parents not affiliated with the College. We heard stories from teachers who wanted to talk to their students about what was happening but for several reasons stopped short. One teacher and graduate student, we’ll call her Emily, told a story of a child in her class whose response to a cheerful “Good morning!” had been “No! It’s a horrible morning,” before telling the teacher that “a police officer killed a man and nothing is happening!” Emily described her student as angry and upset and expressing a desire and a need to talk about the situation. Before Emily could respond, her head teacher told the whole class that “This subject will not be discussed here.” Another told a story about children in a Kindergarten class in a neighborhood nearby much of the protest activity. One child had asked “Why are there so many policemen outside of our school?” to which her teacher did not know how to respond.

Participants wondered aloud about what type of conversations were developmentally appropriate. Teachers and graduate students expressed feelings of unpreparedness--worries about saying the right thing, how to remain objective, wondering what parents or administrators might think or say. As we ended our meeting, we had two big takeaways. First, teachers were craving supportive spaces like the one we had created to share their concerns, listen to stories from peers, and discuss difficult
topics. Second, while there was agreement from the group that part of the role of the teacher is to support their students through difficult conversations, many teachers felt untrained to do so and were therefore avoiding such situations.

Excited and engaged after a powerful conversation, we pressed into the issue. We challenged ourselves to engage with our students about race and inequality. We formed a small working group of graduate students with the support of COS and the Anti-Racist Allies and we discussed social justice education at the Graduate School of Education. This group planned follow-up community conversations designed to give students and faculty “practice” at talking about race with children and with colleagues. Within our group we shared feelings about our experiences at Bank Street. Students described experiences similar to our own. Some had come to Bank Street in large part because of its history of commitment to progressive pedagogy as a means towards social justice. Some had experiences with professors who worked hard to incorporate messages about multiculturalism and anti-bias into each class session. Everyone had experiences of missed opportunities like the ones we described from our courses above.

We asked, “How can Bank Street better support teachers as they approach an increasingly diverse and increasingly unequal student body?”

A major concern of ours was the limited diversity in our group and in the student body of the college. We actively worked to diversify our group, reaching out to students of color and alumni to join us as we challenged Bank Street to add strength to its mission of inclusiveness. The 2015 Middle States Decennial Self-Study that was conducted by Bank Street and submitted to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education noted
that in 2014, 88% of matriculated Bank Street graduate students were women and 70% were white. Particularly of note was the stability of those statistics over the past five years (Bank Street College of Education, 2015). These numbers are distressing and parallel the level of segregation that is pervasive in New York City schools. Rising cost of living in New York coupled with the high cost of tuition at Bank Street ($1444 per credit in the 2015-16 Fiscal Year) has made the graduate school inaccessible for many students of color (Roach, 2015).

As a group we developed several ideas for creating lasting, institutionally supported change, some of which we (Giuliana and Molly) detail in the “Proposals” section of this Independent Study.

V: Seeking Support Outside of Bank Street

Participating in the work of reimagining a Bank Street commitment to training teachers to be agents of change was has been exciting for us, but it was not changing our feelings of being unprepared to teach to change the world. We sought support outside of Bank Street. At the suggestion of Professor A, we joined a group called Anti-racist White Educators Group (AWE-G) an affinity group run by the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE). We spoke with our colleagues and supervisors about folding more anti-bias curriculum into our schools and classrooms. We attended professional development workshops. Giuliana attended an Undoing Racism workshop. Molly attended the NYSAIS Diversity Conference.

AWE-G meetings that we have attended have explored implicit bias, school disciplinary measures and their relationship to racism, intersecting identities, and
teaching “Ferguson” as a white educator. Each meeting begins with a speaking protocol called “Story Circle.” We each share a story based on a prompt for 2-3 minutes without interruption before allowing the whole group to participate in “cross-talk”. The “Story Circle” allows for speakers to flesh out their ideas without fear of interruption and allows listeners to do so actively and without the mind wandering towards a response. AWE-G has been a safe space for us to ask questions, work on half-formed opinions, and hear from other teachers. The women and men that we’ve met at AWE-G meetings are struggling with the same questions that we are, and the meetings have been a meaningful space to hear from other white teachers about their progress and their setbacks as they navigate teaching with an anti-racist lens. AWE-G honors the need for both ongoing reflection and the support of peers. It is a community that we are happy to have found, and a model that we believe would fit well into the culture at Bank Street.

We have also felt lucky this year to teach in schools that have embraced our growing interests and have supported us as we have sought out resources for teaching towards social justice. We have each had the opportunity to attend professional development workshops geared towards training teachers to develop skills for building a culturally inclusive classroom. Giuliana’s ongoing conversations with administration about race and diversity have led to a commitment from her school to strengthen its understanding of issues of diversity. Next year, she will pilot a diversity program including presenting to faculty, leading seminars, supporting teachers, and learning what resources will most help the school as it moves forward. Molly’s administration worked with her to plan and facilitate an optional faculty meeting on the topic of race and racism.
She was also given leadership to rethink and revise the Kindergarten curriculum surrounding Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The new focus hinged on the concept of “fairness” and challenged the students to be activists--what is unfair in your world? how can you act to change it?

As we look back on the past year--the research that we have done, the conversations that we have had, the exciting work happening both in our schools and at Bank Street--we have developed a framework for thinking about social justice teacher training. We believe that in order to prepare educators to teach towards a better world, they need the space to 1) explore and reflect on their own history and biases, and 2) they need to build an understanding of the complexities of structural inequalities through discussions in a community of peers. The following sections are our attempt to do just that. We have each written a short reflective piece on our histories and biases and then we conclude with some ideas for how Bank Street can better integrate the group exploration of inequality into its curriculum.
Reflections on Our Relationship to Race and Racism

As a kid I remember working it out this way: there was a world in which you wore your everyday clothes on Sunday, and there was a world in which you wore your Sunday clothes everyday -- I wanted the world in which you wore your Sunday clothes every day. I wanted it because it represented something better, a more exciting and civilized and human way of living; a world which came to me through certain scenes of felicity which I encountered in fiction, in the movies, and which I glimpsed sometimes through the windows of great houses on Sunday afternoons when my mother took my brother and me for walks through the wealthy white sections of the city.

Ralph Ellison (1953)
Yay! We’re almost done… So what have we learned?

The deepest, the hardest, the most transformative piece is the reflection. How have I internalized these systems that perpetuate racism? And as I learn, as I build my vision and awareness and as I see... How do I avoid the shame? The self-doubt? The self-hate? If I know that the hardest part is going deep and I know that I won’t like what I find, where do I find the courage to keep going? How can I be so sure that I’ll find a way to change? And to do the work and there’s so much work towards justice?

Reflection. I think rivers, surfaces of water that at first seem to be water and then, there, the trees, the sky, clouds, a heron. Looking in myself, at first I see me, then what? Then, so much more: the desire for justice, the shame, the questions, oh so many questions. Reflection. I think mirrors. Judgement. Reflection. I think of writing, of the journals I’ve kept since fourth grade, piled in my closet. Me on the page, for me alone. Reflection. I think people, friends, conversations, hearing the words you just said spoken back to you. Reflection. I think a rainy window pane, I see my face, I see the glass, I see the rain drops sliding down, I see the storm outside. I’m in here, but I see my tears in the reflection too. Reflections feel inside and out.

And here we go... into the river...
Giuliana’s Story

213 West 18th Street, Wilmington, DE: my father’s house.

I went there, with my brother, on Wednesdays and every other weekend, from the time I was five to eleven years old. Cracked cement sidewalk, broken glass, unweeded dandelions in patches of sharp city grass, creaky, paint-chipped front porch, and Pete in his rocker next door. Pete warned us not to trick-or-treat, cause we might be given razors in the candy. Pete had a big, friendly smile, a gold tooth or two, a round belly, and jeans. He was my dad’s neighbor. He was in the row house adjoining ours, and he often greeted us when we arrived from his post on the front porch. I remember Pete as a colorful, cheerful, shiny-faced, different talking, black granddad. He lounged on the porch, leaning back in his chair, sometimes calling in to his house. I never felt judged by Pete, even though I judged my dad for having the messiest cement steps leading up to his door, the messiest tiny back yard, and he must have also had the messiest car with keys that were often locked inside or lost outside. Pete seemed to have it together in the neighborhood. Pops, at that time Papa, my dad, did not.

