

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP:  
CRITICAL REFLECTION ON CLASS  
IN MINISTRIES OF CONGREGATIONAL OUTREACH

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
THE ISSUE .....	1
THE RESEARCH QUESTION.....	3
PERSONAL SOCIAL LOCATION.....	5
MINISTRY CONTEXT OF CONGREGATION AND THE INTERSECTION WITH MY CALL.....	7
STAKEHOLDERS .....	11
PROCESS AND STRUCTURE OF PROJECT .....	14
<b>CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS.....</b>	<b>16</b>
BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	16
<i>Image of God</i> .....	17
<i>Neighborly Love</i> .....	19
<i>Theology of solidarity/incarnational theology</i> .....	21
<i>Personal and communal transformation as the telos for Christian discipleship</i> .....	22
THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND THEMES .....	23
<i>Liberation Theology</i> .....	24
<i>Pastoral Theology</i> .....	27
IMPLICATIONS OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVES AND THEOLOGICAL THEMES .....	30
<i>Hospitality and Power</i> .....	31
<i>Sin as Distortion of Imago Dei</i> .....	32
CONCLUSION.....	36
<b>CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS THAT INFLUENCE INTERVENTION DESIGN .....</b>	<b>37</b>
THE PROBLEMS WITH PRIVILEGE .....	37
A CASE STUDY.....	38
UNPACKING PRIVILEGE.....	39

RESOURCES FROM PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: PRAXIS.....	43
RESOURCES FROM SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION.....	45
CULTURAL VALUES AND CLASSISM.....	46
<i>Class Culture, Classism, and Types of Capital</i> .....	46
<i>Myth of Meritocracy and the American Dream</i> .....	50
<i>Intersectionality</i> .....	52
<i>Economic Issues – Wealth Inequality and Classism</i> .....	54
IMPLICATIONS.....	56
<b>CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY, PROJECT DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION</b>	<b>58</b>
.....	<b>58</b>
THE PROJECT AS PROCESS.....	58
METHOD: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH.....	59
PROJECT DESIGN.....	62
PARTICIPANT SELECTION, RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE AND CONSENT.....	66
ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS.....	68
FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS.....	69
MODULE DESIGN AND CONTENT.....	70
<i>Module 1: Divine Image and Personal Determinants</i> .....	72
<i>Module 2: Empathy and Wealth Inequality</i> .....	73
<i>Module 3: Neighbor Love (Working For and Issues of Class)</i> .....	75
<i>Module 4: Community (Working With)</i> .....	77
<i>Module 5: Advocacy (Being For) and The American Dream</i> .....	80
<i>Module 6: Intersectionality and Solidarity (Being With) and Transformation</i> .....	82
DATA ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION.....	84
<b>CHAPTER 5: DATA INTERPRETATION AND MINISTRY IMPLICATIONS.....</b>	<b>88</b>
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH.....	88
INTERPRETING THE DATA.....	90

DATA CATEGORIES: CONFIRMATION AND CONTINUITY .....	91
<i>Class Chasms</i> .....	91
<i>Earned Worth</i> .....	95
<i>Controlled Environment</i> .....	98
<i>Places to Appear</i> .....	100
<i>Sense of Community</i> .....	102
<i>Priority of Faith</i> .....	104
<i>Awakening Awareness and Sustained Engagement</i> .....	105
CONTRADICTIONS .....	107
<i>Perceptions of Hospitality</i> .....	107
<i>The Trajectory of Transformation</i> .....	108
OMISSIONS .....	112
<i>Intersectionality</i> .....	112
<i>Programmatic Decisions</i> .....	114
LIMITATIONS OF PROJECT .....	115
<i>Methodology</i> .....	116
<i>Volunteer and Neighbor Participation</i> .....	117
RESEARCHER REFLECTION.....	119
<i>Curricular Process</i> .....	119
<i>Data Acquisition</i> .....	121
<i>Surprising and Significant Learnings</i> .....	124
IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE ACTIONS .....	126
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>130</b>
APPENDIX A: ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS WITH VOLUNTEERS (PRE INTERVENTION).....	130
APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR NEIGHBORS (PRE-INTERVENTION) .....	131
APPENDIX C: SCOPE AND SEQUENCE OF SIX WEEK CURRICULAR PROCESS .....	132
APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT COVENANT FOR VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANTS AND NEIGHBOR FOCUS GROUP.....	133
APPENDIX E: ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS WITH VOLUNTEERS (POST INTERVENTION).....	134

APPENDIX F: CYCLE OF SOCIALIZATION .....	135
APPENDIX G: ACTION CONTINUUM .....	136
APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR NEIGHBORS (POST INTERVENTION).....	137
APPENDIX I: WHERE I’M FROM POEM AND TEMPLATE.....	138
APPENDIX J: WEALTH INEQUALITY IN AMERICA TRANSCRIPT .....	140
APPENDIX K: INVISIBLE KNAPSACK .....	142
APPENDIX L: FORMS OF CAPITAL EXERCISE.....	144
APPENDIX M: THE “VALUE” OF HUMAN DIFFERENCE (OR CAPITAL MARKETPLACE).....	146
APPENDIX N: PRIVILEGE WALK.....	149
APPENDIX O: CYCLE OF LIBERATION.....	151
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>152</b>

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### The Issue

Several years ago, in the food pantry ministry of our congregation, I heard one volunteer say to another, “I can’t believe people who drive nice cars come to receive free groceries.” This under-the-breath complaint about the presumed socio-economic status of our neighbors who receive groceries from our food pantry caught my attention and piqued my interest and, in fact, in many ways, is the impetus that led me to pursue a doctoral degree in order to explore issues of class as it pertains to congregational outreach ministries. I knew (from my own experience!) that judgmental positions about others are rarely space for compassionate solidarity and genuine relationships.

How does a pastoral leader respond to such a comment with thoughtfulness, wisdom, and integrity, especially with volunteers who may have never considered themselves in the role of an unintended oppressor? How does a pastoral leader facilitate dialogue that invites introspection, deeper conversation, listening, and honesty around issues of privilege and prejudice? What can be learned from honest ownership of one’s own social location? How can conversations that seek to educate generally well-intended people lead to increased sensitivity and empathy for others different from themselves? Furthermore, what theological preparation and reflection is instrumental to increase empathy and compassion? What tools help church members navigate their thoughts and experiences when working with those in material need while giving thoughtful reflection to their own privileges in the hope that this critical reflection would result in opportunities for generative thinking and substantive transformation?

In particular, as a pastoral leader, I approach these questions from a theological lens. What do our assumptions about others who are different say about us, about God, say about God's vision for the world? And, if given the opportunities for exposure and education, will church members who have not noticed or questioned the structures that benefit those with privilege be willing to engage in critical reflection from a theological framework?

As a pastoral leader of mission and outreach in my congregation, I seek to promote relational ministry that involves neighborly<sup>1</sup> engagement and substantive transformation individually, interpersonally, and theologically. My role as pastor includes both providing opportunities for people to serve and providing space for theological reflection that informs critical thought and action in our ministries of outreach. As a pastor, I am keenly invested in the spiritual growth and discipleship of those involved with our congregation. And, as a pastor of outreach, in particular, essential to personal, relational, and theological change is reflection and action on systems of inequality inherently present in ministries of mission and outreach.

Many well-intended individuals in our congregation's food pantry ministry,<sup>2</sup> representative of the larger membership, are unreflective about patterns of privilege which affect the assumptions and practices of relating to others in a ministry context. Specifically, uncritical postures concerning socio-economic privilege contribute to a lack of self-awareness that impacts relating to others who do not share similar patterns of privilege. In addition, unexamined

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1 The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.25-37) and other synoptic passages which mention "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22.34-40 and Mark 12.28-34) expand the notion of neighbor beyond geographic or sectarian boundaries to include compassionate action for others – especially those different from oneself – as definitive for loving God. This notion of "neighborly" love will be further developed as it is a key biblical concept that informs this project.

2 Our congregation participates regularly in fifteen distinct volunteer ministries with those in material need. For the scope of this project, I chose our food pantry ministry as it has the largest number of volunteers and participants.



privileges influence the programmatic models for the way in which a ministry is designed and implemented. Left uncontested, these systemic patterns of advantage and disadvantage perpetuate philanthropic colonialism, which is far cry from transformational discipleship.

Thus, as a pastoral leader, I have the responsibility to address patterns of privilege that amplify oppression and obstruct compassion within our congregation's ministries of outreach in the pursuit of "emancipatory praxis towards...the telos of social justice."<sup>3</sup> Transformational leadership includes disrupting thoughts and actions that impede relational connection and creating intentional space for individual, interpersonal, and theological growth that encourages human flourishing. Critical reflection on the effects of individual, institutional, and ideological oppression informs thoughtful action and response as God's people live into the divine affirmation of *imago Dei* and the charge of Christ to ethical compassion and solidarity with neighbors.

### **The Research Question**

To this end, I developed a curriculum for use in my congregational context that engaged a small group of participants in participatory pedagogical strategies aimed at transformational experiences. As such, I relied on biblical and theological resources, as well as critical theories and social justice education. My guiding question for this project is: Will a curricular process informed by biblical and theological rationales as well as critical theories and social justice education generate critical reflection and impact thoughtful action with those who volunteer in

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy Ramsay, "Intersectionality: A Model for Addressing the Complexity and of Oppression and Privilege," *Pastoral Psychology* 63, no. 4 (2014): 453.

our congregation's food pantry ministry? In other words, will those who engage in a curricular process display demonstrable progression in their self-understanding and interpersonal engagement with neighbors<sup>4</sup> at our food pantry? Moreover, will such a process affect programmatic decisions of the pantry that eschew paternalistic models of charity in favor of thoughtful actions of mutuality and solidarity that prioritize hospitality and dignity?<sup>5</sup>

This project will contribute to the overall understanding and practice of ministry in three specific ways. First, this project foregrounds the assumption of discipleship as a dynamic process of growth and change which includes one's theological and practical orientation to serving in ministries of outreach.<sup>6</sup> Second, this project is deeply grounded in theological understandings of mission which are themselves deeply grounded in the nature and character of God. Simple phrases (working with/for, being with/for) give accessible language to theoretical concepts which, in turn, have practical implications for being in solidarity with others (i.e., critical reflection and thoughtful action). Visions of God's kingdom (hospitality, *imago Dei*, neighborly love) are appropriated to the very practical nature of congregational mission initiatives. Impediments to the full vision of God's kingdom include structures and systems that distort solidarity and justice. Third, this aim of this project is to move beyond awareness of systems of inequalities to addressing inequities through thoughtful action. In other words, the project intends to move beyond theoretical to tangible and tactile expressions of faith in action.

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<sup>4</sup> The standard nomenclature in our congregation for those who receive food at our food pantry is "neighbors" so as to emphasize mutuality, over the word "client" or even "guest."

<sup>5</sup> Incidentally, the name of the food pantry ministry is First H.A.N.D. which is an acronym for "hospitality, advocacy, dignity and nurture." I plan to give attention to this aspirational name in my research.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Sensing underscores this priority for the pastoral leader's primary interest in transformative discipleship: "The DMin researcher exercising pastoral leadership functions as a midwife, facilitating the process of congregants' transformation into the image of Jesus" (Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011, xxv).

## Personal Social Location

My own personal, professional, and ecclesial identity as a mainline Protestant pastor are predominantly shaped by privilege and power. By virtue of my upbringing, social status, and education, I have extensive access to economic, cultural, and social capital. While I have experienced some sexist marginalization because of my gender (especially in ecclesial circles), I have tremendous privilege because of my sexual orientation, race, and class, as a straight, white, affluent female. I, and my ancestors before me, have benefitted from colonialism and its aftershocks. My intellectual education has largely valued Eurocentric “histories” as well as Western preferences for pedagogy. My worldview has been shaped from the perspective of privilege.

Consequently, my theological assumptions are framed by a Western understanding of God who complements the patterns and particularities of my own socio-economic experiences. The confessional work of Jaco S. Dreyer speaks to my social location. Like him, I am unable to “escape my colonial baggage in a postcolonial context;” as it “colors every action that I take.”<sup>7</sup> I must remember that “all knowledge is mediated knowledge”<sup>8</sup> and my complicity in colonialism and post/de-colonialism must be acknowledged and challenged by other voices of mediated knowledge.

This self-awareness helps me enter my context of ministry, especially in the work that I do with those in material need and who suffer great injustice due to class, race, and culture. How

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<sup>7</sup> Jaco S. Dreyer, “Knowledge, Subjectivity, (De)Coloniality, and the Conundrum of Reflexivity”, in *Conundrums in Practical Theology* eds. Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1996) 97.

<sup>8</sup> Dreyer, 91.

do I acknowledge, with honesty and humility, my social location in order to engage in authentic ministry that seeks to decry the injustices that complicity with privilege promulgates? And how can my openness to confess my own obliviousness of my privilege give others courage to engage in similar introspection and critical thought? I carry my own prejudices and judgments of people across socio-economic spectrums: from finding frustration about those who hold judgmental attitudes of the poor to frustration that some neighbors make what I would consider to be unwise economic choices. In both cases, I try to model ways in which to suspend judgment and sustain compassion for those whose actions and thoughts are different than what I may choose. I see part of my purpose in ministry to facilitate generative conversations that struggle with privilege and prejudice even as we seek to serve.

My response may, in fact, shape how church members respond in the intersections of justice and faith in their own lives. Walter Earl Fluker says, “Leaders in this century are called to be more than charitable actors who respond only to the needs of individuals; they must be willing to stand at the intersection where worlds collide and create communities of justice and compassion.”<sup>9</sup> As a pastor, this is a charge for vocation as a leader, to see beyond the situation at hand to the larger imagination of God’s justice lived out in the world.

I, as a pastoral caregiver facilitating social justice education with those in privilege, am wise to remember that it is not a simple thing to come to terms with privilege and, at the same time, people cannot change what they do not know or see. Challenging fundamental worldviews is an exercise in humility, prayer, and patience. And yet self-awareness can lead to freedom, for self and others. My hope for transformation is bound up in this project as well. What

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Earl Fluker, *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009) 154.

transformation requires, especially from a place of privilege, is to make space for more than a single story or dominant narrative and thus for a larger theological and cosmological imagination.

## **Ministry Context of Congregation and the Intersection with My Call**

The project is centered around my particular context at First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth (FPCFW), where I serve as an Associate Pastor for Mission and Family Ministries. The congregation is an affluent, downtown mainline congregation with abundant resources of social and economic capital. Though a variety of political viewpoints co-exist within the congregation, FPCFW is the largest PC(USA) congregation in one of the most conservative urban counties in the nation.<sup>10</sup> The membership (almost 2,000) is overwhelmingly white and spans several generations.