We were the only white family that lived on the street. I didn’t feel comfortable there, but I was also used to the farm where I grew up: the safest, most fun, most beautiful place full of family -- people who looked like me, spoke like me, played with me, loved me. Two grandparents, four of their children and ten grandchildren... until the other four children and ten more grandkids came over the holidays. A big family. A clean place. In fact, the big house, where my grandparents lived and where we all coalesced over holidays and rainy afternoons, was cleaned by women who were hired. We always
had a cleaning lady; we always hired help. It hurts to say, and we don’t use the word, but it rises as I write: servants.

One woman was named Virginia. She, from what I overheard, lived in a trailer out in Unionville. She had a young daughter who was pregnant, and she stole money from my too-generous, non-confrontational, perhaps pitying grandmother. She was a very light skinned black woman, or so I assumed from how she spoke. She left after about five years. Steal might not be the right verb: she borrowed a lot of money and never gave it back. According to my mom, Mimi had been taken advantage of.

Sarah, on the other hand, came to the farm once a week on a bus from Wilmington to iron my grandfather’s shirts. Now she comes about once a month. She has square shoulders, deep black, creased skin, teeny curls down to her neckline, and thick glasses. I can hear her slow deep voice and her metered laugh. She’d sit quietly on a stool in the kitchen while we all ran in and out, while the dogs wagged and chased around her feet, while our parents came and checked in, and where my grandmother, Mimi, was in charge.

Sarah was the part of the family of servants that Mimi and Hal, my grandparents, had hired when my mom was little. She has worked for the Haskells for about sixty years. Hal had sent her kids and nephews through college. Mimi was kind to her and volunteered around holidays in her neighborhood, or a neighborhood like hers (what does that mean, Giuliana?), bringing Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. I thought Sarah was treated well. Sarah is part of being home. I don’t love Sarah, I don’t know Sarah, but I would help Sarah, and I feel sad for her.
Today, Geneva lives at the house. Mimi is dead, and Hal is almost 94. She often cooks him dinner, and over the holidays, she and some of her family members cook big dinners for all of our family. Twenty to forty of us arrive to a kitchen busy with food prep, we’re served a big buffet, and cleaned up after. Jake, my brother, hates that Hal hires them to make us dinner and clean up. I, too, feel uncomfortable, but I sympathize with Mom and her sisters, who would likely take-on all of the stress of making food and cleaning up for so many people. I kind of wish they weren’t black, then it wouldn’t feel so weird. But, I love Geneva. She also works at my mom’s flower shop. If she weren’t black, I might just think it were a situation when someone is hired to cook a big meal for a family, like Ellen, a white cook we used to have. It’s like going out for supper, but getting to stay home and play cards and wiffle ball, wear messy clothes, be with the dogs... Hal has enough money to do that. Is it bad? I’m not sure. Should we not hire black people to cook just because they are black?

There’s something else, another problem, another stab of uncertain shame when I look towards home. I feel like I’m revealing a dirty secret about my family; a secret our whiteness allows for us to ignore. A secret that we don’t hide, because, well, I don’t know why; because we don’t know it’s wrong? Almost all of my uncle’s workers, the workers in his fruit and vegetable fields, are Mexicans. A couple of families live here all year round and their kids go to the same school I went to. The other families come during the summer and live in the apartments in our barn; real, furnished, though small, run down apartments (in case you were wondering). They return to Mexico in the winters. I asked my aunt how much she thinks they get paid. I asked her if she thought it was ok --
moral, ethically ok -- for my uncle to hire them. She said, “To be honest, I’ve never asked. I don’t want to know the answer.” This furious, proud, Los Angelean liberal aunt won’t ask her brother how much he pays his workers. Something’s wrong. Should I ask him? Could he have his farm, his roadside stand, his very moderate income, if he didn’t underpay people, oppress people? Is everything wrong with my home? Are you picturing a plantation? because, it’s not! I swear it’s not! It’s so full of love, of hard work, of good intentions, of childhood... of white innocence; no, yuck! of something...of blindness? I’m disgusting myself, and something’s not right. But it’s not all wrong; it can’t be. Jake, my brother, says my uncle pays them fair wages, and they like to work for him; the same families come back each year. I’m just confused. I’m sad. I love my home.

At the public school I went to through ninth grade, there was only one black kid in our grade of over three hundred. I also only knew of one girl who was jewish. I remember learning about the Underground Railroad, the Civil War, Slavery, Martin Luther King Jr., and Rosa Parks. In fourth grade I read a book by Gary Paulsen called *Nightjohn*. It broke me. I cried. I made my dad read it. He was blown away. He loved it, and he was very picky about books. I think a man, a good man, gets whipped and beaten a lot. I think he loses a finger or gets salt in his wounds. I remember physical pain from that book and other pain: relentless injustice and solitude. I remember loving Nightjohn, but I can’t remember the exact story. I became, for a time, confused and deeply worried about humans, about our past, about the existence of a cruelty I couldn’t imagine.

I went to boarding school for the final three years of high school. It was a very different place, and I felt awed at the diversity of students. My roommate was from
Maine. I had classmates from Hong Kong, Romania, Japan, Canada, Korea, and other foreign countries. There were about five black kids in my class of 90. It felt diverse to me; however, the diversity wasn’t embraced; it wasn’t talked about. Most of the black kids were closest to each other. I thought some of them didn’t like me, but I didn’t make an effort. I was intimidated by Alethea, I thought Meryl was uninterested in me, and I was shy with most boys. I was primarily trying to survive and thrive for myself. Without race being brought to my attention, I ignored it: race was not my issue, and I couldn’t feel that there was a big problem because, for some reason, they weren’t my close friends.

Intellectually, however, at Groton I was most inspired by the US History, Race Relations, and Court and Constitution classes I took. (As well as my many English electives) The teacher, Mr. Lyons, had been hugely influential in my ability to speak-up in class. I loved his classes, and I respected his choice to bring these topics to his students -- even though I didn’t apply any learning to our own campus. In US history, he chose to spend more time on Reconstruction, rather than rushing into more Modern History that we would be tested on. He insisted that it was important, and he kept us there.

As a term paper for his class -- one of the big Groton assignments-- I wrote about Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address. I wrote about how the press responded in Philadelphia. The lines, “...until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword...” were chiseled in my mind. This was so bold, so brave. Was it true? I loved Lincoln. I loved his writing. I loved this message, and it scared me. The Civil War clearly didn’t balance the blood spilled by the 250 years of slavery, though that war may have begun to deliver some justice through spilled blood. Or were they only
fighting about something else? We couldn’t continue towards equality. We didn’t. We wouldn’t. Why not? Why not today? Is there too much fear in creating equality? Will equality eliminate power? Perhaps we, in America, need to revisit the ideals of democracy. Perhaps there can be equality and leadership. Perhaps we need to consider humanity... or some philosophical search for goodness and truth... or the stories, the human, animal, earthen, magical, and spiritual stories that bind us together, not as slaves, but as fellow humans holding up mirrors for each other, offering each other lullabies, quilts, questions...