First Presbyterian demonstrates a civic mission orientation<sup>11</sup> towards engagement with the world. Notably, the church has a long, storied history of commitment to mission and outreach in the Fort Worth community and beyond for decades. From launching the Fort Worth chapter of Meals on Wheels to co-founding the Presbyterian Night Shelter to working with a variety of Presbyterian Church (USA) mission initiatives around the globe, First Presbyterian finds ways to channel its resources and creativity in order to engage the world beyond its walls and

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<sup>10</sup> Christopher Connelly, Brandon Formby and Alexa Ura, “Tarrant is a Bright-Red Anomaly: A Big, Urban County that Votes Republican” KERA News 17 January 2017, <https://www.keranews.org/post/tarrant-bright-red-anomaly-big-urban-county-votes-republican>, accessed 28 January 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Roozen, McKinney, and Carroll delineate four mission orientations of congregations: sanctuary, evangelistic, civic and activist. See David A. Roozen, William McKinney and Jackson W. Carroll in *Varieties of Religious Presence: Mission in Public Life* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984).

membership. FPCFW participates in a remarkable level of giving within church structures and mission as well as contributing generous resources through volunteers and significant financial support to countless non-profits and social service agencies. Church leaders and members serve on boards and sit at decision-making tables that support healthcare, education, affordable housing, and homelessness, among others. Additionally, the church operates a community outreach center in a low-income neighborhood that includes a food pantry, clothing closet, dental clinic, formula and diaper distribution, English as a Second Language classes, a weekly community meal, worship and Christian education. Local partners who offer assistance in housing, healthcare, and other necessities have a weekly presence at the center. The current mission statement succinctly captures the ethos of the congregation: “inspiring disciples, engaging the world.”

While extremely generous and civically active, FPCFW does not institutionally engage in critical reflection on class either from a personal location or from systemic oppressions in which the privileged are complicit. A civic congregation is often generous with resources to address change but is often oblivious to privilege and ways that it obscures and obstructs critical examination and deconstruction of the status quo. Explicit teaching about privilege in terms of class is largely absent from the programmatic, educational, missional and homiletical life of the church, though it does exist in small segments.<sup>12</sup> The absence reflects the uncritical posture of many involved in the outreach ministries of the congregation and the power dynamics inherent within ministries that have asymmetries of power.

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<sup>12</sup> Also, church members engage in political activism, though they do so as individuals and not as a sanctioned church coalition.

And yet, in the past four years, individuals and groups within the church participated in educational opportunities focused on issues such as racism, poverty, immigration, hunger and theological reflection on models for mission engagement. From those groups emerged measurable transformation. For example, a “welcome team” ministry for refugees engaged in state and national advocacy around immigration legislation. A holiday toy drive became a holiday toy store that restored dignity to parents who could choose gifts for their children. A “Just Faith” study group participated in a march demanding legislative action on gun control. A book study on white privilege led to a facilitated film series about race and power with a Black congregation and the City of Fort Worth, and, most recently, evolved into a covenant partnership with that same congregation to share in education, fellowship, worship and service. Individually, volunteers who were previously “task oriented” (filling a grocery bag, providing music for worship) serve in ministries of hospitality (greeting guests, developing a friendship, serving as listeners at a Listening Post ministry) after extended times of theological reflection and training.

My call with this congregation began in 2004, and I have held my current position for about nine years. I resource and support our local and global outreach ministries, from short-term mission trips to child mentoring programs to providing respite in our church gym for those experiencing homelessness. Additionally, in partnership with our center director, I oversee the ministries at our outreach center. Those who participate in the ministries there live at or below the poverty line, many of them without stable shelter, and the majority of the participants are marginalized racially and ethnically. In this calendar year, thousands of households received groceries and over ten thousand lunches have been distributed in our food pantry ministry.

While I serve a rather homogenous congregation as it relates to class, my call as a pastor for more than a decade and a half has also been with those in material need. Even though we do

not share similar stories, I identify (and feel called to) those whom I do theology with and for: the working poor, persons experiencing homelessness, and those disconnected from natural supports of healthy community. Through service, worship and conversations, I “do” theology by reflecting on God who stands in solidarity with those who suffer.

To this end, I appreciate Jürgen Moltmann who helped me see that while I do not personally experience the oppression of poverty (as he does not either), I do strongly identify with those with whom I do theology with and for (solidarity with the poor). My experience is not their experience, but I do have a compassion, and an emphatic impulse to be with those who struggle in my own community. As Moltmann says, “Anyone who does something ‘for other people’ must first of all be there ‘with the others.’”<sup>13</sup> The contextual space of being with those in material need every single week of my ministry has shaped my own personal social location and perspective.

And, this compassion moves beyond mere presence towards an ethic of justice. In fact, Letty Russell defines hospitality as “the practice of God’s welcome by reaching across difference to participate in God’s actions bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis.”<sup>14</sup> The goal is “just hospitality,” that is, hospitality also with justice. Christopher Heuertz and Christine Pohl further explain that relationships with “people who are poor makes our lives bigger and invite us to enlarge our circle of responsibility.”<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, vocation for me is participating in

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<sup>13</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000) 234.

<sup>14</sup> Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God’s Welcome in a World of Difference*, J. Shannon Clarkson and Kate M. Ott, eds. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2009) 2.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher L. Heuertz and Christine D. Pohl, *Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010) 67. Also, Christine Pohl’s book, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdsman Publishing Co., 1999), connects justice as integral to a Christian understanding of hospitality.



hospitable and compassionate avenues for people to rejoice and struggle as they make sense of the world around them. And while my hermeneutic may not match those whom I serve (and who serve me), our sharing the work of theology and life *together* gives us all a broader understanding of God who desires wholeness and justice for creation.

For my context, congregational pastoral care is both being with individuals whose lives bear pain because of injustice and being with individuals who are complicit in oppression and identifying coalitional strategies to effect change systemically and transformation individually and interpersonally. The metaphor of bridge has been instrumental in my own vocational vision and the way in which it intersects at First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth. In fact, the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee sixteen years ago articulated their desire to find a pastor who can wrestle with “poverty in the midst of plenty” in order to give witness to a God who desires reconciliation for all God’s people.

## **Stakeholders**

A variety of stakeholders, people with interest or concern about this research question, intersect with this project, and various issues are of significant importance, depending on the perspective of the stakeholder. The stakeholders are those involved directly in the research (curricular intervention participants, neighbor focus group participants, and the researcher) and those who are impacted by the outcomes of the research (neighbors, volunteers, congregation, community).

First, neighbors are stakeholders in this research question. How do the neighbors experience hospitality and welcome by volunteers? Conversely, are there ways in which

neighbors experience oppression and discrimination from volunteers? Are there noticeable differences in the volunteer interactions after the intervention, and, if so, does it impact the relationships between neighbors and volunteers?

Specifically, those who participated in the neighbor focus group may have expectations that their comments and suggestions will have direct impact and future implementation of training and design at the food pantry. The candidness of the focus group participants is at stake in the way that they perceive how the information they share can be trusted, remain confidential, and have no impact on their ability to receive groceries. The benefits for those who participated in the focus group include the possibility of input, feedback, and ownership about a ministry in which they participate. Another potential benefit is an increased connection to others who participate in the focus group and a deepened sense of the purpose and hopes of the ministry.

Second, volunteers are obvious stakeholders as this research question may inform training modules as well as how ministries are programmatically designed after the intervention. The expectations for volunteer interaction are at stake as well – the research question itself suggests that the current interaction of giver and receiver is inadequate, and this may feel threatening to some. Is this primarily a ministry about transformational Christian discipleship or a ministry in which we complete a task of meeting neighbors' needs of hunger? What else may be at stake is retention of volunteers. If volunteers find their time meaningful and transformative, the volunteers may sense a deeper connection to the ministry and the neighbors who come.

In particular, those who participated in the curricular intervention group are stakeholders because it is their experience and analysis of the curricular intervention that guides the outcome of the question. Additionally, it takes courage to challenge master narratives, such as the myth of meritocracy, that are so insidious and ubiquitous in our culture. To challenge it in some ways

seems like challenging the Judeo-Christian fabric of our country. What is at stake is honesty and vulnerability about one's own privilege and unexamined support of classist behaviors and attitudes. The benefits for curricular intervention participants include the possibility of enhanced self-awareness and understanding of systemic domains of power around issues of class through interactive, participatory exercises. Another potential benefit is an increased empathy and relational engagement with neighbors in material need and an increased connection to both me as pastor/researcher and other participants in the curricular process. A final possible benefit is a deepened sense of theological reflection and rationale on outreach ministry and that their experience will impact other areas of the volunteers' lives and their sphere of influence with other people.

By extension, the programmatic decisions of the ministry are also at stake. Will the research findings suggest other alternatives to conduct our food pantry ministry? If so, making changes to a volunteer-led ministry has its challenges and setbacks that will need to be addressed and mitigated.

Third, as the pastor and principal investigator in the research question, I am a stakeholder. How will I be changed as a participant in this process? What will I discover that will inform my practice of ministry and my engagement with both neighbor and volunteers and the wider church and community? Will the biblical and theological rationale, the critical theories and social justice education that I select for the curriculum adequately convey the intended knowledge and awareness? Additionally, will the way in which I present the material resonate with those in the curricular intervention to ignite creative and critical thinking? Will the questions I ask be generative towards thoughtful engagement with the material? How can I, as a pastoral caregiver, examine the structures of power that so successfully resist change in order to

lift up God's vision of *shalom*? What is also at stake is my role as a pastor and a researcher. How will this research impact my relationship with church members and neighbors?

Fourth, the congregation of First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth, is a stakeholder in this research question. What will this research and its findings mean for volunteers beyond the curricular intervention group? If this curricular process yields significant and positive benefit for the test group, I hope to duplicate and repeat this experience with other volunteer groups in our outreach ministries. If deemed helpful, this process has the potential to modify our intended outcomes for missional engagement and the process of training and equipping volunteers.

Fifth, the greater community who participate in the ministries of outreach through our congregation is a stakeholder. If more volunteers participate in a curriculum that explores issues of privilege and engages in critical thought related challenging dominant myths of meritocracy, the overall ministries of our outreach center may be impacted. Coalitional community partnerships may result in leveraging privilege that yields to the expertise of marginalized voices in our greater community,

Finally, ultimately, and hopefully, God's vision of justice and flourishing for all people is at stake. More than a question of sociological curiosity about socio-economic class and our understandings and experience of it, this research project is grounded in a theological inquiry about the amplifying the love and God and neighbor through critical reflection and thoughtful action.

### **Process and Structure of Project**

The first chapter introduces the project issue, the central research question and the describes the ministry context. Additionally, Chapter One identifies my social location, as the

researcher, through reflexive and autobiographical information in order to underscore my personal investment and interest in attending to asymmetries of power as part of Christian discipleship. Finally, stakeholders in the research question are named and explained.

Chapter Two provides a biblical and theological analysis that grounds the project as a theological exercise. In essence, this project theologically matters as an exposition of core biblical teachings and illustrative of major theological themes including sin, hospitality, and incarnational theology, among others.

The third chapter explores several theoretical frameworks that assist in elucidating asymmetries of power within the research project and how these critical theories and pedagogies can help learners reflect upon privilege and oppression. Chapter Four describes the method of data collection in order to analyze if the intervention strategy of a curricular process was effective. This chapter details the way in which data was collected from the researcher through interviews, focus groups, and observation. Finally, the last chapter summarizes data findings and their intersection with theological and theoretical frameworks as well as their implications on my future ministry practices.

## CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Biblical passages and theological themes provide the foundation for the project as issues of class and wealth disparity are a central concern of the Bible. Furthermore, it is not only the discussion of inequalities but how followers of Christ are to think and behave in light of them. This chapter will underscore three key interrelated scriptural concepts: *imago Dei*, neighborly love, and solidarity/incarnational theology. Additionally, this chapter will highlight two particular theological streams, liberation and pastoral theologies, as well as explore significant theological themes that are key to a Christian worldview and witness such as sin and hospitality.

### **Biblical Foundations**

Biblical examples abound in thinking about disparities in wealth and caring for the poor and hungry as well as the necessity in seeing the image of God in others. From the Hebrew scriptures' admonition to care for the most vulnerable to Jesus' continual engagement and association with the poor, the Bible is full of examples for those who follow God to be allies with the plight of those in material need. Moreover, the categories of "us" and "them" become obsolete as we find that through mutuality and solidarity, the welfare of all people is connected to our own.

## *Image of God*

First and foremost, this project is grounded in a theological anthropology<sup>1</sup> centered in the understanding of *imago Dei* (God’s image) as a central framework for human creation and being. According to Genesis, God made humans in the image of God and pronounced them “very good.”<sup>2</sup> Karen Scheib expounds on the implications of this truth: she says, “Because all persons are created in the divine image of God, they are sacred beings and children of God.”<sup>3</sup> This original blessing is a radical affirmation of the human being, of who one is, regardless. In relation to this research question, an *imago Dei* theological anthropology emphasizes human worth not in possessions or perceived productivity, but in the very fact that humans are created in the image of God. Our value as God’s creation is beyond human merit and in spite of ourselves.<sup>4</sup> Thus, seeing humanity through the lens of God’s intentions of image bearers of God becomes the defining directive of living in community with others.

Namsoon Kang calls this vision a “compassionate gaze” that validates all people and encourages a liberating “radical affirmation of the other.” The true challenge is to see God in the face of the other, not simply to see ourselves as a more/less privileged and powerful/powerless other, but to allow subaltern stories to be lifted up as expressions of God’s very self.

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<sup>1</sup> Eleazar Fernandez defines “theological anthropology” as interpreting “our identity, plight, and destiny in light of our religious understanding and practice.” See Eleazar S. Fernandez, *Reimagining the Human: Theological Anthropology in Response to Systemic Evil* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004) 3.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1.27, 31. All scripture references are from the NRSV.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Scheib, *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016) 43.

<sup>4</sup> Likewise, Mary in Luke 1.26-55, redefines worthiness to be about the divine image that gives us worth, where human flourishing is the end goal, not human productivity or human merit. She is not worth what she does; she is worth who God is and who God creates her to be.

As it pertains to this research question, the biblical framework of *imago dei* suggests seeing the individual face of a neighbor over seeing them as a person in need or another number at the food pantry.<sup>5</sup> Neighbors bear God’s image. In fact, if our identity as humans is grounded in an *imago Dei* theological anthropology, we understand our humanity as a manifestation of the divine itself. Moreover, the biblical concept of the image of God, unique to human beings in the creation narratives, implies an ethic of bearing God in an active sense, not simply passive. As image-bearers, we are also imitators of God’s intentions for flourishing and the well-being for all. As Edward Farley asserts: if our humanity is a manifestation of God’s image, then we have a “compassionate obligation”<sup>6</sup> towards all people.<sup>7</sup> Thus, *imago Dei* contains an ethical assertion to care for others and creation in a constant trajectory towards God’s intention of wholeness for creation. Truly, ‘in the beginning,’ the Bible presents the relational intention and responsibility of humans as partners in God’s creation.

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<sup>5</sup> Namsoon Kang says, “To turn one’s compassionate gaze onto others as fellow-citizens of the cosmos will allow one to fundamentally refuse reducing neighbors into numbers and to see them as somebodies, not as nobodies.” See Namsoon Kang, *Cosmopolitan Theology: Reconstituting Planetary Hospitality, Neighbor-Love, and Solidarity in an Uneven World* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2013), 9.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Farley, *Good and Evil: Interpreting a Human Condition*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 43.

<sup>7</sup> Conversely, both our denial of others as image-bearers of the divine and our refusing relationships of wholeness with others, is sin. See the theological themes section for further development of the harmful consequence of racism as the “negation of relation” as Fumitaka Matsuoka argues in *The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998) 58.