I found myself, in my studies past Groton, drawn to these questions. However, I didn’t choose America to study for my undergraduate years. Rather, I experienced the diversity of a European, a British, university. There were very few black people. There was condescending criticism of George W. Bush, and of the unrefined, loud, proud American manner. I didn’t consider that I was avoiding the American experience of race by going to Scotland. I was there reading English literature and studying Italian and French Art History; I was a humanist, for better or worse. Questions of race didn’t emerge, as it wasn’t really part of my prior knowledge, or at least the not the knowledge I was aware of learning. However, I was a defender of American Democracy and the Founding Fathers, of some idealist history of brilliant writers, of ideas; of some image of the states that I held dear, even if I were also first to criticize the stupid Republicans in office and the rowdy college kids who were thrilled that under-age drinking was legal in the UK.
I came back home after University to be near my dying grandmother, Mimi. I loved her so much. She was a second mother. She was beautiful, matriarchal, generous. She was a pained woman, in many ways, but she took immense joy in her grandchildren. I followed my interest in reading and writing by doing a Masters at St. John’s College in Annapolis, MD. The curriculum was based on a canon of texts that “Shaped Western Civilization.” There were no black people in my graduating class of maybe sixty students. There was one black professor. There were no texts in the required curriculum written by a black person outside of the Politics and Society semester. There, we read a few pieces. We may have also read a poem or two... However, what we talked about seemed to be universal. We were exercising our thinking, as free as possible from historical contexts. When we read Plato, we didn’t think much about how he was impacted by the socio-political period of Athens. We thought more about his thought process and could we understand what he meant through his language. I loved reading and thinking about these brilliant, powerful, fascinating minds...and yet, I was unhappy. My grandmother had died, my boyfriend had broken up with me and stayed in Scotland, and I was in the early years of recovering from a ruthless eating disorder. I read, I wrote, but speaking with peers was very hard. At St. John’s I lacked connection with real people. Luckily, while studying I started working for a non-profit that was all about communication and learning through discussion. It gave me more exposure to diversity in schools, and I began to have a deeply meaningful experience with black men: I was participating in discussions in a medium security prison.
In that prison I felt respect. It was shared. These men gathered weekly to discuss a short text, to tell stories, to raise big questions. They weren’t speaking to prove their intellect, as some St. John’s people did, they were speaking from their hearts, and they were listening. They didn’t roll their eyes at a young white girl. They listened and encouraged me to speak. I started reclaiming my voice in this circle of mostly black men. I felt their difference, their huge difference in life experience, but I also felt at ease in my naivete. They accepted me for that hour, and they even thanked me for coming. I did everything I could to make those Tuesday night discussions.

Meanwhile, I had graduated from St. John’s, completed my year and a half Montessori training and worked with a woman for a year who was trying to start a school for kids in South Eastern DC. There, I had no white children in my group of twelve kids. But again, I didn’t think about how their world was hugely different because of race. I thought about money; I thought about class. Not race.

I moved to NYC. To the Upper West Side. My Montessori school was founded with the promise of bringing a diverse population of students together.

I went to Bank Street. Also a place founded with ideals that point to embracing diversity. I still wasn’t really thinking about it. I wasn’t thinking about it until I started thinking about it, talking about it, feeling the frustration of starting and having to stop conversations, reading the news and having strong reactions when I gave myself a more than three second window to feel into something... It hit me that I had a blind spot. I cared about people, all people, but I was ignoring how brutal a society I was part of -- brutal for some people, brutal for a man-made thing called a ‘race.’
I started to look where I hadn’t looked before, or not recently, not consistently, not with the active intention of revealing to myself who I am in this world. That is happening now.

I do not have powerful, first-hand experiences of racial injustice. I have not been aware of injustices happening in close proximity, in the realm of my visceral, personal attention. I still do not have close friends who are black. I have felt so little emotional connection. I feel shallow, inadequate, and weak in this conversation. I’ve lived, unaware, in my own little non-black world.

I feel less blind and more blind at the same time. I feel more liberated and more stuck. Utterly confused, and yet with more certainty that I am pointing in a better direction than I was before. I’m starting to see my privilege without only gratitude, but with fear, with shame, with the question of what do I do now?

I was talking to Pops about race a few days ago. I was telling him that I had to write this section of my thesis, and he said, “What about music?” I said, “Oh my god, yes! I have always wanted to have Ella Fitzgerald’s voice! Since I was, what?... four?” He laughed. “About then, I bet. And Louis Armstrong and Chuck Berry. You loved all that. We listened to it all the time.” I agreed and added happily, “And Aretha Franklin at Mom’s. And Tracy Chapman.” A hopeful feeling came over me. Some hopeful sun shone on my shameful soul and filled it with Ella’s voice. For a second I thought, *Maybe I’m not so racist. Maybe I’m not that bad. Maybe my upbringing showed me that music, if nothing else, was best done by people who didn’t look like me.* Three, two, one... clouds return. How proud of you to feel good about yourself! How disgusting. This is not your
sun, your light, to feel. You can love singing with Ella, you can even plan to name your daughter after her, but you are part of the problem; stop basking in your lovely, loving light and consider what it’s like in the dark.
Molly’s Story

All year long I have been trying to think back. When was my anti-racist awakening? Which moments from my childhood were eye-opening? When did my perception shift towards the realization that I was living in an unequal world? When did I decide that that was not okay? That I was going to do something about it?

In fact, I don’t remember such a moment. I remember learning about racism, slavery, and the civil rights movement in elementary school. I remember feeling shame about the white people in those stories—knowing that what they had done was wrong, wishing that it wasn’t true, wishing that it wasn’t like me. And yet that memory doesn’t particularly feel like a beginning, I was already in process. At least as far back as I can remember, I was always thinking about this work, always piecing the puzzle together, thinking about how to make the world more fair.

And as I have tried and tried again to write this piece. I again don’t know where to start. This is the third iteration of my reflection. So where to start if not the beginning? Why, if I can read and think and talk and talk about racism and about identity and about my privilege, does it feel so hard to sit down and write about it?

I want to be as full and honest and clear as possible, but I know that the structures of inequality that exist are bigger and more complex than I can begin to write about. I don’t want to misrepresent problems and structures and I care so much. I don’t want to let myself down. So where to begin?

I want to tell stories—vivid anecdotes that carry emotion and weight and share the pain and confusion associated with a lifetime of unearned privileges. Except stories of
privilege, at least mine, are not emotional or painful, they are invisible. Stories of my privilege are told in the daily interactions that I don’t have. The evidence of my privilege is everywhere and it has taken much of my 26 years to begin to see it, to take note of it, and hopefully now, to shine a light on it.

It is hard. This is hard. I keep going back and scanning Peggy McIntosh’s *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* for reminders and for inspiration. Oh wow. The first time I read that… was it in college? Wow. I just sat with it. And read it and re-read it and I made my friends read it so that we could talk about it. And then sometimes I forget about it. I am meant to forget my privilege. It is white noise—unless you’re listening for it, you may not know its there.

Yesterday evening I went to the grocery store. I walked down the aisles scanning the rows of food, picking out items and checking them off my list. I stood, examining tomatoes, checking each one, searching for those that were perfectly ripe. I wandered in the cheese section, sampling anything I could get my hands on—smoked gouda, manchego, romano, brie. I scanned the check-out lines, stood on the shortest one, and paid with my credit card. “I don’t need a bag” I told the cashier as I carefully loaded up my canvas bag and went home. And that is it. That’s the end of my story. No one came over to me to point out the “Take One Please” sign by the cheeses. No one followed me around as I slowly meandered the aisles. No one stopped to ask for my receipt as I left the store. No one seemed to take note of my presence at all—I was meant to be there.

I have lived in New York City for my entire life. I have never been stopped by a police officer. I have never been searched in the subway.
Okay well that is not exactly true. I have had two police encounters in my life in New York, both when I was in high school, and both times I was doing something illegal. Actually both of my encounters with police have a lot in common. I was with friends, I was in the park, I was smoking weed. The similarities continue… both times we noticed the cops coming and tossed the half-smoked joint about fifteen feet away. Both times the cops came over, asked us what we were doing there, told us they need to see some identification, and both times I was able to walk away with no consequences. Both times my male friends of color were arrested for possession of marijuana.