## *Neighborly Love*

Building on the priority of a ‘compassionate obligation’ for humans from the first pages of Genesis, the more explicit imperative to “love your neighbor” appears both in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>8</sup> As such, biblical examples in the gospels,<sup>9</sup> in particular, abound that illustrate and amplify the ethic of neighborly love in the context of a society impacted by political and economic realities. The book of Philippians in the ancient Christ hymn admonishes disciples to consider others’ needs in the same way that Christ showed ultimate love and humility.<sup>10</sup>

Paradigmatic of this neighborly love is the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

The familiar parable is a powerful and disarming story of bridging barriers and risking ridicule to help another human being find dignity and care in a time of crisis. In the parable, showing mercy turns out to be the correct answer to the lawyer’s question to Jesus, and it is mercy shown for those in need regardless of race, religion, or region. It’s a radical self-emptying love that transcends all barriers in order to see one another as created in the very image of God.

This parable also demonstrates what can be a trajectory toward ethical action, albeit not guaranteed. The parable makes the point, as do several other gospel pericopes,<sup>11</sup> that a pattern

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<sup>8</sup> See Matthew 22.34-40 and other synoptic gospels (see also Leviticus 19.18). The parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10.25-37, illustrates neighbor love in action.

<sup>9</sup> See Matthew 22.34-40, Mark 12.28-34, Luke 10.25-37.

<sup>10</sup> Philippians 2.3-4.

<sup>11</sup> The example of this trajectory is found in the gospels, in Jesus’ repeated modeling of seeing, empathizing, acting. For example, in the story of feeding the multitude, Jesus sees the crowd, has compassion on them and cures them (Matthew 14.14). In the story of the widow’s son, Jesus sees the widow’s son, has compassion and acts (Luke 7.13-14). And, in two famous parables Jesus uses this same pattern. The Samaritan sees the wounded man, is filled with pity, and acts (Luke 10.33-34). The father sees the prodigal son, has compassion, and hosts a feast of reunification (Luke 15.20). Jesus sees humanity with a ‘compassionate gaze’ which consistently leads him to have compassion which ultimately leads him to action.

that begins in seeing the other through the lens of ethical obligation, can result in transformative action. For example, the Samaritan sees the wounded man with a compassionate gaze which, in turn, engenders empathy, which renders ethical action required of neighborly love.

This pattern of ‘see-have compassion-act,’ does not ensure that ethical behavior will occur, but it does provide a pathway for engagement.<sup>12</sup> Christine Pohl explains by quoting a sermon from John Wesley: “One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor is because they so seldom visit them. Hence...one...does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it – and then plead their voluntary ignorance as an excuse for their hardness of heart.”<sup>13</sup> This ignorance, or obliviousness,<sup>14</sup> can impede our genuine encounters with others across differences. If we keep a sympathizing distance from the plight of others, or worse, if we do not see the plight of others, we will be at great lengths from the performative ethic of compassion that can occur in our collective liberation.

However, while it is also helpful to note that while the parable of the Good Samaritan enhances the understanding of *imago Dei* and expands the understanding of neighbor to include all people, this neighborly love can too easily fall into a patronizing stance of helping those who are less privileged without the theological claim of solidarity: that our welfare is intrinsically tied to the welfare of all. Thus, a cursory reading of the parable may be more about finding people as projects to save, cure, fix, or help rather than seeing the collective liberation and mutuality of all

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<sup>12</sup> Ryan Lamothe says, “Without some empathy, caring activity does not seem possible.” See Ryan Lamothe, *Care of Souls, Care of Polis: Toward a Political Pastoral Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017) 40.

<sup>13</sup> See Christine Pohl’s book, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdsman Publishing Co., 1999) 76.

<sup>14</sup> Obliviousness will be explored further as it relates to the work of pastoral theology.

people. In other words, we can “help” others without consideration for real transformation of ourselves in the process. We can merely tolerate people instead of love people, and toleration does not lead to transformation.

That said, the parable does point to the possibility of reversing “givers” and “receivers” so that we all receive mercy by embracing our collective suffering and failing. It is in the act of receiving that we concede God’s presence in the other. So then to alleviate suffering is not only an act of charity but also an act of solidarity.

### *Theology of solidarity/incarnational theology*

When we see our well-being as intricately connected and intertwined to the well-being of others, we participate in an act of solidarity. Moving beyond our familial and familiar spheres, moving beyond our concern with those with whom we share identities, we cross borders and boundaries to see *shalom* as a flourishing for all of God’s people.

A Hebrew scripture that emphasizes this image of mutuality and solidarity is Jeremiah 29 in which the Lord says to those in Babylonian exile to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”<sup>15</sup> Human well-being is bound up in our neighbor’s well-being, even the neighbor who is, in fact, one whom we may consider hostile, or an enemy. Mutuality is prerequisite for human flourishing, whereby the well-being of all humans is valued and prioritized. Human flourishing consists of resilience, growth, and generative imagination in which individual agency serves the collective communion.

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<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah 29.7.

This solidarity<sup>16</sup> is best demonstrated in the incarnation of Jesus who is Emmanuel, God-with-us.<sup>17</sup> God desires this intimate connection with humans; God becomes ‘new’ in the natality of the birth of Jesus – ‘God with us’ – which is illustrative of God’s relationship to and redemption of the cosmos. John’s poetic prologue says it this way: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”<sup>18</sup> In God’s ultimate desire for emphatic solidarity, God becomes incarnate.

### *Personal and communal transformation as the telos for Christian discipleship*

Thus, in our desire to “let the same mind of Christ be in us,”<sup>19</sup> we aspire to live into the mutuality as the body of Christ.<sup>20</sup> And as we function together in our varieties of gifts, we are transformed into a whole greater than the sum of its parts. We grow in community, and in the “renewing of our minds,”<sup>21</sup> we are transformed. And, transformation is at the very heart and is the telos for Christian discipleship. In other words, through our loving God and loving our neighbor, we are also transformed in the process through our relational solidarity.

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<sup>16</sup> Theologian and preacher Sam Wells contributes significantly to the understanding of solidarity as a theological model, in particular regarding the mission of the church as moving from “working for,” “working with,” “being for” to ultimately “being with” that is incarnational theology. He argues is paradigmatic of Jesus’ ministry and our call as disciples – the ministry of presence connected to the ministry of liberative praxis. See Samuel Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God* (West Sussex: Wiley, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 1.26.

<sup>18</sup> John 1.14.

<sup>19</sup> Philippians 2.5

<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 12.12-26.

<sup>21</sup> Romans 12.2

When ministries of charitable compassion do not encourage and stimulate personal and communal transformation, we continue patterns of paternalistic giving and receiving.

Opportunities to encounter others who display the *imago Dei* are thwarted, and we can continue to hold assumptions, prejudices, fear, and hatred even while helping others in need. Nothing is demanded of us save our time and perhaps possessions. Jesus' model of incarnational theology presupposes engaging all one's self on the road to genuine and transformative discipleship.

Moving from *imago Dei* to Jesus' description of neighborly love and its corresponding ethic of empathetic compassion, the biblical stories radically reframe postures towards those in material need to embody mutuality, solidarity, and personal and communal transformation.

### **Theological Foundations and Themes**

This project brings together a host of constructive and practical theologians in conversation with one another, all who, in one way or another, lift up the political and social implications of a theology of solidarity (*God-with-us*). This theological intersection allows for the link between the personal and the political, between individuals and the systems and structures which are intrinsically connected. Two streams of theological discourse, in particular, frame this research question and its implications: liberation theology and pastoral theology. Together these two discourses weave a liberative and relational theological approach to advance neighborly love that includes care and action on behalf of another.

## *Liberation Theology*

Liberation theology provides a sound theological framework for engaging in congregational outreach in the twenty-first century because it depends heavily on the concept of praxis in the formation of theology. Katherine Turpin says, “Liberationist practical theologians focus more on public praxis<sup>22</sup> as the starting and ending point of theological reflection rather than focusing primarily on increasing faithfulness and discipleship.”<sup>23</sup> Liberation theology affirms the importance of experience as a foundational and fundamental source of theological thinking, offering not only social location/context but also theological content based on the *Sitz im Leben* of the theologian and/or theological community.

Theology is intrinsically contextual, in that each of us brings our own (limited) understanding and experience of the divine in our attempts to enter the dialogue about God. This contextual theology also lends itself more naturally to praxis in concrete ways within communities. Experience becomes then a viable and valuable ‘source’ in theological thinking. Liberation theology argues that theological thinking is an ecclesiological discipline, critical thinking about faith and life in the marketplace and daily struggles of our shared human condition.

Liberation theology espouses that both politically and socially, we are called to address the issues of our time from the lens of faith. Faith, then, is not relegated to the ivory towers of

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<sup>22</sup> Turpin says, “Praxis refers to action saturated with analysis and understanding played out in an arena marked by experiences of oppression and marginalization...Praxis as a term tends to emphasize the political and institutionally situated nature of such knowledge-action interplay and foregrounds the work of social and contextual analysis as a central element in theology.” (Katherine Turpin, “Liberationist Practical Theology,” in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, eds. Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014) 157.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

academia nor to the stained-glass windows of the church – faith is lived out for and with those who struggle in the community. Liberation theology encourages utilizing the lens, or the hermeneutic, of oppression as a valuable tool for wrestling with the biblical narrative. Justice then becomes a priority in liberation theology as an outcome of fully embracing *imago dei* and neighborly love.

In particular, liberation theology recognizes the biblical mandate to care for the poor. Jürgen Moltmann says: “The preferential option for the poor is first and foremost an ecclesiological term for a new orientation and social location of Christ’s church, and it is therefore also a political and moral term for solidarity with the poor, protest against poverty, and the church’s own commitment to the poor.”<sup>24</sup> That is, the church finds its identity (and even salvation, he claims!) through solidarity with those in poverty. The voice of liberation theology reminds us that the poor, not just the powerful, can describe God’s action in history and participate in the future of liberating praxis.

In particular, two theological themes in liberation theology and pastoral theology contribute to the theological scaffolding of this research project: hope and the doctrine of the Trinity. First, how does one hope without a home, without food security, a job? Liberation theology claims that even beyond our ability to see hope in our particular context, the biblical and historical context contains both claim and promise. If Christian hope is to have any content beyond mere optimism, it is the assertion that hope is precisely hope because it meets suffering head-on and affirms that nothing is beyond God’s redemption. Hope, then, must engage the depths of the despair (the cross) with God’s promise of presence in and through it. Despair may obstruct hope but it does not ultimately occlude it.

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<sup>24</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000) 232.

What often contributes to the despair, especially for those in material and physical need, is the “loss of a future story” as pastoral theologian Andrew Lester explores in his work on hope in pastoral care and counseling as socially mediated.<sup>25</sup> Building on Lester’s work of narrative theory and relational story telling as a way to construct ‘hopeful future stories,’ pastoral theologian Karen Scheib asserts that the practice of imagination in narrative story telling “makes change and hope possible.”<sup>26</sup> By accompanying people in relational storytelling, hope arises through the divine intersection of sharing our lives in solidarity with one another.

Second, how does a robust understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity influence our interactions with neighbors? The perichoretic understanding of the Trinity models the community that is aspirational in ministries of outreach, especially those with asymmetries of power inherent within them. For example, Leonardo Boff beautifully connects the doctrine of the Trinity as a foundational concept in liberation theology because the communion of the Trinity is the ultimate model for human community at its ideal: power dispersed, reciprocity encouraged, dialogue valued, all included, participation expected. Trinitarian theology is the theological framework for solidarity and the with-ness of God. He says,

What does it mean for the poor to believe in the Trinity? It is more than a matter of professing a dogmatic truth and managing to understand its terms. It is also a matter of an existential actualization of the mystery of communion, so that people may be concretely helped to live their humanity in a fuller and freer way...the holy Trinity is the best community.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Andrew D. Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

<sup>26</sup> Karen Scheib, *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016) 104.

<sup>27</sup> Leonardo Boff, “Trinity” in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives in Liberation Theology*, Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuria (Maryknoll, NY: Orbix Books, 1993) 77, 85.



Liberation theology enhances communion with others and communal action on behalf of others. “Liberation theologians,” says Claire Wolfteich, “have insisted that praxis on behalf of the poor and oppressed must be integral to Christian spirituality.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, the Trinity models communion in its most genuine expression as mutuality and solidarity that equates to active participation that can then inform and encourage social transformation and action.

### ***Pastoral Theology***

In addition to liberation theology with its emphasis on liberative justice, pastoral theology further informs the research question and scope of this project by examining the complexity of asymmetries of power and the need to identify ways in which people and systems benefit from privilege while marginalizing people and systems disadvantaged by injustice.<sup>29</sup> Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook suggests that “pastoral care that recognizes the realities of oppression” is “an exercise in love and power.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, pastoral theology offers theological implications for ways to remedy the imbalance of power by those with privilege yielding to the expertise of those without privilege and power.<sup>31</sup> Essentially, pastoral theology necessitates advocacy as a function

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<sup>28</sup> Claire Wolfteich, “Spirituality,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2012) 331.

<sup>29</sup> Advantage is inextricably connected to disadvantage: “Group inequality persists because the privilege and power of some is directly tied to the oppression of others: Powerful groups gain and maintain power by exploiting the labor and lives of others.” See Lynn Weber, *Understanding Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality: A Conceptual Framework*, second ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 8.

<sup>30</sup> Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook in “Love and Power: Antiracist Pastoral Care in *Injustice in the Care of Souls: Taking Oppression Seriously in Pastoral Care*, Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook and Karen B. Montagno, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009) 13.

<sup>31</sup> Appreciation to Nancy J. Ramsay for this helpful delineation of pastoral theology.

of care<sup>32</sup> through challenging master narratives and structural evil in a pastoral context with the telos of transformation in the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological spheres. In other words, pastoral theology is a process and a practice of communal discernment, honest conversation, engagement, and transformation of powers and privilege that surround our living.

Additionally, pastoral theology not only addresses the pain experienced by those who are marginalized, it offers tools to assess the privilege of those who oppress. How does privilege obscure consciousness and the failure to attend to the dynamics of oppressive disparities and inequities?

Thus, pastoral theology is also political by nature. Ryan Lamothe argues that “pastoral theology, and by implication, pastoral care are political not only because both are tied to a *mythos* and its vision of living together, but also because suffering and care are inextricably bound to political and economic realities.”<sup>33</sup> Human lives are shaped by systems that have influence upon our “survival, flourishing and liberation”<sup>34</sup> that, depending on our privilege, bring advantage or disadvantage. Claiming that our identities are in and of themselves also political, Iris Marion Young says that “in our society aversive or anxious reactions to the bodily presence of others contribute to their oppression.”<sup>35</sup> Then, to ‘speak truth to power,’ political pastoral theology works through interventions, among other things, to support “survival, flourishing, and

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<sup>32</sup> See Nancy J. Ramsay, “A Time for Ferment and Redefinition,” in *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms*, ed. Nancy J. Ramsay (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004) 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ryan Lamothe, *Care of Souls, Care of Polis: Toward a Political Pastoral Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017) 5.