I haven’t thought about either of those moments in years. I remember being so scared at the time. Thinking throughout the whole ordeal, what is going to happen to me? How can I get out of this situation? Remain calm, remain calm. After the officers left, taking my friend with them (Matthew on one occasion, Ryan on another), I felt relieved. So relieved that I wasn’t being written up, I wouldn’t have a criminal record, I could still apply to all the colleges I wanted to, I could still get a summer job, etc etc. Those moments of joy quickly faded to moments of outrage, why was it Matthew? How was he any more guilty than I was? What evidence was there that the weed was Ryan’s and not ours? Why was it him who took the fall? And yet, I had let the situation run its course. I had stood and listened and obeyed. I watched as something I knew to be unjust unfolded. I saved my outrage for a time when I once again felt safe and assured.

And here it comes again. The shame. I am sick thinking about those moments. The moments when my fear and my weakness comes at the expense of my values. I think about the times in my life when I have been involved in activism. I have marched, I
have volunteered, I have signed petitions. I have walked out, I have sat-in, and I have died in. Yet when the blue uniforms arrive, I have never found the courage to stay, to show my solidarity and to make a sacrifice for my cause. Will I find the strength to act fully and completely in my beliefs?

It is so hard. This is so hard. There was an Onion article about a year ago, “Woman Takes Short Half Hour Break From Being Feminist to Enjoy TV Show.” Is it too burdensome to fully and completely and always consider the many overlapping injustices that impact our lives? Is it too wide and deep and changing? Can I consider all of inequities associated with race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, religion, region, and others and still still be able to kick back and enjoy my life? Perhaps not.

And if I “take a break” or focus on other things or say it is “not the time” for truly radical change, am I a hypocrite? or worse? And what of those people whose daily interactions with these systems is not white noise? Who don’t have the opportunity to turn off the critical part of their brain?

At our first conversation that we hosted at Bank Street on the topic of Teaching Ferguson my division head came and she shared a story of when she was pregnant with her twins and on bedrest. When her husband was home with her, he too, was living with her pregnancy--he was shopping and cooking for the family, helping her when she was uncomfortable, doing anything and everything to support her as they worked together for a healthy pregnancy. He could, however, take time off. He could go to the museum with his friends, he could go to work or for a walk in the park and then he could be away from the pregnancy. She, on the other hand, was always pregnant. There was no forgetting
and no escaping. That, she said, is how she thought about white privilege. “I can choose to be present in the Black Lives Matter movement. I can use my voice to try to dismantle a racist system, but I can also go to a museum, go to work or for a walk in the park, and then choose to no longer be present--black people cannot do that.”

Hers was a story that moved me. Such a relatable analogy. And now I think back to Peggy McIntosh. I need to take note of, speak about, and write about my privilege.

I can get through security at an airport with relative ease. My bags have never been opened and rifled through. I will move out of my parents apartment this summer and feel confident that I will find an apartment at a price I can afford. It will likely be in a neighborhood that will increasingly be inhabited by people that are of the same race as me and at the expense of the people of color who live there already. And I can always get a cab. I can go out with my friends and I can drink too much and I can stumble out of a bar and into the street and even then I can get a cab to take me home. I am given the benefit of the doubt. Oops! My metrocard is empty! But it is okay--I can almost without fail get on the bus anyway.

And one privilege that has been weighing on me heavily over the past year--I do not need to teach my white students to be aware of the painful truths of systemic racism for their physical safety.

But really I do. I must. I need to act on all of these things. I need to be critical of the assumptions, benefits, privileges that I get for no reason other than the color of my skin, and for which people of color need to work for each and every day. And I need to think about my biases. And I need to think about my appropriations. And my
exotifications. Why is it that I claim to hate sexism and I call out my friends, family, and colleagues for making sexist assumptions, but I happily dance to hip hop songs that objectify and devalue women? Why do I hold off on criticisms of black culture but I am so quick to lash out against white men? And did I just now equate hip hop to “black culture” rather than just name the artists or the particular songs? When white artists like Robin Thicke get criticized for the same exact problems with the portrayal of women, they are not made to apologize on behalf of white music. So what am I doing? Am I holding back criticisms so as to actively reverse a racist trend? Or am I actively participating in that racist media bias by not holding black artists to the same standard? No answers yet, but I will keep asking questions.

And what about my language? What am I doing when I write emails to my friends and I use the word “yall” instead of “you”? I am not from the south nor have I ever lived there. Is it just a lighthearted way to refer to a group? Am I implicitly poking fun at others? It is not a word from my people or my culture. That is not to say that the word is off limits, though that is really not my call to make, but perhaps the bigger question is why? Why risk appropriation? It feels like a tiny thing to me--do I use the word yall or not--but of course it is really not my question to answer.

And what about my body language? Do I tense up or hold my purse closer to my body when riding the subway near men of color? Do I avoid eye contact with men of color on the sidewalk? Is my experience of street harassment more coded by my identity as a woman or as a white person? And does that matter?
And what of my sex life? And there it is. This is the part that I have been avoiding. I have most often and most vocally been attracted to and had relations with men of color. And really specifically black men. I wonder about this pattern. I wonder if I am exotifying these men. I fear that I am exotifying these men. Almost fetishizing them. The notion is truly disgusting to me. Worse it is dehumanizing to those that I have been with. Those who I have talked with, laughed with, shared with. Those who I’ve known well or less well. Who I have cared for and about. And I think it’s not true and I want badly for it not to be true. It’s so heinous, could it even possibly be true? But unless I explore the idea... Unless I really push to my least comfortable place…

I’m back at the abyss now. Touching the edge of something bigger, deeper, and more confusing than I think I can tackle.

I am pushing forward. I feel the discomfort but I am trying, at times desperately, to move past the shame. Past the guilt. To reflect on my privileges, biases, assumptions, and preferences and for those reflections to not stop me in my tracks, but to inspire me towards action. I will question my motives in my relationships, aiming above all, to connect with other people and to listen to their many stories. I will speak out when I see my friends (and hopefully anyone!) being treated differently because of the color of their skin and I will not wait until I am safe to do so.

And I will teach my white students about privilege, power, and racism because lives depend on it and because I need to give my students the opportunity to participate in the difficult and beautiful work of anti-racism.
Proposals for the Bank Street Graduate School of Education

*If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow.*

*John Dewey (1944)*
Remember in Professor A’s class when you showed me that website with white people talking about being white? I got so annoyed and then confused. I hated that someone would say they felt ‘proud’ to be white. Proud of a skin color made no sense to me. That’s what I thought of as white: something you didn’t work for, something you were just born with, something you had no influence over... so how could you be proud of it? I thought about being proud of writing a paper, of running a race, of standing up for yourself; not proud because I happen to be born a certain way, to a certain group. Proud to be white; proud to be black; how ridiculous. People were obviously using the word wrong...I remember having big feelings and starting to share them... and sensing you were on a very different page. I could feel my big reaction retreat a little, and I felt naive. You knew something I didn’t. I was missing something, maybe... Do you remember?

Yeah! Wow that feels like a really long time ago. Just six months later, six months of thinking, reading, and speaking with you, I feel that I have a much clearer perspective. And six months ago I had already been thinking and reading and speaking with people about race for a really long time! I remember in one of the first AWE-G meetings that we went to, someone shared that she really tended to only speak about race with people who she knew were already on her same page. I was the same way. It is so hard to communicate such big ideas with people who aren’t there yet. And the conversations are so personal... I found I would get angry and emotional and I would lose the clarity of my perspective which would make me angrier. It’s not a way to grow though. It’s not a way to... what’s the term? Work from your growing edge? We need to have other perspectives to check us when we don’t make sense, to remind us of the depth when we forget it, and to support us when it is so so big and so so hard. I loved that conversation about those wacky Buffalo white people. It did sound silly to hear them talking about pride in their whiteness. But I think about white people who have risked their lives, lost their lives, fighting for equity... Andrew Goodman and Mickey Schwerner—white men who were murdered by the KKK registering voters in 1964... then I am proud of whiteness, proud of that heritage. I never really thought about it that way until talking with you.
As we have researched teacher training for social justice education we have developed a framework for understanding how a successful teacher education program in social justice can function. We believe that in order for teachers to be prepared for the complexity of the systems of inequality in the school system as well as the challenging feelings associated with it, they need the opportunity and the space to not only reflect deeply on their own privileges and biases but to be able to explore these themes in a community of peers. With that framework in mind, we each set out to the hard work of deep reflection. Those are the stories that we shared in the above section. Below are some proposals for Bank Street College of Education to build greater institutional support and practice for the second part of the framework—the deep complex conversations and support from a community of peers. We have learned this year that while there is much work happening in the college on the subject of diversity, inclusiveness, and social justice, the work is largely happening in separate communities. In the Graduate school, the meeting that we have hosted and the conversations that we have had with faculty have been student initiated. We hope that in the near future the Graduate School adopts some structures to support a more consistent and integrated approach to teaching teachers to be social justice educators.