<sup>34</sup> Lamothe, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) 11.

liberation of individuals and communities.”<sup>36</sup> By challenging dominant narratives which are entangled with systemic issues of power, pastoral care *is* political.

One type of pastoral intervention is to challenge the master or dominant narrative with the acceptance and elevation of alterative, or subaltern, stories as valid. A master narrative is a worldview that propagates a system of oppressed and oppressors; master stories are confirmed and uncontested. Once a master narrative is disrupted or ruptures, space is allowed for re-storying to occur. Pastoral theologian Karen Scheib contends that strengthening subjugated narratives and challenging master narratives as a function of pastoral care “allow for new, liberating, healing possibilities and ways of being in the world.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, pastoral theology is “liberating pastoral care,”<sup>38</sup> as Emmanuel Lartey says, as liberation from cycles of destructive narratives becomes a focal piece to a holistic pastoral theology. Deconstructing harmful master narratives ripe with sin and evil in favor of a vision of justice, mutuality, salvation, and human flourishing is the telos of Christian discipleship and the aspirational outcome of a theological anthropology centered in God’s image in all creation.

As Mary McClintock Fulkerson suggests, in order to counter the oblivion of marginalized narratives and experiences and the harm that it caused through obliviousness, “places to appear” become critical. Seen from the perspective of *imago Dei*, “being seen and heard by others, being acknowledged by others” are “essential to a community of faith as an honoring of the shared

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<sup>36</sup> Lamothe, 25.

<sup>37</sup> Scheib, 91.

<sup>38</sup> Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006) 69.

image of God.”<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, what is required for shared appearance is for those benefitting from power and privilege to acknowledge obliviousness and to make space for all appearances. The “emancipatory interest” of pastoral theology “demands a response of change”<sup>40</sup> or a transformation, which is at the heart of Christian discipleship.

### **Implications of Biblical Narratives and Theological Themes**

While scriptural narratives and liberation and pastoral theologies underscore the importance of transformative practices vis-à-vis an awareness of privilege and mitigating the harm done to marginalized groups and people through spaces of awareness and actions of advocacy, this is easier said than done. Social and political identities are complicated, and living fully into the theological implications of *imago Dei* and neighborly love that lead to solidarity and transformation are complex. From a theological point of view, which is the focus of this chapter, the process is arduous when unraveling centuries of harm promoted by the dominant narrative. At the same time, the urgency and necessity of this transformative work is paramount for Christian faith and belief.

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<sup>39</sup> Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 21.

<sup>40</sup> Fulkerson, 22.

## *Hospitality and Power*

Implicit in neighborly love is the biblical concept of hospitality, in which as Pohl says “the power of recognition is given” or as Fulkerson suggests, a “frame for appearing” is made. At first glance, hospitality is a noble and kind aspirational goal of our outreach center.<sup>41</sup> Hospitality is a gesture of welcome from host to guest(s), and contemporary connotations do not require social or moral obligations. However, as Christine Pohl argues, the Judeo-Christian tradition of hospitality implies a “fundamental moral practice”<sup>42</sup> and includes recognizing, validating and celebrating the inherent worth of another. Christian hospitality, then, is more than giving and receiving; it reflects a solidarity of interconnected welfares of both giver and receiver.

At the same time, as excellent a vision that hospitality may be, it is not without its limitations for inherent in the relationship between host and guest is the dynamic of power. Pohl points to the danger of hospitality as a “charity model” in which patronizing givers exert control over “dependent” recipients. Namsoon Kang is quick to point out Derrida’s work on the etymology of the word hospitality and the interplay between “hostility” and “hospitality.”<sup>43</sup> Power is part of hospitality in that the host provides a space or welcome for the guest; and hostility can arise within hospitality when asymmetries of power are at play.

Thus, hospitality is reframed from a simplistic image of a giver and a receiver to a mutual connectedness as reflected in Trinitarian models of solidarity. Instead of obliviousness or naivete

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<sup>41</sup> In fact, the word “hospitality” is the first word in the acronym of the food pantry ministry, First HAND, which stands for hospitality, advocacy, nurture and dignity.

<sup>42</sup> Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2009) 17.

<sup>43</sup> Namsoon Kang, *Cosmopolitan Theology: Reconstituting Planetary Hospitality, Neighbor-Love, and Solidarity in an Uneven World* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2013) 154.

about the dynamics of power and privilege, they are revealed and recognized to bear upon the systemic inequalities and theological inequities that result in the denial of the *imago Dei*.

### *Sin as Distortion of Imago Dei*

The foundational theological belief that humans are created in the *imago Dei* is distorted and obstructed by dominant and oppressive forces that place diminished value on other humans. Fumitaka Matsuoka describes racism, in particular as the “negation of relation” as the rupture in relation speaks theologically to the disregard for *imago Dei*.

This negation of regard is a “desacrilization”<sup>44</sup> of the “other;” in other words, it is sin.<sup>45</sup> Karen Scheib expounds on the implications of this truth: she says, “Violating the dignity of any person, through slavery, racism, and other forms of oppression, is a violation of God’s great commandment to love as we are loved and is an expression of sin.”<sup>46</sup> Sin, therefore, is the lie that privilege obscures so as not to challenge our structures of power and privilege.<sup>47</sup> The confession, then, of sin, in our disregard for the other is a fundamental aspect of reflexivity for the one with power and privilege.

However, the complicity in structural sin is often given less attention in Protestant North American culture. The way in which sin is relegated to matters of personal piety hinders the

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<sup>44</sup> M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) 10.

<sup>45</sup> Eleazar Fernandez mentions sin as “discrete acts of individuals that reinforce structures of oppression (systemic evil).” See Eleazar S. Fernandez, *Reimagining the Human: Theological Anthropology in Response to Systemic Evil* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004) 54.

<sup>46</sup> Karen Scheib, *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016) 43.

<sup>47</sup> Several theologians develop the idea of sin “as a lie” and develop it more fully in their scholarship (for example, Wendy Farley, Reinhold Niebuhr, Nancy Ramsay, Marjorie Suchocki).

ability to admit complicity in systemic sin, most especially for those in positions of power. It is what Elsa Tamez calls the “spiritualization of sin”<sup>48</sup> in which people are consumed by metrics of morality rather than concerned with societal sin and individual promulgation of it. To arrive at a level of self-awareness of participation, even unwittingly in injustice, takes great courage, for some in dominant groups claim that they did not intend harm (not purposefully or personally committing an injustice). I find these words by Eleazar Fernandez both helpful and hopeful:

The systemic character of evils that plague our society calls for a kind of responsibility that operates beyond individual goodness and good intentions...Systemic evil demands not only individual confession and conversion but also the transformation of our collective ways of thinking, being, and acting. As the interlocking forms of oppression are systemic and structural in nature, so, too, must transformations happen at the structural-societal level.<sup>49</sup>

And while an academic exercise may name them as sinful in theory, it is another thing altogether to oppose them in practice and to facilitate conversations that repudiate their existence and our complicity in their existence (as individuals and as groups). To do so is not only wholly unfamiliar to some people, but also extremely threatening to those with power.

At the same time, sin can be understood from positions of the oppressed. For those marginalized, sin is not concerned with the benefits of power and privilege but with the consequences of power and privilege. Sin denies equal humanity for all by taking away agency from the oppressed, thereby limiting the ability to believe that a life of flourishing outside of

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<sup>48</sup> Elsa Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993) 21.

<sup>49</sup> Fernandez, 69-70.

oppression is possible, let alone attainable. Then, sin is symptomatic of structural evil;<sup>50</sup> and interlocking evils debilitate the re-imagination of humanity.

One of Fernandez's arguments about the relationship between sin and evil is based on his appropriation of the work of Mary Potter Engel. He writes, "when one is speaking with perpetrators, sin needs to be stressed because it underscores personal responsibility. On the other hand, when one is speaking with the victims, the stress should fall on the systemic aspect (evil), so as not to perpetuate the feeling of self-blame among the victims."<sup>51</sup> This underscores the importance of rebalancing power through the ownership of fault for oppressors and, at the same time, the abstinence of shame for the victims. However, Fernandez goes on to say, "the perpetrators need to know that their actions are expressions of systemic evil that extends beyond their individual decisions, and the victims need to realize that they have a responsibility to resist and fight back."<sup>52</sup>

That is, perpetrators are part of structures and narratives larger than themselves, and, perhaps by intentional examination of these structures and narratives, perpetrators can begin to dismantle the ideologies to which they have consciously or subconsciously subscribed. Wendy Farley emphasizes that oppressors are inducted into privilege deceptively<sup>53</sup> through the cycle of

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<sup>50</sup> Fernandez mentions sin as "discrete acts of individuals that reinforce structures of oppression (systemic evil)." See Eleazar S. Fernandez, *Reimagining the Human: Theological Anthropology in Response to Systemic Evil* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004) 54.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Wendy Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: a Contemporary Theodicy* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990) 44.



socialization<sup>54</sup> are “hip deep”<sup>55</sup> in privilege before the oppressor is conscious of their existence and influence. Classism is not a deliberate choice by an oppressor.

And, yet, when awareness joined with action occur, the oppressed find courage in individual actions to resist the dominant narratives that have falsely defined their livelihood (or lack of it). While it takes courage to name the injustices not only in one’s life but also within society, this is justification as the Apostle Paul and the Reformers understood it: liberation for both victims and perpetrators where authentic reconciliation abounds in the kingdom of God, where the affirmation and the obligation of *imago Dei* is restored as God intends. This moves salvation away from a private affair and moves salvation towards the biblical vision of the cosmic arena of God’s redemption that all of creation longs to realize through the Spirit.

Justice, then, is not only ‘righting wrongs,’ it is restoring the truth of *imago Dei* and rejecting the lie that “negated relations” are permissible as disciples of Christ. Whether injustice exists in written policies and unspoken privileges or whether it takes the form of silent thoughts or verbal beliefs, injustice threatens human flourishing for both privileged and oppressed, no matter the particular context. And, the lie exists far beyond individual and interpersonal realms; the lie is woven into institutions and ideologies to which people are socialized and indoctrinated. The scope of the lie helps explain how people are inducted into the lie of classism (born into it and buy into it) and learn not to see, much less challenge, how systems benefit the privileged.

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<sup>54</sup> See Bobbie Harro, “Cycle of Socialization,” in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* 3rd ed. Maurianne Adams and Lee Anne Bell with Diane J. Goodman and Khyati Y. Joshi. eds. (New York: Routledge, 2016) 107.

<sup>55</sup> With appreciation to Dr. Nancy Ramsay for this metaphorical phrase.

## **Conclusion**

Theological and biblical foundations inform this project as an exercise of Christian discipleship. The biblical narratives illustrate critical scriptural paradigms of *imago Dei*, neighborly love, and solidarity. Liberation and pastoral theologians underscore social justice education and work as central to theological understandings of liberation praxis lived out in the lives of disciples as priority in Christian witness. The next chapter will further explore transformative thought and action through the theoretical lens of identity politics and social justice education.

## CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS THAT INFLUENCE INTERVENTION DESIGN

### The Problems With Privilege

Even though issues of poverty and unequal treatment of the poor are a central concern in the gospels<sup>1</sup> and in theological scholarship, largely absent from Protestant North American Christian education and preaching is discourse and deliberate consideration of systemic socio-economic injustices that continuously oppress the marginalized. Moreover, those with privilege are often grossly unaware of the chasms of wealth inequalities and the cultural, social and economic values that maintain and reinforce those inequities. The induction into the life of the obliviousness of privilege obscures systemic issues that advantage some while, at the same time, produce harm to others. Many times, especially this project's context of a congregational outreach ministry, as Derald Wing Sue and David Sue claim: "It is the well-intentioned individuals who consider themselves moral, decent, and fair-minded who may have the greatest difficulty in understanding how their belief systems and actions may be biased and prejudiced."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eben Scheffler, "Luke's View On Poverty In Its Ancient (Roman) Economic Context: A Challenge For Today" in *Scriptura* 106 (2011), pp. 115-135. <http://scriptura.journals.ac.za/> accessed 10 February 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice*, Fifth Ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2008) 88. Also, Nancy J. Ramsay finds a similar observation in a fictionalized case study of a congregation comments that "thoughtful and well-meaning congregants" were "remarkably unreflective about the socio-economic realities." See Nancy Ramsay, "Analyzing and Engaging Asymmetries of Power: Intersectionality as a Resource for Practices of Care," in *Practical Theology and Care: Trajectories in Theory and Practice*, Nancy Ramsay, Ed., (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2018) 163.

While the biblical and theological frameworks mentioned in Chapter 2 are not unfamiliar to some congregants, making the connection to contemporary issues of economic oppression and disparity can be new territory. This chapter will explore how theories and pedagogical concepts can help pastoral practitioners assist their communities in critical reflection in a contextual situation and bring theological and biblical messages to bear on the economic, social and political realities that distort and oppress human flourishing. These theories, pedagogy, and methodology challenge dominant cultural messages in which those with power and privilege are unaware of their complicity in harmful systems. Sue and Sue claim, “The goal of our society – and by association, of helping professions – should be to make the invisible, visible.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, transformative pastoral care involves unveiling<sup>4</sup> socioeconomic and cultural biases and political, social, and cultural forces that shape our daily lives as part of a process of liberation.

### **A Case Study**

For example, consider this fictional case study from the context of a congregational food pantry. Gary is a 69-year-old white man who is economically affluent and, in his retirement from a successful real estate career, volunteers at the church food pantry through my congregation. He participates faithfully each week, giving of his time and energy to distribute groceries to those in need in our community. He describes himself as one who is deeply spiritual, as one who believes “that all people are created in God’s image as children of God.” Additionally, Gary shares his

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<sup>3</sup> Sue and Sue, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Paulo Freire says, “Problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality” in Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018) 34.

political viewpoints with other church members while volunteering; for example, phrases such as “it’s more prudent to give people a hand up, not a hand out” or “people should pull themselves up by their bootstraps “or “some people, especially women, are too dependent upon the government for assistance” are not uncommon in his conversations and viewpoints. One day I overheard Gary complaining to the other volunteers about neighbors who drive to our center for free groceries in the middle of the workday in their very nice vehicles. His comment implies that the neighbors should be employed during a work day (presumably to be able to afford to purchase groceries instead of receiving them) and should not have access to nice cars when receiving free groceries (assuming that the neighbor mismanaged financial priorities). While he does not intend his comments to be disparaging, they, in fact, are.

### **Unpacking Privilege**

What assumptions has Gary made about neighbors who receive free groceries, failing to capture the complexity of economic and personal factors that are at play? How does a pastoral leader not only aid congregations in connecting theological claims to socio-economic issues but also assist in addressing patterns of privilege that amplify oppression and obstruct compassion? Mission engagement ministry presupposes engagement, not simply stocking shelves and getting the job done. How can the pastoral leader create opportunities that lead to transformation?