Some of our ideas are as follows...

I. Hire a Diversity Director for the GSE

Hiring a Diversity Director for the Graduate School of Education should be an initial step towards making significant institutional change. As described in the previous
section, Diversity Directors have been huge assets to school communities that desire to transform their relationship to diversity. The position would give one person the opportunity to understand the needs and shortcomings of the program and develop ways to create a Graduate School community that truly matches the intentions of the school’s mission. The Diversity Director would work closely with faculty, examine and supplement curriculum, and design specific means to better prepare faculty and students for their roles as classroom leaders. This hire would be the best way to follow through with many of our other proposals.

II. Train All Faculty

Graduate School faculty must be adequately trained for the responsibility they have to prepare their student teachers. Several faculty members at Bank Street have been trained by SEED and lead a handful of SEED seminars every year. (See above section on ‘Approaches to Addressing Racial Inequality in Schools,’ for more info on SEED.) It is unclear how many faculty members who were trained to be SEED Leaders are still teaching at Bank Street and involved in the SEED program. Whether there are few or many remaining, we propose that all faculty receive training from different programs and that the SEED seminars continue as one peer-led avenue for teachers to explore their role in creating a socially just community.

We suggest that all faculty members begin with attending an Undoing Racism workshop delivered by The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond. As described in the section on “Approaches to Addressing Racial Inequality in Schools,” the workshop explores an analysis of power and racism and gives participants the opportunity to
examine their place in this race-based system. The workshop empowers participants to work towards “undoing” racism, to become leaders towards this change in their communities, and to challenge themselves to find their “growing edge” as a participant in anti-racist work. This workshop would provide faculty with common language, a common historical understanding, the confidence that their efforts will produce change, and the self-acceptance to begin this work no matter where they are personally in their awareness, knowledge, and motivation to be part of “undoing racism.”

Secondly, the Graduate School, ideally led by a Diversity Director as done in the School for Children, should partner with Border Crossers. This program would deliver more training and support designed for the particulars within the Graduate School. Border Crossers, being an organization that focuses primarily on New York City, could truly help the Graduate School faculty offer experiences for themselves and for students to know themselves, know each other, and bring their work to the larger community: their students, families, school communities, and their city. Border Crossers would provide the long term support to ensure that faculty members were consistently developing themselves to be leaders of social justice.

III. Integrate into Conference Group

As described in the section, “Our Experience At Bank Street,” Conference groups are intimate groups of students working closely with a faculty advisor at the college and in their school communities. This arrangement provides several excellent qualities for being a safe space to invite and hold challenging conversations. First, the group has an entire year to work together, to get to know each other and to build trusting relationships.
Second, the faculty advisor gains deeper knowledge about each student teacher’s setting outside of Bank Street, enabling the advisor to prepare for conversations, raise certain topics she or he observes, and support the specific needs of every advisee. Third, the conference group holds no measure of performance; some assignments are required, but it is generally a supportive place to learn, to share, and to connect with your peers. In other words, it is an easier place for students to take risks, to raise questions that may feel too personal for a larger class, and to communicate with more honesty about parts of teaching that are truly hard, uncomfortable, and upsetting. Given these reasons, we feel conference group could be an essential piece in giving student teachers a deeply personal and shared experience of growing their awareness of and ability to act to heal the injustice in our diverse society.

IV. Mandatory 2 or 3 Credit Course

A mandatory semester-long course devoted to developing a framework for teaching social justice would be a great step towards aligning the Graduate School’s curriculum with its mission to use education as a means of bettering the world. This course would be designed for students to take early in their program. Just as Child Development serves as a lens through which students view work during their entire Bank Street career, a course devoted to race, power, and privilege and their connection to education would be a powerful additional perspective that would enhance student’s analysis of issues in education. Our experience at Bank Street has been that while many students and faculty express an interest and at times a passion for education as social justice work, class time devoted to the subject is limited and conversations only graze the
A full, semester-long course would give students the time and the space to reflect deeply on themselves and to consider the complex challenges associated with teaching social justice with peers.

Work in developing a skeleton curriculum for this course has been done in collaboration with COS and the Bank Street Anti-Racist Allies. We see this course as being guided by three major questions:

1. Who am I?
   - This piece will allow students to examine their own positionality, including social groups they identify with, as well as privileges and biases that will come to bear on their teaching.

2. What are the structures that create and perpetuate inequality and bias?
   - This will introduce conceptual frames and histories that will support students’ reflection and critical thinking as they train to teach in, and work to transform, an unjust society. Frames will include but not be limited to: race as a social construct that is experienced with real consequences, class, gender, and sexuality. The course will pay close attention to teacher bias--particularly as it relates to ELLs, students with disabilities, and students from “high need” populations.

3. How can I and my community of educators challenge oppression and build a better society?
   - To explore the social responsibility incumbent upon teachers, provide historical and contemporary examples of how Bank Street educators
practice education as and for social justice, and inspire commitment to carry on this legacy. This piece of the curriculum will build in practical approaches to social justice education such as the anti-bias curriculum.

V. Zero-Credit Course

This course would be structurally similar to the above course though the material would, of course, be scaled down. The course would, like State Mandated Workshops, would be free for students, and would be delivered in a workshop style over the course of three sessions. We see this workshop as a course taught in a small group setting and could be taught by a trained facilitator, not necessarily by a Bank Street faculty member.

VI. Efforts to Diversify Student Body and Faculty

One major obstacle for Bank Street in its efforts to strengthen its commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, and social justice is its relatively limited social diversity. In 2014, Bank Street’s student body was 88% female and 70% white. Similarly of Graduate School’s 51 faculty members, 78% are women and 73% are white (Middle States). Efforts need to be made to diversify both the student body and faculty. Bank Street tuition is also quite high in comparison to other Graduate schools of Education in New York City. At the current rate of $1444 per credit, a 54-credit program like ours would cost an incoming student close to $78,000. Needless to say, this price tag makes a Bank Street education inaccessible to many students--particularly students of color. Increased funding and awareness of the Pemberton Society, which supports graduate students of
color, and other initiatives would be good first steps towards developing a more diverse student body.

VII. “Anti-Racism Fellows”

An “Anti-Racism Fellowship” would be a unique way to continue a tradition of student leadership in social justice work at Bank Street. We envision this as a work study position. Bank Street would pay to have a group of Fellows trained in anti-racism and social justice work. These fellows would then work with faculty members to better integrate social justice education in course work. Fellows would also meet monthly for mutual support and curriculum planning. This group of students could also potentially be responsible for continuing the “Talking To Kids About Race” community conversations that have happened over the past five months at the College. We see this program as a way to give continuity to the work that graduate students can do to impact school culture at Bank Street. One year’s Fellows would mentor the following year’s cohort, creating a community of students committed to strengthening Bank Street’s place as a leader in progressive, culturally inclusive, and justice-seeking education.