Conversations about systemic inequalities can be difficult to have, and many times thought and action around divisive topics are avoided in our society at large and especially within a mainline church populated by those with privilege. It takes courage to challenge master narratives that are insidious and ubiquitous in our culture such as “the American dream” and the

myth that it is attainable for those who work hard enough. Privileged individuals and groups of individuals may find dialogue that question cultural and economic assumptions about class and wealth to be disconcerting and, at times, disorienting. How does a person or even a group of people effect change concerning broad cultural assumptions about class? The conversations and the implications of such conversations can be uncomfortable to those in power, and those with privilege often find themselves defensive (i.e., “I wasn’t personally involved in making policies that were discriminatory.”) As Derald Wing Sue says regarding dialogue about racism that is easily transferable to conversation about economic issues: “negative reactions are often the result of defensiveness brought forth by...denial of personal responsibility for racial inequities in our society.”<sup>5</sup> Of course, classism, like racism, is more than individual behaviors; economic disparities are baked into policies, systems, histories, ideologies and institutions from which no one person can exclude himself or herself.

Moreover, classism relates to other interlocking oppressions that diminish human flourishing, such as racism and sexism. However, classism can be less visible, and some argue that less attention, theological and pastorally, is given to issues of classism.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, racism is deeply tied to classism as many minoritized racial and ethnic groups are “disproportionally represented in the lower socio-economic classes.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Sue and Sue state that “many argue that class may be a more powerful determinant of values and behavior than race or ethnicity”<sup>8</sup> because of the power dynamic involved in the growing chasm of wealth inequality

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<sup>5</sup> Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, *Counseling the Culturally Diverse*, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Rogers-Vaughn, *Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016) 53-54.

<sup>7</sup> Sue and Sue, 148.

<sup>8</sup> Sue and Sue, 196.

that all but guarantees the wealthiest will maintain power. However, unlike race and ethnicity, generally speaking, a social class identity can be fluid and dynamic.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, debates over economic issues and both the reasons and resolutions for economic inequalities is political by nature. Today's national and global landscape encompasses deep ideological divisions and excessive partisanship which contribute to an extremely polarized populace. Thus, people affiliate along political lines and fiercely ascribe to the static economic ideology of their particular political alliance. Therefore, to dismantle, let alone question, commonly held cultural beliefs is a formidable challenge. There is no simple "fix" to the gaps of socioeconomic disparities into which all of us are born.

As Bobbie Harro illustrates in the "Cycle of Socialization,"<sup>10</sup> while we are born into the world with systemic inequalities in place, we are then socialized on personal levels through norms and values and expectations (i.e., we are taught) which are reinforced by institutional and cultural messages on conscious and unconscious levels. The awareness of socialization "includes analysis of how we come to know ourselves as persons holding the particular identities that we wear, and the socialization impact on us of institutional and cultural systems, structures, and

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<sup>9</sup> Additionally, one can achieve or lose income or wealth and yet can ascribe to the beliefs and values of the social class that they choose. (Yet, that is not without complexity, too. As Professor Michael Birdwell says, "when one tries to change social classes, there's this feeling that you're forsaking the family, place, forgetting where you came from. There's real fear that if you leave, that you'll be ashamed of where you came from." Michael Birdwell, *People Like Us: Social Class in America*, Center for New American Media, 23 September 2001.)

<sup>10</sup> Bobbie Harro, "Cycle of Socialization," in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* 3rd ed. Maurianne Adams and Lee Anne Bell with Diane J. Goodman and Khyati Y. Joshi. eds. (New York: Routledge, 2016) 107.

practices.”<sup>11</sup> Our understanding of socialization, and its effects upon individuals and institutions opens the possibility to see how those with power become oppressors, often unwittingly.<sup>12</sup>

And, as we experience dissonance from what we have been taught, we can continue patterns of intentional obliviousness or disrupt the socialization cycle towards a cycle of liberation.<sup>13</sup> The repetitions of the cycle of socialization without interruptions or directions for change reinforces ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and individual imbalances in our social structures and relationships. In theological parlance, sin, then is the acceptance and perpetuation of the lie of widely held cultural and economic beliefs that maintain the socioeconomic status quo.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, in order to interrupt the cycle of socialization and lay the groundwork for personal, interpersonal, and systemic transformation, the pastoral practitioner draws on resources from practical theology, including pastoral theology, and social justice education. In fact, each extends the goals of the other as they help disclose the lie of commonly held economic and cultural assumptions about inherent systems of inequality and privilege and assist in moving those in power towards the trajectory of emancipatory praxis. In other words, the telos, or end goal of such theories and social justice education is not only to understand the asymmetries of power

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<sup>11</sup> Maurianne Adams and Barbara J. Love, “Teaching With a Social Justice Perspective: A Model for Faculty Seminars Across Academic Disciplines” in *Teaching Inclusively: Resources for Course, Department and Institutional Change in Higher Education*, Mathew L. Ouellett, ed. (Stillwater: New Forums Press Inc., 2005) 593.

<sup>12</sup> Sue and Sue agree: “Majority group members are victims who are unwittingly socialized into the role of oppressor” (Sue and Sue, 88).

<sup>13</sup> Bobbi Harro also offers a diagram of this in *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice* 3rd ed. Maurianne Adams, Warren J. Blumenfeld, Carmelita (Rosie) Castañeda, Heather W. Hackman, Madeline L. Peters and Ximena Zúñiga, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2013) 107. A cycle of liberation is illustrative of what I will later reference as “emancipatory praxis.”

<sup>14</sup> See Marjorie Suchocki in *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 1995).



that are at play but also to elicit change on individual, interpersonal, institutional and even ideological levels.

### **Resources from Practical Theology: Praxis**

As explained in Chapter Two, pastoral theology offers rich theological resources for identifying and combatting embedded inequities in our interpersonal and social structures. Pastoral theology, as a branch of practical theology, encourages reflection of past and present action to align, change or improve future action.

Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martínez offer a helpful way of understanding theological reflection as a critical component for thoughtful action. However, as they point out, the idea is not to move from theory to practice, but to embrace “reflective discernment” as a “continuous practice, rooted in the current environment and experiences of the church.”<sup>15</sup> This process is called praxis, and praxis is the quintessential intention and purpose of practical theology.<sup>16</sup> As Branson and Martínez explain it, praxis is “the constant rhythm that includes study and reflection (including working with theology and other theoretical material) in continual interaction with engagement and action.”<sup>17</sup> In order to move more quickly (and people assume more efficiently), the temptation in the church is often two-fold: reflection with little action; action with little to no

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<sup>15</sup> Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martínez, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011) 39.

<sup>16</sup> In fact, Paulo Freire boldly claims that praxis is “the transformation of the world” (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 42).

<sup>17</sup> Branson and Martínez, 41.

reflection. This process of praxis seeks to ensure that intention and attention are requisite for both thought and action.

Practical theologians working within this action-reflection-action paradigm, blend together Scripture and tradition with the realities of social location, historical events, personal (and also corporate) experience, the culture of a community and social change. The goal, then, of such theology is to “reflect on the mutual relationship between these experiences and allow them to explain, illuminate, challenge, or critique each other.”<sup>18</sup> The purpose of practical theology is to engage and encourage conversations between faith and life, allowing the intersection of the two to inform and enhance the other towards transformational change.<sup>19</sup> Paolo Freire’s work aimed to liberate people from cycles of socialization that assumed that existing inequities are fixed, unmovable and inherent in society; accordingly, he addressed “social inequality through praxis: an iterative process of engaging in knowledge, action and reflection in an effort to understand and transform the world.”<sup>20</sup>

In other words, practical theology encourages “analysis-soaked action,”<sup>21</sup> suggesting that critical engagement with thoughts, beliefs and actions leads to informed and intentional future

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<sup>18</sup> Stephen Bevans, “Contextual Theology as Practical Theology in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski, eds. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014) 49.

<sup>19</sup> Also, practical theology recognizes that no one theology is monolithic nor is representative of the whole of humanity. See Gordon S. Mikoski’s chapter “Neo-Protestant Practical Theology” in Cahalan and Mikoski, 169-186.

<sup>20</sup> Beth Glover Reed and Melissa R. Peet, in “Faculty Development and Organizational Change: Moving from ‘Minority Relevant’ to Intersectionality and Social Justice” in *Teaching Inclusively: Resources for Course, Department and Institutional Change in Higher Education*, Mathew L. Ouellett, ed. (Stillwater: New Forums Press Inc., 2005) 476.

<sup>21</sup> With appreciation to Dr. Stephen Sprinkle for this phrase.

action. For example, in my research question, the cycle of praxis (reflection-action-reflection) is a curricular process aimed at thoughtful engagement as a type of intervention for future behavior. Thus, the pastoral cycle of practical theology or praxis becomes the circular and dynamic process of reflective leadership with a trajectory towards transformation.

Specifically, this *emancipatory* praxis underscores that the aspirational goal for the practical application of theology is that of liberation for the oppressed and the oppressor. Emancipatory praxis is, then, by nature, a political activity.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the merger of liberation and pastoral theologies results in a performative ethic over against a descriptive theory. In other words, emancipatory praxis anticipates actual practices of liberation, beyond the theoretical towards the transformational.

## **Resources from Social Justice Education**

A critical pedagogical approach to emancipatory praxis is social justice education (SJE). As such, the objectives of a social justice education approach “include awareness and understanding of oppression, acknowledgment of one’s role in that system (as a privileged or disadvantaged social group member), and a commitment to develop the skills, resources, and coalitions needed to create lasting change.”<sup>23</sup> Social justice education employs participatory pedagogical methodologies that include reflection and interactive learning as critical to growth and retention. For example, central to a SJE approach is collaborative learning and making

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<sup>22</sup> Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986) 152.

<sup>23</sup> Maurianne Adams and Lee Anne Bell with Diane J. Goodman and Khyati Y. Joshi, *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016) 97.

connections from theoretical to personal experiences in order to encourage “personal growth and collaborative efforts toward change.”<sup>24</sup>

Fundamental to an SJE approach of transformation is the recognition of oppressive inequities and the learned complicity of citizens as oppressors<sup>25</sup> by understanding the origin and persistence of inequalities through historical, political, and structural frameworks. Thus, social justice education emphasizes an examination of domination and subordination and their implications on people and groups of people, especially as “power and privilege is connected to those identities.”<sup>26</sup> Part of the structures of domination and subordination, as it pertains to this project’s focus on economic inequalities inherent in ministries of material need, includes an assessment of the origin and perpetuation of cultural values and economic realities that shape and bolster structures of oppression, often outside the awareness of those who benefit from the structures.

## **Cultural Values and Classism**

### ***Class Culture, Classism, and Types of Capital***

Generally speaking, North American culture values independence and autonomy as normative, and “rugged individualism and individual responsibility”<sup>27</sup> as directly influencing

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<sup>24</sup> Adams, Bell, Goodman, Joshi, 116.

<sup>25</sup> SJE acknowledges that the “social justice framework includes analysis of domination and subordination at different societal, institutional, and interpersonal levels” (Adams and Love, 597).

<sup>26</sup> Maurianne Adams and Barbara Love, Teaching With a Social Justice Perspective: A Model for Faculty Seminars Across Academic Disciplines,” *Teaching Inclusively: Resources for Course, Department and Institutional Change in Higher Education*, Mathew L. Ouellett, ed. (Stillwater: New Forums Press Inc., 2005)593.

<sup>27</sup> Sue and Sue, 81.

notions of socio-economic class. Determinants of social class<sup>28</sup> in our society consist of personal performance (education, occupation, income, achievement), wealth, and social orientation (values, class consciousness). Like other socializations into which we are born, “patterns of thought and behavior learned from one’s class culture often remain unconscious”<sup>29</sup> as they filter in through larger historical, social, and political structures and systems. Predictably, early experiences of class has lingering effects for individuals. “The fact that class cultures are rarely talked about makes it even more likely that people will fail to notice their own patterns of class culture.”<sup>30</sup> Even if one rejects affiliation with a particular class, normative behaviors, beliefs, and actions may be unconsciously internalized.

Classism, a systematic assignment of worth based on social class (real or perceived) that advantages some while oppressing others,<sup>31</sup> results in drastic income and wealth inequalities. Classism benefits the wealthy at the expense of the poor through laws, policies, ideologies and individual attitudes and behaviors. Classism is held in place by systems of policies and practices that reproduces privilege according to economic status, wealth, job status, education level, and family lineage/heritage. Assumptions are made about people’s lives based on economic class. For example, church volunteers may assume that neighbors in material need do not have much education, when, in fact, some neighbors have advanced degrees.

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<sup>28</sup> Borrowing from Leondar-Wright and Yeskel’s work, Adams, et. al. defines class as “a relative social ranking based on income, wealth, education, status, and power” (Adams, Bell, Goodman, Joshi, 214).

<sup>29</sup> Adams, Bell, Goodman, Joshi, 216.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Again, borrowing from Leondar-Wright and Yeskel’s work, Adams, et. al. defines classism as “the institutional, cultural, and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socioeconomic class (Adams, Bell, Goodman, Joshi, 214).

Classism inscribes as true hierarchies of value and worth that reproduce inequalities. Thus, cultural values are assigned differing levels of worth in conjunction with the power and ability to promulgate a certain class, and its beliefs, as normative or standard.<sup>32</sup> For example, Gary judges neighbors who arrive to a food pantry in a nice cars as undeserving (or uneducated about financial priorities) of luxury items often associated with middle and upper classes. The neighbors, in Gary's mind, transcended a class boundary by using something other than public transportation or an older model vehicle.

Some factors that impact understandings and identities of social class and classism include what French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu describes as economic, cultural and social capital.<sup>33</sup> These types of capital influence power dynamics and understanding them aids in grasping the relationship among culture, wealth and status. Economic capital can be "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights."<sup>34</sup> This can be income, or wealth or the ability to generate income or wealth ("what one has"). Cultural capital describes "what one knows about," whether it be education or the values and norms that can help one navigate within a particular class. Social capital is "who one knows" and includes the value of social networks that can render certain advantages and benefits.<sup>35</sup> Taken together, these three types of capital can work to advantage or disadvantage

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<sup>32</sup> This is what Sue and Sue refer to as "monocultural ethnocentric bias" (Sue and Sue, 88-93).

<sup>33</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241-258.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Adams, Bell, Goodman, Joshi, 217-218.

persons and groups of people.<sup>36</sup>

For example, in the case study, Gary benefits from economic capital from his successful real estate career (and we do not know if he also inherited wealth of any kind from his family). Because of his income, he has access to material goods, health care, opportunities and experiences made possible by an exchange of money. His success in business was likely aided by social capital, by those he knows through his social network of other middle to upper class professionals. Gary has cultural capital in that he was afforded education, not only in formal educational institutions, but informally through cultural avenues like the opportunity, for example, to play golf, or attend a predominantly white, affluent church, or to understand social mores of certain classes in his community. These types of capital are not earned; even with economic capital, privilege and disadvantage plays a role in securing financial gains. Additionally, because of his gender and race, Gary is able to navigate the upper echelons of society with predictable ease and access.

In contrast, neighbors who come to a food pantry for groceries and lunches have food insecurity of some sort, connected to a lack of economic capital. And, for some neighbors, social capital is hard to come by if one is transient in a community or by virtue of class does not have access to networks of wealthier classes who can assist in securing employment, health care, real estate, and so on. One who has limited education and exposure to educational opportunities possesses low cultural capital. Presumably, with additional education one can have an advantage in achieving higher social and economic status. However, when neighbors are socialized into

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<sup>36</sup> Peggy McIntosh illustrates this in her *Invisible Knapsack* (1989) in which unearned assets from the dominant culture affords advantages through social, economic and cultural capital. See Appendix K.

systems of poverty and oppression, breaking the cycle is complex as the cycle is dependent on systems of oppression and not merely individual will power and determination. Bourdieu sees these capitals impacting the generational reproduction of inequality.

### ***Myth of Meritocracy and the American Dream***

A prevailing belief in dominant North American values regarding class and classism is the idea of meritocracy, the notion that “hard work and talent will always be rewarded by upward economic and social mobility.”<sup>37</sup> Said another way, meritocracy’s basic assumption is that people can achieve what they want if they have enough talent and are prepared to work hard. This individual centered approach tends to view any socio-economic gap as residing with the person and does not consider the factors of systemic disadvantages, the enormous gap in wealth inequalities that extend generationally, and historic discrimination.

Meritocracy is, thus, a myth – more strongly said, a lie – that institutionalizes privilege by purporting that economic wealth is earned or justified, which fails to take into account a variety of factors including varying types of capital, inherited wealth, and the centuries-long persistence of privilege and structured inequalities. Consequently, people like Gary may assume that those who come to a food pantry have not worked hard enough because, according to meritocracy, if one does work hard, then reward will follow. It fails to consider a host of systemic and economic policies and realities that benefit some while oppressing others. Thus, in this mindset, the primary theological stance towards a neighbor at a food pantry is less the inherent relational

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<sup>37</sup> Adams, Bell, Goodman, Joshi, 218.



obligation of *imago Dei* (one's worth is centered in the divine image) and instead is framed by a Puritan work ethic (one's worth is directly related to one's work/work ethic<sup>38</sup>).

Likewise, the idea of the American Dream, the idea that people can succeed and advance economically because everyone has access to the same opportunity if they are willing and able to exert the labor, is deeply tied to meritocracy. The American Dream associates success with virtue and merit that is under the control of the individual and determined by one's industrious ability to merit success. Phrases like "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" and "I am a self-made person" reflect this belief. Conversely, in this view, those who do not realize economic prosperity are themselves to blame. The poor, then, are seen as inferior and lacking their own agency. Sociologists, political scientists, and economists alike note that these are cultural fabrications that lack factual corroboration. Disparities in wealth and income are direct results of other interlocking forms of oppression<sup>39</sup> like racism,<sup>40</sup> gender discrimination, as well as other economic factors like the aftershocks of colonialism and its inherent imperialism.

Moreover, the myths of a "level playing field" and "equal opportunity" are grossly inaccurate as one takes into account myriad inequities that exist for different groups of people. Structural systems beyond individual agency like discriminatory practices, social and cultural advantages, inheritance and wealth, and unequal educational opportunities together create

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<sup>38</sup> It's no surprise that the U.S. workers work some of the longest workweeks in the Western world. (See Derek Thompson, "Workism is Making Americans Miserable," in *The Atlantic*, 24 February, 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/02/religion-workism-making-americans-miserable/583441/>, accessed 10 September 2020.

<sup>39</sup> See upcoming section on intersectionality.

<sup>40</sup> Consider: Native Americans who were stripped of their land and forced into reservations; African-American who endured decades of chattel slavery and their descendants who were denied equal opportunities; other minorities who faced unfair labor practices; the lingering effects of colonialism in which the powerful assumed that their way was normative and necessary to inculcate to groups without power.

unequal “playing fields.” Equality aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone begins from the same place and has the same opportunities. Countless years of structural and systemic advantage and disadvantage demonstrate that equal opportunity is an allusion far beyond the bounds of reality. Equality is then distinguished from equity, the latter being giving everyone what they need to be successful, not necessarily treating everyone the same. Equity is rooted in an ethic of mutual obligation, of neighborly love and solidarity, to validate the *imago Dei* in all persons. The myths of meritocracy and the American Dream only perpetuate systemic inequality as part of the cycle of socialization; they are not liberative avenues. However, refuting them and giving attention to equity disrupts socialization cycles and moves towards generative spaces for liberation and, ultimately, transformation.

### ***Intersectionality***

To that end, one theory that is helpful to actualize practices of liberation by disclosing how inequalities shape self and other identities is intersectionality. People have multiple intersections of identity, and their intersections involve the simultaneous impact of identity and oppression inherent within them. Intersectionality discloses the numerous, complex, and deeply structured ‘worlds’ of social inequities and asymmetries of supremacy and privilege deeply imbedded within identities. Identities intersect both “in parallel” and “in mutual reinforcement.”<sup>41</sup> For example, in the brief case study of this chapter: Gary is a white, affluent male, and the simultaneity of those co-constructed identities amplifies his power and privilege assigned to those identities. Neighbors who frequent the food pantry, presumably lack food security; and, other disadvantaged aspects of neighbors’ identities – like race, ability, gender and

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<sup>41</sup> Adams, Bell, Goodman, Joshi, 218.

ethnicity, for instance – when combined with lower socio-economic status, compounds their oppression.

Furthermore, the domains of power that exist at political (laws which discriminate), economic (employment policies), and ideological (media, culture) realms to bear on the lives of individuals. Part of the pastoral role in utilizing the theory of intersectionality is to disclose how oppressive influences affect simultaneously individual, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological realms and to invite people to reflect critically upon one's own personal and corporate involvement from a theological and ethical orientation. For the purposes of this research question, intersectionality can aid people, like volunteers, in recognizing “the priority of addressing their own intersectional complicity that may be implicated in another's experience of oppression.”<sup>42</sup> Intersectionality highlights how concurrent marginalized identities contribute to power inequality and inequity. Said another way, to understand wealth inequality, an intersectional lens assists in explaining how people experience inequality according to different, or intersecting, aspects of their identity. An analysis of the multiple axes of power inherent in identities determine social positioning and normative values. Ultimately, “intersectionality pursues emancipatory praxis toward its telos of social justice.”<sup>43</sup> The theory helps reveal the interlocking structures of power and privilege as well as evoke action that leads to liberative thoughts and actions on interpersonal and systemic levels.

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<sup>42</sup> Nancy Ramsay, “Intersectionality: A Model for Addressing the Complexity and of Oppression and Privilege,” *Pastoral Psychology* 63, no. 4 (2014): 463-464.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

## *Economic Issues – Wealth Inequality and Classism*

Sociological and cultural economic disparities cannot be seen apart from concerns and injustices within the larger U.S. economy. This concerns pastoral leaders because as Ryan Lamothe says, “suffering and care are inextricably bound to political and economic realities.”<sup>44</sup> Joyce Ann Mercer concurs: “In the face of such tumultuous economic times, practical theologians must address economic and class-based contexts in which people are embedded.”<sup>45</sup> The uneven distribution of income and wealth has steadily increased in the past four decades, as the rich become exponentially richer and the poor become poorer. One percent of the United States has over “\$25 trillion in wealth, which exceeds the wealth of the bottom 80 percent. That is more than all the goods and services produced in the U.S. economy in 2018.”<sup>46</sup> Many factors play a part in the alarming rate of wealth inequity and the acute concentration of wealth. Capitalism and the rise of neoliberalism are central for effectively understanding steep and deep economic disparity.

Within the United States, capitalism shapes our economic system that is powered by competition in a free marketplace, and regulation is presumed to come from the forces of the market rather than control from labor unions or government.<sup>47</sup> A core postulate of capitalism is

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<sup>44</sup> Ryan LaMothe, *Care of Souls, Care of Polis: Toward a Political Pastoral Theology*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2017) 5.

<sup>45</sup> Joyce Ann Mercer in “Economics, Class, and Classism” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, ed. (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2012) 436.

<sup>46</sup> Isabel W. Sawhill and Christopher Pulliam, “Six Facts about Wealth in the US” in Middle Class Memos, Brookings Institute, 25 June 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2019/06/25/six-facts-about-wealth-in-the-united-states/> accessed 14 February 2020.

<sup>47</sup> See Adams, Bell, Goodman, Joshi, 214-215.

an equal opportunity marketplace which is a false claim when many groups of people have been historically and systemically marginalized. Absent from those marginalized is generational inheritance and denial of access to mortgage money, refusal of benefits like the GI bill or the right to live in any neighborhood (redlining). The accumulation of debts, the privatization of the market, the restrictions on labor unions and tax cuts for the rich all contribute to the growing disparity in wealth in our country.

In particular, the function of neoliberalism as an economic theory guides U.S. economic practice and contributes to extraordinary gaps in economic inequalities and social disparities. In fact, Robert McChesney calls neoliberalism “capitalism with the gloves off,”<sup>48</sup> emphasizing that neoliberalism thrives on competition, not exchange, as with capitalism.<sup>49</sup> Neoliberal economics underscores the focus on individual gain over against communal welfare which exists in all sectors of society. Neoliberal practices aim to make the domains of validity, value, and normativity to favor those with economic power. While it claims, in theory, to reward merit and punish inefficiency, as aforementioned, merit is convoluted by centuries of oppression or advantage and restrictive or unconfined access to wealth and its accumulation and ability to pass along generationally, or not. In essence, the richer get richer and those in the middle and lower strata of economic wealth are disempowered by their lack of financial power in this type of market.

Summarily said for purposes of this project, neoliberal economics is not rooted in an ethic of mutual obligation, but instead is based on a framework of competition. In the last many

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<sup>48</sup> Robert W. McChesney in the “Introduction” to *Profit over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* by Noam Chomsky (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011) 8.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce Rogers-Vaughn, *Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016) 53-54.

decades, neoliberal principles have dominated global economics and threatened to further bifurcate the rich and the poor and the policies and structures that aim to maintain and limit access to power and wealth.

## **Implications**

These theories and concepts from practical theology and social justice education help disclose the imbalances of power and privilege in the lives of individuals and groups of individuals. Disrupting widely held narratives like the American Dream expose the falsehood of individual merit and illuminate the multiple systemic structures that contribute to the wealth inequality in the United States. Challenging socio-economic assumptions and classifications dismantle scaffolding of classism and its accompanying ideologies.

This awareness, in partnership with biblical and theological frameworks addressed in Chapter Two, are tools that can assist both a pastor and a congregational community towards an emancipatory praxis. The outcome of such education is action that affirms the humanity and dignity of those in disadvantaged socio-economic positions, in particular. Not only are beliefs and attitudes transformed about those with less access to economic, cultural and social capital, but policies and practices are aligned to ensure maximum dignity and respect.

Thus, the curricular, interventional process of this project combines biblical and theological resources alongside pedagogical processes from social justice education. The intended outcome of the intervention in the lives of volunteers is to stimulate change both in thoughts and behaviors, individually and within the context of a congregational food pantry and its policies and practices.

However, transformative thoughts and actions are not only difficult to measure but can be complex in working towards emancipatory practices. Lynn Weber summarizes the conundrum: “the extent to which particular actions will be effective in bringing about a change in the distribution of power in a particular social context will depend on a variety of factors, including the depth of understanding of the forces of oppression, the nature of coalitions involved, and the strength of the forces of dominance.”<sup>50</sup> Her statement describes the difficulties in interrupting the cycles of socialization regarding class that are prevalent in congregational ministries of material need and moving towards outcomes of liberative practices. Thus, many times, transformative change is often met with challenge, especially to those with power and privilege, both in theoretical and practical terms, on individual and collective levels. A pastoral leader with intentions to provoke critical thoughts and thoughtful actions is aware of these challenges, not only with volunteers, but also within himself or herself. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the particular methodological model for the curricular process that captures the pastor as participant, and I will explain the data collection for this project that seeks to depict metrics and limitations for transformation.

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<sup>50</sup> Lynn Weber, *Understanding Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality: A Conceptual Framework* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford, 2010) 220.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY, PROJECT DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION

### The Project as Process

The purpose of practical theology is active and reflective engagement in lived experience. The combination of action and reflection allows for modifying theological thought and action to align with theological rationales and intended outcomes. To model practical theology, I believe that best practices for pastoral leadership allow for perceiving, reflecting, and acting as critical components of a praxis-based style of leadership, one which promotes the thoughtful exchange between faith and life. Mark Branson says, “Leadership is about shaping an environment in which the people of God participate in the action-reflection cycle as they gain new capacities to discern what God is doing among and around them.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, leadership that demonstrates mutuality, broad ownership, and communal participation foster the ethos intended by practical theology which values the contributions of many in service to the whole.

Thus, I developed and facilitated an interactive, extended curricular process for a segment of those involved in the First H.A.N.D. food pantry ministry of First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth. While comprised of curriculum modules, the overall design is a curricular *process*, underscoring the longitudinal intent of the education, the communal aspect of the facilitated activities, and the transformative goal that awareness and knowledge lead to action.<sup>2</sup> The concept

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martínez, *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011) 57.

<sup>2</sup> “Three broad goals for social justice education courses are to increase personal awareness, expand knowledge, and encourage action.” See Maurianne Adams and Lee Anne Bell with Diane J. Goodman and Khyati Y. Joshi. eds. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016) 60.



of “process” aligns more appropriately with transformative behavior<sup>3</sup> which includes awareness and action rather than “curriculum” which may imply learning only for the sake of knowledge.

### **Method: Participatory Action Research**

The decision to use a curricular process informed by social justice education as the intervention method is informed by participatory action research (PAR). PAR assumes that research participants are not passive subjects to observe, but, in fact, are “actively engaged in the quest for information and ideas to guide their future actions.”<sup>4</sup> That is, the participant, in my case, the church volunteer, is personally interested in the project, even as a tool for their own growth ideologically and theologically. Furthermore, the principle researcher is not involved in the research from an expert position, but as a collaborative, or cogenerative,<sup>5</sup> learner with the research participants. Participatory action research is an approach that involves the full collaboration of both researchers and participants working together not only to gain greater awareness about an issue, but also to take action regarding the issue. Tim Sensing argues that a PAR approach is what defines a Doctorate of Ministry project by introducing “an intervention in

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<sup>3</sup> M. Shawn Copeland claims that the “Christian gospel is an invitation to *metanoia*, to change...lived transformation is discipleship.” See M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010) 6.

<sup>4</sup> William Foote Whyte, Davydd J. Greenwood, Peter Lazes in “Participatory Action Research: Through Practice to Science in Social Research” in *Participatory Action Research*, William Foote Whyte, ed. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991) 20.

<sup>5</sup> Max Elden and Morten Levin, “Cogenerative Learning: Bringing Participation into Action Research,” in *Participatory Action Research*, 134.

order to provide ministerial leadership for the transformation of the organization.”<sup>6</sup> In the case of a DMin, for example, while the researcher defines the project’s problem (as opposed to the participants identifying the problem), it is the partnership of researcher and participants who work together to form collective inquiry, expertise, and workable solutions.

The end goal of the research is action-oriented for individuals participating and invested in the research. And, as the learning is cogenerative, collective action is an intended outcome as well. For example, in this project, PAR assumes that the principal researcher as well as the volunteers learn together through the curricular intervention (based in part on social justice education and biblical/theological resources) so that individual transformation is possible as is collective actions such as changing policies and procedures of the sack lunch program in the food pantry ministry. In fact, “broader participation can lead to stronger consensus for change and sounder models because models arrived at through broader participation are likely to integrate the interests of more stakeholder groups.”<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier underscores that in PAR a less hierarchical community of participants coalesce toward action for the sake of liberating practices.<sup>8</sup>

To that end, in addition to the researcher and participants, I add a third group to my qualitative research (on which I will elaborate later): neighbors who receive sack lunches. Their expertise as fellow participants in the ministry broadens the conversation about the ministry as well as provides feedback about the observable transformation of the volunteer participants. PAR

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<sup>6</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011) 58.