VIII. Annual Lectures

Though social justice is woven into the fabric of Bank Street’s philosophy, it needs to be made more apparent to the school community and to the public. An annual endowed lecture at Bank Street with a focus on social justice would bring the community together to learn and be inspired to learn more. Having speakers from outside of the college would invite new perspectives and be direct examples of how we must open
ourselves to and connect with a larger community. Furthermore, we suggest that it be open to the community, including the School for Children, as a celebration of what we care most about at Bank Street and what we feel is most important to share with the public. Speakers inspire, motivate, and hold everyone in a shared space to listen and learn together.
Epilogue/Conclusion

When you write, you lay out a line of words. The line of words is a miner’s pick, a woodcarver’s gouge, a surgeon’s probe. You wield it, and it digs a path you follow. Soon you find yourself deep in new territory. Is it a dead end, or have you located the real subject? You will know tomorrow, or this time next year.

You make the path boldly and follow it fearfully. You go where the path leads.

Annie Dillard (1990)
I like that advice that you gave a few weeks ago. We were talking to a friend who was just getting ready to start her IMP. You said “write about something you care about.” It has been so rewarding to go through this process thinking about problems that I passionately want to fix. And so so great to have the opportunity to do it with a friend. Someone I admire and trust. Having a partner has pushed me. And I think I’m really proud of our work. That’s a great feeling.

Caring does feel good. Caring and writing and questioning -- I think we set ourselves up well for an opportunity to grow. Writing alone can do that, but there was the challenge of writing and reflecting with someone, that made the growing more true -- I had the feeling of: I can’t really pretend. I’ll get called out. I can’t paint a prettier picture of myself and my thoughts because you would see right through it. It was important that I trusted you. That helped me grow. You helped me be more honest with myself. That ‘excavating honesty’ -- it’s hard to do on oneself and with society... but we could go on and on about this. Let’s wrap it up. Last words?

Yeah. Good idea...

To you Dear Reader,

Thank you. May you find the space to excavate, to reflect, and to connect. Have hard conversations. Practice.

“You make the path boldly and follow it fearfully. You go where the path leads.”

Love,
Molly and Giuls
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## Appendix I: Program Requirements

**Course Requirements** Note: This course listing does not indicate a suggested sequence. Course selection and sequencing is planned in consultation with the program director or advisor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 500</strong></td>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or <strong>EDUC 800</strong></td>
<td>The Social Worlds of Childhood [Prerequisite: EDUC 500 or EDUC 501 or permission of instructor]</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 505</strong></td>
<td>Language Acquisition and Learning in a Linguistically Diverse Society</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 530</strong></td>
<td>Foundations of Modern Education</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>or <strong>EDUC 531</strong></td>
<td>Principles and Problems in Elementary and Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 535</strong></td>
<td>Science for Teachers (Grades N – 6)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or <strong>EDUC 551</strong></td>
<td>Science Inquiry for Children in the Natural Environment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 540</strong></td>
<td>Mathematics for Teachers in Diverse and Inclusive Educational Settings (Grades N – 6)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 563</strong></td>
<td>The Teaching of Reading, Writing, and Language Arts (Grades K – 3)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 564</strong></td>
<td>Language, Literature, and Emergent Literacy (A Focus on Grades N – 3)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 590</strong></td>
<td>Arts Workshop for Teachers (Grades N – 6)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or <strong>EDUC 591</strong></td>
<td>Music and Movement: Multicultural and Developmental Approaches in Diverse and Inclusive Settings (Grades N – 6)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 514</strong></td>
<td>Curriculum in Early Childhood Education: Developing Learning Environments and Experiences for Children of Diverse Backgrounds and Abilities</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 618</strong></td>
<td>Working with All Children and Families: An Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 629</strong></td>
<td>Education of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Assessment and Educational Intervention</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 803</strong></td>
<td>Developmental Variations [Prerequisite: EDUC 500 or EDUC 501 or EDUC 800 or permission of instructor]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 823</strong></td>
<td>Play Techniques for Early Childhood Settings [Prerequisite: EDUC 803]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 869</strong></td>
<td>Early Language and Literacy in Sociocultural Contexts: Supporting Development and Adapting for Disability [Prerequisite: EDUC 500 or EDUC 800; pre- or corequisite: EDUC 505]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 880</strong></td>
<td>Insights from Occupational Therapy: Understanding Children’s Sensory-Motor Development [Pre- or corequisite: EDUC 892]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 892</strong></td>
<td>Developmental Systems I: Connecting Research in Early Development to Practice in Early Childhood Education [Prerequisite: EDUC 500 or EDUC 800]</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 893</strong></td>
<td>Developmental Systems II: Approaches to Early Childhood Assessment [Prerequisite: EDUC 892 or EDUC 894]</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 894</strong></td>
<td>Early Childhood Practicum I: Observing a Child Through Family/Cultural Contexts [Prerequisites: EDUC 500 or EDUC 800; corequisites: EDUC 893]</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 895</strong></td>
<td>Early Childhood Practicum II: Collaboration with Families and Colleagues about the Cycle of Assessment, Planning, and Instruction [Prerequisite: EDUC 894]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective credits as needed to complete the requirements of the program</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 963</strong></td>
<td>Early Childhood Special and General Education Supervised Fieldwork/Student Teaching/Advisement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUC 990</strong></td>
<td>Extended Field Experiences with Diverse Learners (for students completing fieldwork as student teachers)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or <strong>EDUC 992</strong></td>
<td>Summer Supervised Fieldwork/Advisement for Early Childhood Special Education Head and Assistant Teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative Master’s Project</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**TOTAL CREDITS** 54

* Because head and assistant teachers are required to take EDUC 992, they are advised to select EDUC 535 in order to remain within the 54-credit requirement.
Appendix II: Selections from Syllabi--Goals, Readings, Assignments, and Class Discussions Related to Social Justice

I. Mathematics for Teachers in diverse and inclusive educational settings

Course Description:
*Who are the students we teach? Cultural backgrounds? Primary language spoken? Divergent Learners?

Course Goals:
To learn in an environment that integrates all six NCTM Principles: Equity, Curriculum, Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Technology

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Felton, Mathew D. "Is Math Politically Neutral". Teaching Children Mathematics, Sept 2010

In Class:
VIII. Meeting the Needs of All Learners
a. Understanding the experience of an English Language Learner(ELLs) in the math classroom. Modifying instruction to meet the needs of language learners.
b. Children with learning differences in the math classroom. Adapting (not modifying!) instruction to meet the needs of children with learning differences.
c. Distinguishing "disability" from the normal second language learning process

d. What is the impact of each of the developmental functions (attention, memory, spatial, language, higher order cognition) on the learning of mathematics?

e. Implications for teaching and learning: adapting instruction to meet the needs of all learners

**Language, Literature, and Emergent Literacy**

**Course Description:**
Using multicultural, nonsexist, developmental, aesthetic, and literary perspectives, criteria for selecting fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and folklore evolves throughout the course–looking at style, illustrations, content, and, most importantly, the deep meanings for children.

**Required Readings:**

from packet: “Understanding Bilingual/Bicultural Young Children” and “The Education of Hispanics in Early Childhood: Of Roots and Wings”

**In Class:**
Session 4, June 4, Interview of Jacqueline Woodson

Jacqueline Woodson is a prominent African-American author of children’s books, from picture books to books for adolescents. One important picture book of hers you may be familiar with is *The Other Side*, about an African-American child and Caucasian child, whose worlds are separated by a fence.

In a series of short video interviews, she describes what’s important to her as a writer of books for children. In class, we have been looking at and discussing books that reflect diversity. Throughout these thirteen interview segments, Woodson, among other topics, discusses her view of diversity. The web address for these interview segments is: http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/woodson/

View three specific segments: segment 3, “Feathers and deaf culture”; segment 6, “Reaching reluctant readers”; and segment 9, “Reading beyond themselves.” *(Of course you are free to view all of them.)* Be prepared to discuss in class your reactions to her view of diversity as expressed in each of these segments, and also discuss your reactions to her view of helping reluctant readers as expressed in
segment 6, “Reaching reluctant readers.” Also consider Woodson’s perspective as you analyze the book you selected that reflects diversity in our society.

Assignments:

For bibliography, select 3 storybooks that reflect diversity in our society. Do a written analysis of one of these books. Use the Fiction Format (p. 9) to guide your analysis. Also, be sure to explain how your selection reflects diversity in our society. Integrate into your analysis, as appropriate, Garcia, Soto, and Woodson. *For this assignment you are asked to interpret diversity personally and broadly.

Practicum I: Observing a Child Through Family Cultural Contexts

Course Description:
- Culturally responsive, family-based practice
- Through regular interactions with the child, the student constructs a full, respectful and increasingly complex understanding of the child, as he/she exists in his/her family, culture, and community, with special emphasis on the strengths of the child and his/her social environment.
- Students will also begin to integrate information on adult development, family systems theory, and cultural/linguistic diversity as a basis for developing their understanding of and relationship with the family.

Course Goals:
3. Students will establish and maintain a respectful, caring, and professional partnership with families, demonstrating understanding of adult and parent development, family systems theory, and cultural and linguistic diversity, and applications to families of children with disabilities.
5. Students will develop awareness of and sensitivity to differences and strengths in family structures, socio-economic, and cultural/linguistic backgrounds, including their influence on beliefs about assessment and personal and educational goals.
6. Students will analyze their own cultural biases and points of view that affect objectivity in observation, interpretation, and perspective taking.

Required Readings:


**In Class:**
Reflecting on genograms
Factors affecting differential access to education
What power dynamics exist in an educational setting, or between home visitors and families? How are these dynamics perpetuated?
What cultural groups do you belong to? How does membership in these different groups affect your access to power and resources?
Observing social interactions with adults and children
Expressing emotions
Understanding social pragmatics
Cultural variation in expression of emotion

**Assignments:**
1. Genogram of Your Own Family
Due Session 4 (September 29)—In class draft session 3
A. Create a family tree depicting the members of your family and their relationships to one another. You may choose to use the genogram symbols and format described here: [http://www.genograms.org/index.html](http://www.genograms.org/index.html). Other formats of graphic representation are also acceptable.
B. Using the distributed guiding questions, write a brief interpretation of the genogram, describing themes, roles, and relationship dynamics that you notice in your family.
C. Again using the guiding questions, in a final section, discuss the ways in which understanding the patterns and values of your own family can inform your professional work with children and families.
8. Intersession assignment: Learning about the family
This assignment is due in the second class of the spring semester. You must schedule and carry out a conversation with the family or caregiver during December or early January, before the class reconvenes for the spring semester. Building on information about family systems and on course readings, you will begin to develop an understanding of the child's family. You will meet with the child's family for a conversation about their experiences, using suggestions from course readings. At the first session of the spring semester you will discuss your conversations with the family. At the second session of the spring semester you will turn in a written description of your study child’s family and a personal reflection describing differences and similarities between the child’s family and your own family of origin.

*Working With All Children and Families: Sue Carberry and Minna Immerman*

**Course goal:**
Begin to reflect upon their life experiences, values, beliefs, and those of others.

**Required Reading:**


**Assignment:**
In your assigned work group reflect on and describe a value or belief of your own that you became aware of as a result of experience(s) in this course. For example, in what way(s) did the course challenge an assumption you held about working with children and their families? Connect your comments to specific readings (using APA) from the course. You will post three forums. The first one follows
the above instructions, another that responds to a classmates posting, and the third that is a summary. These need to be thoughtful, respectful and professional. They need to be proofread.

In class:
1. Early Childhood Education in Diverse Contexts
   Videos:
   South African Day Care
   Family Center Inclusion Classroom

   During the final class, we spent a lot of time talking in a small group about whether we felt aware of or influenced by racial or religious differences during high school. This was a fascinating conversation and everyone in the group had deeply meaningful experiences to share; some more prevalent/explicit than others.

Practicum II: Collaborating with Families and Colleagues about Cycles of Assessment, Planning, and Instruction

Course Goals:
Become familiar with and use appropriately a variety of informal assessment methods to develop an ecological understanding of a child, with a focus on his/her strengths, within the contexts of family, culture, and society.
Develop appreciation for the wide range of parental values and goals in child-rearing practices in relation to one’s own beliefs, and effectively communicate with families, respecting the integrity of family and cultural systems.

Required Readings:


**In Class:**
Family-based practice
Becoming culturally responsive practitioners
Learning from parents
Questioning assumptions
Considering families’ priorities
Anticipating cultural bumps and developing responsive practice
Interactions between educators and families
Interactions between the larger special education system and families
The effect of diagnosis of a disability on families
Acknowledging diversity; providing space for each family to be valued as they are
Collaboration, valuing families ideas and priorities
Creating goals that are relevant within a child’s family/cultural context

How does economic inequality affect children’s development?
What are the implications for our work?
What is our role as practitioners in supporting families in economic hardship?
What is our role in fighting economic inequality?
What practices can foster resilience?
Beyond the classroom: what does it mean to be an ethical early childhood professional?
Considering codes of ethics from professional organizations
Working for justice in education
Supporting families in self-empowerment

*Developmental Systems II: Approaches to Early Childhood Assessment*

**Course Description:**
Culturally responsive approaches to involving the family with the assessment process will also be addressed.
Students will become aware of the legal, ethical, culturally responsive, and professional considerations that assessment entails, including confidentiality, and local, state and federal monitoring and evaluation requirements.

Course Goals:
3. Develop awareness of and sensitivity to differences and strengths in family structures, socio-economic, and cultural/linguistic backgrounds, including influences on beliefs about personal and educational goals.
4. Increase understanding of issues of bias in early childhood assessment.

*Education of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Assessment and Educational Intervention*

Course Goal:
Consider and discuss issues of support for and collaboration with families, develop an increased sensitivity for cultural considerations and the role of educator as advocate for the child and the family

Recommended Reading:
Appendix III: EDUC 530 Syllabus: Foundations of Modern Education, Professor B

Foundations of Modern Education: Professor B

Course Description:
The purpose of this course is to examine critical theories and ideologies of schooling and education through legal, historical, social and philosophic lenses. Students will be encouraged through reading, discourse, and reflection to formulate their own theory of schooling and education and develop a language of critique useful in examining current ideas, ideals, problems and possibilities. In keeping with progressive education's long-standing emphasis on social reconstruction, the central focus for the Foundations of Modern Education course is advancing equity in and through education. Through collaborative learning experiences as well as individual action research projects, students will explore ways in which post colonialism affects race, class, gender, ability, immigration, and language perspectives and prospects for teaching, leading and learning in our society.

The course has been developed with close attention to the transformative possibilities and contributions of digital technology with its potential to foster, sustain and extend diverse modes of inquiry, communication, data analysis, and representation of knowledge.

By learning to conduct individual action research projects in their own urban schools and other educational settings, graduate students will gain greater awareness of obstacles, openings, and strategies for improving practice. Throughout the strand, we will explore how local school practices (micro level) and larger social/structural issues (macro level) are reciprocally influential.

A Little Bit About the Course:
This course will begin with us. We will explore our “positionality” through some powerful exercises around our family backgrounds, our names, similarities and differences that exist between and among us, as well as through our cultures (in Nieto’s broad definition). We will look at the history of education, examine some philosophers of education, delve into Dewey’s Experience and Education, come up with a definition and some characteristics of “progressive” education then and now. We will look deeply into specific laws like Brown v Board of Education, Lau v Nichols; No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and examine their effects on education today. We will concentrate on language, special education and gender as they relate to schooling/education. And, you will have time in this course to take a social justice issue at a school site and to conduct a Social Action Research project. The hope here is to see how research can better inform us about how we might bring about what Renee Martin hopes will be “more emancipatory and equitable school pedagogies.”

I am looking forward to meeting you all.