<sup>7</sup> Richard E. Walton and Michael E. Gaffney, “Research, Action, and Participation,” in *Participatory Action Research*, ed. William Foote Whyte. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1991 (125).

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, ed. (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2012) 236.

as a methodology is a “way of generating new knowledge where the participants in the research process function as equals because of their different kinds of expertise and frames of reference.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, all the various stakeholders and their accompanying hermeneutics “produce culturally specific and contextually rich data”<sup>10</sup> for a project’s design, evaluation, and action. The goal of PAR is creating “more democratic forms of organization and management”<sup>11</sup> because broad ownership also leads to the “fundamental objective for the action process, namely, democratic change.”<sup>12</sup> In the case of a congregational food pantry, involving committed volunteers allows transformation to come from within the volunteer community instead of being imposed in the form of a hierarchical mandate or outsider decision.

A variety of benefits emerge from a communal process of participatory action research. First, a collective model of both inquiry and action illustrates biblical and theological practices of solidarity and an ethic of mutual obligation. Sharing in communal discernment and decision making over against an obligatory top-down directive inhibits notions of paternalistic and authoritarian control of a community ministry. Second, shared ownership for thoughts and rationales that lead to decisions and change are more likely to be understood, adhered to, and supported if a democratic process is framework for dialogue. Third, a communal, praxis-based experience of volunteers who are involved in both reflection *and* action (for example, not engaging participants from a theoretical standpoint only) “form a cyclic process that gradually

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<sup>9</sup> Elden and Levin, “Cogenerative Learning: Bringing Participation into Action Research,” in *Participatory Action Research*, 132.

<sup>10</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 58.

<sup>11</sup> Elden and Levin, 140.

<sup>12</sup> Jan Irgens Karlsen, “Action Research as Method: Reflections from a Program for Developing Methods and Competence,” *Participatory Action Research*, ed. William Foote Whyte, 148.

improves knowledge and create useful results.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, participatory action research emphasizes action, and, ultimately, emancipatory transformation of participants (including the researcher!) and specific contexts and systems. Therefore, PAR offers an approach to research conducive to the intentions and hopes for my question and my context as part of a congregational community.

## **Project Design**

As stated in the Introduction, my research question is: Will a curricular process informed by biblical and theological rationales (Chapter Two) as well as critical theories and social justice education (Chapter Three) generate critical reflection and impact thoughtful action with those who volunteer in our congregation’s food pantry ministry? Key questions that informed this primary research question include: Will this process enable participants to develop a significant self-awareness as it pertains to class and its intersections? Will this process allow participants to identify domains of power and their historical and structural practices surrounding issues of class? Will participatory pedagogical education lead to demonstrable progression in critical reflection and thoughtful action in our sack lunch ministry? Will such a process affect programmatic decisions of the ministry that eschew paternalistic models of charity in favor of thoughtful actions of mutuality and solidarity that prioritize hospitality and dignity? Finally, can this curricular process be duplicated and repeated with other small groups who volunteer in other ministries of outreach in our congregation?

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<sup>13</sup> Elden and Levin, 139.

The intervention involved six human subjects who participated in the curricular process, after approval from the Institutional Review Board and their informed consent. Before the intervention, I met with the six participants in one-on-one interviews in order to gain a baseline evaluation of individual, interpersonal and theological social development. The open-ended interview questions<sup>14</sup> sought to solicit in-depth responses pertaining to the theological conceptualizations of class as related to the food pantry ministry. The one-on-one interviews lasted forty-five to sixty minutes, and they took place in a private room at either First Presbyterian Church or our outreach campus, Community Crossroads. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and the participants signed a consent form and a Media Recording Release Form.

Additionally, I convened a focus group with eight neighbors before the intervention to learn from those who participate in the sack lunch ministry about their assessments and experiences of the ministry and their interaction with volunteers.<sup>15</sup> The focus group lasted approximately forty-five minutes and met in a private conference room at our outreach center. Neighbors signed a consent form and a covenant form to promise that the conversation in our focus groups remain confidential. The focus group took place before the sack lunch ministry began in order to conceal the neighbors' participation to the volunteers (in order that the volunteers were not more self-conscious when interacting with neighbors in the focus group).

Next, I designed a six-week curricular process that explored self-understanding, interpersonal empathy, and institutional implications of classism and its intersections as it relates

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<sup>14</sup> The pre-intervention questions to volunteers are available in Appendix A.

<sup>15</sup> The pre-intervention questions to neighbors are available in Appendix B.

to the sack food ministry.<sup>16</sup> The curriculum provided guidelines for generative discussion for the group.<sup>17</sup> Each module of the curriculum included biblical study and theological reflection and relied upon social justice education resources. The curriculum was sequential, with the expectation that participants attend all meetings. Additionally, a variety of learning methods, including participatory exercises, assisted in the understanding and examination of social identities, power, and privilege. After consulting with schedules of the volunteers, the classes were offered at a time convenient for them in a private conference room at First Presbyterian Church. Each module was sixty to ninety minutes in duration and occurred weekly for six consecutive weeks.

Additionally, I observed the participants in action as they volunteered in our sack lunch ministry before, during, and after the intervention. Relying on observational ideas in Sensing, I observed body language, direct interaction with neighbors, and comments made during the volunteers' service. Tim Sensing offers helpful tools for field observation including noting the subjects' personal space, degree of perceived engagement, their interaction in the physical space itself and attention to explicit and implicit 'curriculum' of the physical space that may influence the behavior and attitude of the subjects.<sup>18</sup>

At the conclusion of the six-week curricular process, I conducted open-ended one-on-one interviews with the six volunteers.<sup>19</sup> In these post-intervention interviews, I utilized social justice education resources for participants to self-identify their "measure" of growth or transformation

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<sup>16</sup> For the scope and sequence of the curricular process, see Appendix C.

<sup>17</sup> In addition to the Institutional Review Board requirements, participants and neighbors agreed to a covenant of behavior that fostered a welcoming and inclusive learning environment. See Appendix D.

<sup>18</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 99-102.

<sup>19</sup> The post-intervention interview questions to volunteers are available in Appendix E.

along continuums of social development after the intervention, including the “Cycle of Liberation” by Bobbie Harro<sup>20</sup> and the “Action Continuum” by Pat Griffin and Bobbie Harro.<sup>21</sup> The final interviews were forty-five to ninety minutes in duration in a private room at First Presbyterian Church or Community Crossroads, and I used an audio recording device to capture the conversation to assist in the transcription.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, I convened a second and final focus group in a private room at Community Crossroads for forty-five minutes in length. While my intention had been to have the exact same neighbors as the first focus group,<sup>23</sup> several neighbors were not available to participate or could not be reached. I asked questions to generate discussion around the efficacy of the intervention from their perspective.<sup>24</sup> They commented on behaviors and actions of the volunteers in the sack lunch ministry before, during, and after the intervention.

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<sup>20</sup> Bobbie Harro, “The Cycle of Socialization” in *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. by M. Adams, W.J. Blumenfeld, C. Castaneda, H.W. Hacksman, M.L. Peters and X. Zuniga, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2013) 45-51. See Appendix F.

<sup>21</sup> Griffin and Harro in “Racism Curriculum Design” in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook* by M. Adams, L. Bell, & P. Griffin, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1997) 82-107. See Appendix G.

<sup>22</sup> I did not give volunteers a copy of their transcript in order to achieve respondent validation. See Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 185-187.

<sup>23</sup> Measures were taken to convene the original group of neighbors from the first focus group. The neighbors had all received the date and time of the second focus group at our first meeting. Additionally, I collected phone numbers of participants in order to remind them of our meeting.

<sup>24</sup> The post-intervention questions to neighbors are available in Appendix H.

## Participant Selection, Recruitment Procedure and Consent

As for the participants in the curricular process, I chose to limit the group size to six for the intimacy of the weekly small group while still maintaining a critical mass for small group interaction. Additionally, six was a manageable number for the one-on-one interviews before and after the intervention. As a pastoral leader interested in transformation (and not as an ethnographer hoping to survey large groups of people), a small sample size is preferable for in-depth information that does not lend itself to over-generalization.

In order not to show favoritism or give an impression of intended results, I selected the six volunteers from those who volunteer on Monday in the sack lunch ministry of our food pantry. We distribute groceries and sack lunches on Wednesday and Thursday but had recently added Monday as a day for sack lunches only.<sup>25</sup> By selecting active volunteers, and not congregation members at random, I was able to engage them in praxis education of simultaneous reflection on current experience in the sack lunch ministry.<sup>26</sup> Their reflection was informed by their action, and vice versa.

At the time of my curricular process, we had exactly six volunteers on Monday so there was no bias in selecting certain individuals, and I used this inclusion criteria. Fortunately, the demographic makeup of the group reflected the volunteers at large, with different ages, gender,

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<sup>25</sup> Those who receive groceries are typically housed and have access to cook their own food. Those who received sack lunches are generally unhoused, without access to food preparation, and therefore, need pre-packaged, pre-cooked or shelf-stable food

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Groome's Shared Praxis approach encourages a symbiotic interaction between what he calls "life" and "faith;" that is, reflection on lived reality and its integration with faith becomes a generative process for participants. See Thomas Groome, *Will There Be Faith? A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples*. San Francisco: Harper One, 2011) 261-297.



socio-economic status, church membership, and social identity development.<sup>27</sup> The participants were all 18 years and older and regularly serve in the sack lunch ministry and had participated at Community Crossroads as a volunteer for more than six months. The volunteers did not receive incentives for participation and their participation was voluntary, with the express ability to withdraw at any time without penalty. A letter of invitation was sent to all six participants with the goals of my research, estimated time commitment, and participation expectation in my project.

My goal for the focus group size was between eight to ten neighbors<sup>28</sup> so that all neighbors had an opportunity to speak while also maximizing a larger sampling of neighbors. Neighbors who participate in the sack lunch ministry were recruited through a flyer handed out at the sack lunch ministry one week prior to the first focus group, and the flyer was also posted on a wall in the center. I was explicit that participation is voluntary, and participation could be terminated at any time and no incentives would be offered for participation. All participants were 18 years or older, regularly participated in the sack lunch ministry,<sup>29</sup> and had come to Community Crossroads for more than three months. On the day of the first focus group, the Director of Community Crossroads also helped identify neighbors who might offer constructive feedback for

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<sup>27</sup> I was fortunate that participants were along the continuum of social identity development (Adams, Bell, Goodman, Joshi, 58). I also recognize that diversity among race and class in my sample size reflects the makeup of the congregation, not the society at large (though some of those who volunteer in outreach ministries are themselves food insecure, for example). My participants were comprised of two females and four males, ranging in age from their 60s to 90s.

<sup>28</sup> Tim Sensing cites 8-12 individuals as average for qualitative focus groups See Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011) 121.

<sup>29</sup> “Regular participants” connotes attending the sack lunch ministry two or more times per month. We keep records of participation.

my research project. Based on her recommendations, I approached a few neighbors on the day of the first focus group to ask them to participate. While the sampling was more random in nature than that of the volunteer group,<sup>30</sup> the group did represent a variety of demographics along ability, age, race, and gender.

### **One-on-One Interviews**

Before the curricular intervention, I met with each of the six participants for an interview focused on learning about their interest in volunteering in the sack lunch ministry and any hopes or aspirations any of the volunteers have for the ministry. I was also interested to know how their Christian faith impacted their desire to serve and if any biblical stories have had significant influence in their desire to use their time and energy to volunteer to provide food for unsheltered people in our community. I stated in my invitation for them to join about how my project centers around issues of class – and by intersectional extension, race – in ministries of outreach, and I wondered if the participants had engaged in intentional reflection on class and race, particularly in regard to interactions with neighbors and the sack lunch ministry. I also wanted to know why the participants had interest in deepening their awareness about economic inequalities and what they hoped to gain from participation.

After the curricular process, I met with each participant again for a final one-on-one interview. Foremost, I was interested in understanding if the participants gained new measurable insight from the curricular intervention that also modified their thought or action in the food

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<sup>30</sup> See Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 82-85.

pantry ministry. To that end, I asked questions aimed at eliciting that type of information. Did different biblical and theological rationales emerge from our modules that shaped their understandings of outreach in which economic inequities exist? Did their self-reflection on issues of class, race, and privilege change over the course of our conversations? Did the curricular process in any way prompt them to revise their interactions and relationships with neighbors in the food pantry? I used Harro's "Action Continuum" as a pedagogical measurement tool for them to identify progression and transformation along a continuum. Finally, I was curious to know if a curriculum like this would be, in their opinion, beneficial for all volunteers in the outreach ministries of our church to experience.

### **Focus Group Sessions**

I met with a focus group comprised of neighbors who frequent the food pantry before the curricular intervention with volunteers. My time with them centered around what led them to the sack lunch ministry and what aspects of the ministry work well and what aspects need improvement. I was especially interested to know the ways in which they experienced, or did not, the aspirational characteristics of the ministry reflected in the name of First H.A.N.D.: hospitality, advocacy, nurture, dignity. I wondered with them if they had any suggestions on what type of training might be helpful for those who volunteer and what, if anything, did they think might be beneficial for the volunteers to know about the neighbors' experiences in the sack lunch ministry.

I met again with the focus group after the curricular process to learn about their experiences with volunteers in the sack lunch ministry since the last time we met. I wanted to know how their interaction with volunteers impacted their experience of the ministry and how

they perceived the efforts to embody the aspirational goals listed above. In this final focus group, I allowed the neighbors to direct our conversation with issues they wished to discuss in order to lean upon their own expertise and experience. Finally, I asked them about their hopes for the sack lunch ministry, and if they had any information or ideas that they would like to share as we concluded our focus group.

### **Module Design and Content**

As to the curricular process design and the facilitation of the modules, I structured the six sessions to include a study of a pericope of scripture and accompanying theological concept as outlined in Chapter Two. As a pastoral practitioner, I wanted to engage the biblical text to lay the groundwork for social justice education and theoretical concepts. For instance, how does the Parable of the Good Samaritan,<sup>31</sup> for example, demonstrate the concept of intersectionality? Or, how does the Parable of the Vineyard Workers<sup>32</sup> illustrate an economy of grace not based in meritocracy?

Additionally, I relied heavily on *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*<sup>33</sup> as a primary resource for pedagogical activities. In the book, the authors emphasize action and reflection in situations of social inequality in order to equip participants to engage in issues of social justice. The book takes into account the social location of the instructor and the social identities of the intended audience, and the contextual environment for teaching. Furthermore, this resource

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<sup>31</sup> Luke 10.25-37.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew 20.1-16.

<sup>33</sup> Maurianne Adams and Lee Anne Bell with Diane J. Goodman and Khyati Y. Joshi. eds. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge, 2016.

dedicates chapters to the specific issue of classism and other interlocking identities. The theory, and indeed the teleology, behind social justice education is that action arises from education that, in the case of my research, seeks to disrupt thoughts and actions that impede relational connection. Participatory exercises engage the participants in the learning process itself, not simply as a passive receiver of information but as an active, involved co-learner.<sup>34</sup> Learning that is dynamic is retained and recalled by participants and serve as change agents for future action and reflection.