Course Objectives
Course Goals
Students will
• Formulate their own theory of schooling and education and develop a language of critique useful in examining current ideas, ideals, problems and possibilities.
• Explore ways in which post-colonialism affects race, class, gender, ability, immigration, and language perspectives and prospects for teaching, leading and learning in our society.
Bank Street College’s graduate courses seek to address the standards established by the following Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs) in the preparation of teachers and school leaders:
  • Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)
  • Council on Exceptional Children (CEC)
  • Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC)
  • International Reading Association (IRA)
  • National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

The specific SPA standards addressed by EDUC 530 Foundations of Modern Education are indicated below by number. The definitions for each can be found on the Bank Street website.

ACEI 1.0; ACEI 3; ACEI 3.4; ACEI 3.5; ACEI 5.1; CEC 4; CEC 5; CEC 7
NAEYC 1; NAEYC 2; NAEYC 4; NAEYC 5

In addition, performance-based assessment will be linked to NCATE Standards and Regulations of the New York State Education Department.

• Standard 1- Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions
Candidates will “know and demonstrate professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn.” NCATE Standard 1
  ○ Ability to “critique research and theories related to pedagogy and learning.” (1b)
  ○ Ability to “consider school, family, and community contexts in connecting concepts to students’ prior experience.” (1c)
  ○ Ability to “recognize when their own professional dispositions may need to be adjusted and are able to develop plans to do so.” (1g)

• Standard 4- Diversity Candidates will “acquire and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn.” NCATE Standard 4.
Specifically candidates will develop
  ○ Ability to reflect on and analyze their experiences around culture and experiences in ways that enhance their development and growth as professionals. (4c)

Overview of Course Requirements
Thirty hours of the requisite 37.5 hours for this course will occur in 15 two-hour class sessions including Friday, October 12. The remaining 7.5 hours of out-of-class instructional time will occur as delineated in the syllabus.

Expectations/ Requirements
• The final grade will be based on class participation, class presentations, as well as the quality of the social action research project and papers required.
• Every student is expected to read the assigned material and to present key themes from the readings.
• It is expected that each group/individual assignment will be shared with the class as well as submitted to the instructor in written form.
• It is expected that all work will be handed in on time.

Students’ acquisition of key concepts and competencies noted above will be measured by the following:
a) quality of cumulative written assignments leading to and including the final report on an action research project conducted in the student's own educational setting
b) your contributions to group presentations and class discussions.
c) evidence of emergent understanding and integrated use of key concepts and skills addressed in the course.


Attendance: Class starts promptly at 4:45 p.m. The college requires that attendance be taken at each session. If you miss more than two class sessions, you will be ineligible for a grade and will be required to enroll in the course again at a later date.

Please remember that the thoughts and experiences of your classmates also are confidential. This means that it is unacceptable to forward any postings or to print them out to share them with others who are not enrolled in this course this semester.

Required Texts

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Major Assignments

Major Assignments

A. Family Background Paper: Discuss your family background, values and histories in relation to socio-political contexts. Write about your own personal experiences of “education and schooling.” Consider the influences of family, peers and teachers. Include key events, historical-political contexts, tensions and highlights. Consider the metaphor of “border crossings,” moving in and out of territories defined by class, race, politics, ethnicity, language and sexuality, as part of your exploration. (4-5 pages).

B. Cultural Reflection Paper: Write a reflection paper of three pages. The paper should include the following:
- Description of your cultural object
- Discussion of how your cultural object is linked to your culture and family history.
- Exploration of how this object demonstrates what Nieto says about the influencers and attributes of culture.
- Answer to the question How might your understanding of culture be connected to student learning?
C. Clearview Case Study Response (Pairs)
1. Conduct research into your assigned philosopher. Learn about the following:
   a. the philosopher's background
   b. his/her philosophical beliefs about knowledge and how we attain it
   c. the philosopher’s aim of education
   d. the roles he or she ascribes to teachers and students (continued)
2. Read one article or chapter in a book written by this philosopher to find quotes that
   speak to his/her philosophy.
3. In the philosopher’s voice, collaboratively write a response to the case study that
   includes:
   a. Your view of the practices you have observed in the “Clearview District Case Study”
      around tracking
   b. A recommendation that is consonant with what you, as the philosopher, consider the aim of
      education to be, your theory of knowledge and the specific roles of teachers and students.
   c. Evidence of your position supported by some cogent quotes from your writings

D. Dewey Paper: Read John Dewey’s Experience and Education. Write a three-page paper
   highlighting the following themes found in his treatise:
   ● The aims and goals of progressive education
   ● A philosophy of experience and the criteria/principles that define an “educative” experience
   ● The roles of the teacher and the learner in progressive education
   ● The conditions needed for a progressive education

E. Creative Response: Exploring the History of Bank Street and its Thinkers
1. Take notes about what stands out for you, as you explore the following places at Bank Street
   College:
   ○ 6th Floor: “Children and Teachers Explore the World 1930-Present,” a photographic exhibit
     located across from and near the 6th floor elevator.
   ○ 1st - 5th Floors: Between 2 and 4 classrooms and stairwells on the 1st through the 5th floors of
     the School for Children
   ○ The south side stairwells connecting each of the floors.
2. Understand Bank Street College’s History and Work on the library’s homepage. Do the
   following:
   a) Read about Lucy Sprague Mitchell and the Beginnings of Bank Street College by going to
      the following link on the library homepage:
      www.bankstreet.edu/library/about/history_beg.html. Also look at some of the
articles written by Bank Street Thinkers
at www.bankstreet.edu/library/bankstreetthinkers.html

b) Look in the Archives Section of the library area of the Bank Street website for the following digital collections:

- The Long Trip Collection
- Lucy Sprague Mitchell Collection
- Bank Street Publications Collection

3. Formulate a creative response (collage, poetry, children’s story, acrostic, dramatic piece, video, letter, essay or any other idea you may have) that in some way represents what your experience was when exploring the School for Children areas, examining the “Children and Teachers Explore the World” exhibit and reading the material about Lucy Sprague Mitchell on the Bank Street website. Share your creative response by posting it on Forum Session 7. Take some time to look at everyone else’s work.

4. Share the creative response experience you posted last week on the forum with someone outside Bank Street. This sharing may happen face to face or through a social media tool such as Skype, email, or google docs. Be sure to provide the context for the creative response. In other words, talk about the explorations you conducted around the history and work of Bank Street and an explanation of your response.

F. Social Action Research Paper- a 10-15 page paper that

- Focuses on a problem appropriate for qualitative inquiry and states it clearly; situates it in the literature, discusses your perspective and relationship to the problem and makes a convincing argument for the importance or significance of the research.
- The literature review is a narrative essay that integrates, synthesizes, and critiques the important thinking and research on your particular subject. The issues are developed in a scholarly way; the terms are adequately defined, and there is a sense of story to the research.
- Methods of the research are described and include the type of research design, a description of the site and participants as well as a rationale for their selection. There is a description of how the data you gathered were managed and analyzed.
- Data comes from public documents, personal documents and/or researcher generated documents (journals, observations, interviews, vignettes, etc.). The findings are clearly organized, easy to follow and are directly responsive to the problem of the study. The data is rich and thick. The reader is provided some vicarious experience, quotations have been used effectively; headings, sections, and artifacts and appendices are used well. Categories reflect the purpose of your action research and provide the answers to your research questions.
- Reflection, problem solving and/or resolutions have an explanatory power. The study addresses the theoretically important questions. There is a social action plan that addresses equity.
- The report is well written with a strong sense of voice and tone.

(Adapted from Merriam, S. Assessing and Evaluating Qualitative Research In Qualitative Research)

G. Teaching Stories Journal Throughout the course, students will keep a Teaching Stories Journal in Google Docs. Comments will not be allowed. This is for self-reflection and growth over the course. Students might be asked to select a passage/insight to share with the group during a
group discussion. Each week, Professor B will share material and or questions to act as prompts for a weekly entry.