At each session, I allowed for time to process actions, behaviors, and practices that the volunteers experienced or witnessed at the food pantry ministry so that we were directly reflecting on action in order to prepare for future action, an exercise in praxis reflection. In four of the six modules, I included Sam Wells' work on quadrants for mission as frameworks for ministries of outreach,<sup>35</sup> and we explored the benefits and drawbacks to each one. His quadrants have proved helpful for FPCFW over the past several years in describing ways in which our congregation participates in outreach mission, particularly ensuring that our efforts do not gravitate solely to "working for," a model that is often paternalistic and does not challenge structures and systems. Our ninety-minute sessions included time for reflection on actions and experiences, biblical and theological study, and the exploration of a concept from social justice education that included a participatory activity. During each module, I recorded field observations and notes about comments, body language, and participation levels from participants.

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<sup>34</sup> See Thomas Groome, *Will There Be Faith? A New Vision for Education and Growing Disciples* (New York: Harper One, 2011) 293-295.

<sup>35</sup> Wells denotes different approaches to incarnational theology that impacts the mission of the church: "working for," "working with," "being for," "being with." See Samuel Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God* (West Sussex: Wiley, 2015).

## ***Module 1: Divine Image and Personal Determinants***

At our first meeting, we briefly introduced ourselves, and I introduced the purpose of my research and their participation in it. I clarified that while class plays a significant and obvious role in our ministry at Community Crossroads (people in material need coming for assistance), I noted that other intersecting identities are also present. I answered questions that they had about the project and the intended outcomes, and I had each participant sign the covenant and consent forms. We processed interactions and experiences from the food pantry related to issues of class.

The Bible passage on Week 1 was Genesis 1.27, and together we unpacked the implications for an *imago Dei* theology. We discussed how *imago Dei* reframes how we see our neighbors first and foremost as image bearers of God, and how classism can often obscure our perception of the worth of others based on our preconceived notions of class, race, and other intersections. I introduced the concept of sin as denying the image of God in others, as the lie of the negation of relation.<sup>36</sup> We talked about how this lie extends from individuals to structures and ideologies, and how sin, then, becomes the lie that privilege obscures so as not to challenge the structure of power and privilege.

For our participatory pedagogical exercise, I presented George Ella Lyon's poem, "Where I'm From"<sup>37</sup> as a way to understand how people, experiences, and values of explicit, implicit, and null curriculum in our early years shape our worldviews, values, and political identities. In other words, I used this exercise to demonstrate the process of socialization

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<sup>36</sup> Fumitaka Matsuoka, *The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998) 58.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix I for the poem and template.

understood from one's own personal social location. Before we are able to recognize the consequences of privilege and oppression, we are already immersed in them. The homework for participants before Module 2 was to complete their own "Where I'm From" poem using the template provided. This exercise required careful thought and self-reflection so I encouraged participants to take the time they needed instead of feeling rushed to complete it in our class time together.

### ***Module 2: Empathy and Wealth Inequality***

We began our second module with time to share about the volunteer work of the participants at the sack lunch ministry in the prior week. We talked about how our conversation from Module 1 impacted their interactions and thoughts at the food pantry. I also invited anyone to share any further thoughts about our discussion in Module 1. Participants were given the option to share their "Where I'm From" poem with the small group, and most of the participants did. The participants reported that this exercise was helpful in thinking about their own socialization from their families of origin, their cultural context, and other institutions, like churches, that contributed to their worldview and identity. We imagined what the "Where I'm From" poems might sound like from the neighbors who come to the sack lunch ministry.<sup>38</sup> A participant connected this thought to the discussion of *imago Dei*, in that the divine image is deeply embedded in each person's life story.

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<sup>38</sup> We had a brief discussion of ACE (adverse trauma experience) scores and what role trauma may play in shaping perspectives and personalities and identities. This poem may be too painful an experience for someone with injury or trauma, regardless of class status.

I included four Bible passages in Module 2 to illustrate a pattern in Jesus' ministry that I find compelling for the work of social justice that depends on awareness as key to noticing inequities in privilege and oppression. In the Matthean account of the feeding of the five thousand<sup>39</sup> and in three parables from Luke,<sup>40</sup> Jesus, or a protagonist character in a parable Jesus tells, sees a disadvantaged person or group of people, has compassion, and then is compelled to act. Our group talked about why this recurring pattern (see, have compassion, act) might be worth noticing and why it may be important as a template for Christian discipleship. We discussed moving from positions of ignorance or indifference to postures of empathy and action, and how this change in posture can disrupt the cycle of socialization. The group shared examples from their own lives of becoming aware of inequities and privilege, including experiences from Community Crossroads.

We transitioned from this conversation to an activity about the importance of seeing and knowing realities and facts about wealth inequality in the United States. The uneven distribution of income and wealth has grown exponentially since the early 1980s, and the chasm continues to widen. Before watching a brief video<sup>41</sup> that visually demonstrated how wide the gap truly is versus most people's perception of the gap, I asked the six participants to mark on a piece of paper how they think wealth is distributed in the United States by quintiles of the population; then, I asked them to mark what they think the ideal distribution should be. After the video, we compared what we had marked with the reality that was shared in the video, and our group was surprised to discover that we were grossly mistaken as to how wide our wealth gap in the United

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<sup>39</sup> Matthew 14.13-21.

<sup>40</sup> Jesus raises the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7.11-17), the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.25-37) and the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11-31).

<sup>41</sup> See Appendix J for the transcript of the "Wealth Inequality" video.



States truly is. We closed with a conversation about what factors contribute to this gap. Is it that low wage earners work less hard, a common misconception? Could it be that policies and laws have benefitted those accumulate wealth due to privilege? I had us do this exercise to lay the groundwork for thinking about challenging normative myths about the poor for our modules that followed.

### ***Module 3: Neighbor Love (Working For and Issues of Class)***

After our weekly check-ins on how our class sessions impact our experience and observations when serving at the sack lunch ministry, our third session continued the conversation about wealth, income, and class from Module Two. We discussed definitions of those key terms, and the participants had a lively conversation about how the concept of “earned” factors into privilege and class, especially when passive wealth is not “earned.” We also analyzed how we understand the category of class: is class about social or economic position? Does it concern education, income or wealth; or, is it more about taste and lifestyle, regardless of income? How do you “get” class: are you assigned it? Do you work for it? Can you lose it? How does one know which class they are in? What consequences does class stratification have upon health care, life expectancy, education, and social mobility? We agreed that, for a variety of reasons, class stratification in the United States is fairly rigid which makes it difficult for people to move out of their particular class.

We contextualized our macro conversation on class to the particularities of our ministry at Community Crossroads. Whereas in other communal spaces class may be less obvious than other aspects of identity like gender or race or ability, issues of class are readily apparent at

Community Crossroads because the distribution of food assumes that neighbors who receive the food are from a lower economic status. Many of the neighbors who come for sack lunches, the majority whom are unsheltered, are concerned with “having a basic existence,” as one volunteer commented. They endure the continual stress of meeting basic needs like food, shelter, clothing and safety on a daily basis; in contrast, the volunteers have food, shelter, and economic securities met. Volunteers, operating from mores of their social class (most often, middle to upper class) may impose values of their class upon neighbors. For example, I overhear volunteers comment about how they perceive neighbors making poor choices on spending and budgeting priorities without taking into account the very different experience of neighbors who are prioritizing survival. Moreover, the values of specific classes may not be shared universally with those associated with other classes. Making value judgments on how people use the resources they have further complicates the socio-economic divides and misunderstandings.

Accordingly, our participatory exercise for Module 3 was Peggy McIntosh’s popular list of the daily effects of white privilege called, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.”<sup>42</sup> While her list centered around race, we considered that similar privileges exist with class. We talked through her list of fifty examples of white privilege and saw how class works with race in an intersectional way to intensify disadvantage.

For our Bible study in Module 3, I chose to look at two scriptures that volunteers named in their one-on-one pre-intervention interviews with me as being foundational in shaping their understandings of service and outreach to others of a different social class. We read and thought about the well-known parable of the Judgment of the Nations<sup>43</sup> from Matthew and the parable of

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<sup>42</sup> See Appendix K.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 25.31-45.

the Good Samaritan<sup>44</sup> from Luke. In both scriptures, a character or characters who “had” something that another did not (food, clothing, welcome, care) reached beyond a class divide (those with particular disadvantages, Samaritan ethnicity) and shared what they had to offer.

As a way to talk about different approaches to neighborly love as illustrated in the two scriptures, I introduced the participants to Sam Wells’ quadrant of mission with the axes of prepositions “for” and “with” intersected with the gerunds “working” and “being.” For Module 3, we focused on one quadrant: “working for.” In this approach, assistance given to those in material need operates from a posture of doing something for another, of having something and giving it to another in need. Many times the common posture of this quadrant perpetuates cycles of power and privilege to the harm of the disadvantaged. Over the final three weeks, we looked at the other quadrants and advantages and disadvantages of each one.

#### ***Module 4: Community (Working With)***

In our fourth module, we continued our pattern of beginning our session with reviewing discussions or thoughts from previous weeks and how they might have framed our experience volunteering at the sack lunch ministry as part of an exercise of praxis reflection. We continued our review of Sam Wells’ work, concentrating this time on the concept of “working with” as framework for ministry. We talked about the dignity of both neighbor and volunteer bringing their assets or gifts to a common effort, such as homeowners and volunteers constructing a house together with Habitat for Humanity or when our neighbors volunteer at Community Crossroads. This approach foregrounds the theological affirmation of *imago Dei* in that each person has

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<sup>44</sup> Luke 10.25-37.

worth as a child of God and also has assets and gifts to offer the world. When neighbors are viewed as receivers only – or worse, as deficits – their sense of dignity as worthy contributors is diminished.<sup>45</sup> On the contrary, when people, regardless of class, are able to contribute, the dividing lines between giver and receiver are lessened and the dignity of all contributors restored.

To this end, we looked at Acts 2.43-47 in which believers in the early church sold their possessions and held their assets in common in order to distribute to all, “as any had need.” We talked about why this economic model would be adopted by early disciples as demonstrative of the teachings of Jesus. We discussed the benefits and pitfalls for such an arrangement and ways in which we see this cooperative model affirmed or eschewed in economic systems around the globe in our day. We also discussed applying a cooperative approach to the grocery distribution of the food pantry. For example, a co-op model of a food pantry might have neighbors contribute a certain amount per month to offset food costs and then work together to distribute the food for each neighbor. We briefly considered what assumptions and practices would need to change in order to adopt this model at Community Crossroads, for example.

The majority of Module Four centered around a discussion and participatory exercise about social, economic, and cultural capitals. Using the work of French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, I defined these three types of capital<sup>46</sup> (and sub-types) to explain how each of them contribute to determinants not only of class, but how their transmission, or hindrance of

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<sup>45</sup> Asset-based community development (ABCD) capitalizes on this concept by focusing on how people and communities can harness their resources as catalysts for change and development.

<sup>46</sup> See Chapter Three for definitions.

transmission, become determinants “in the reproduction of social structures.”<sup>47</sup> To illustrate this, I gave each participant a sheet of paper with three circles representing economic, cultural and social capitals, and a small bowl of M&M candy. Then, using an amended version of Cody Sanders’ social justice education tool, “The ‘Value’ of Human Difference (or Capital Marketplace),”<sup>48</sup> I read statements that corresponded to different types of capital, and the participants would either place or remove M&Ms on or from their circles. For example, one statement was: “If you’ve inherited money from a family member, place a M&M on economic capital.” Another was: “If English is your first language, place 1 M&M on cultural capital.” And another: “If a connection has ever given you advantage for membership in a group or privilege for medical access, place a M&M on social capital.” Conversely, other statements had participants remove M&Ms from their circles based on disadvantages such as identity politics, incarceration, and loans. The exercise sought to demonstrate visually how types of capital and access to them can influence socio-economic class and the social mobility of people. The experience generated robust conversation around the myriad of factors that influence access to opportunity, setting the stage for the refutation of an equal playing field, a long-held American myth. Before we ended our session, with our piles of M&MS in each circle, we imagined what our neighbors’ circles might look like if they had participated in this exercise.

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<sup>47</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241-258.

<sup>48</sup> See Appendix L for Cody Sanders’ work. I modified his original “Value” worksheet to fit my context.

## ***Module 5: Advocacy (Being For) and The American Dream***

In our fifth module we shared how our previous module on three types of capital prompted any reflection on interactions and experiences in the sack lunch ministry. We also continued with Sam Wells' work as we examined the "being for" quadrant. This approach to ministries with those in material need concentrates on using one's social capital to amplify the issues of injustice that adversely affect those whose voice is marginalized or silenced. "Being for" emphasizes activism and advocacy in order to illicit awareness and change. To that end, we read Proverbs 31:8-9 in which the "capable wife" is praised for "speaking out" and "defending the rights of the poor and needy." Advocacy, though, does not necessitate excluding the one whose voice is marginalized. In fact, those with advantaged power and privilege yield to the expertise and experience of those with less power and privilege. Our group briefly discussed the role of advocacy in the ministries of Community Crossroads and the ways in which activism can generate structural and institutional change.

We spent a significant segment of our time on discussion around cultural beliefs related to accessing economic and educational opportunities. Specifically, we focused on the myths of the American dream, meritocracy, and a level playing field/equal opportunity, philosophies that assume that societal resources are distributed on individual merit, comprised of a combination of factors including innate abilities, working hard, and having high moral character and integrity. Many Americans not only tend to think that this is how our system should work, but many believe that is how the system does work. All of these concepts neglect the consideration of social and cultural advantages, the transmission of wealth and privilege, unequal educational opportunities, and discrimination in all forms. Furthermore, we noted the difference between

equality and equity, the former concerned with treating everyone the same and the latter focused on giving everyone what they need to be successful.

As a demonstration, we participated in a social justice education exercise called a “privilege walk.”<sup>49</sup> Similar to our M&M circles of capital from the week before, a privilege walk seeks to illustrate the complexities of privilege and dispel the idea that the playing field is, in any way, equal. A widely popular pedagogical tool, participants in the privilege walk stand in a straight line across a room. As statements are read about social, political, cultural, or economic capital, participants either take a step back to indicate disadvantage or forward to indicate privilege. Once the set of statements are read, the disparities within the group are obvious as many are behind the original starting line and many are far in front. We participated in an abbreviated form of this exercise, and even with our hegemony, still the disparities were apparent. We imagined this exercise if done with neighbors from our sack lunch ministry, and we agreed the inequities would be staggering. Despite the criticism of a privilege walk as an effective learning instrument in social justice education,<sup>50</sup> the point is clear: whether enacted or imagined, the playing field is not equal, and the American dream that comes with hard work and an industrious spirit is not guaranteed.

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<sup>49</sup> See Appendix N.

<sup>50</sup> The privilege walk as a tool for social justice education has come under significant scrutiny as it is criticized for relying on the experiences of people with marginalized identities to create a powerful learning experience for people with privilege. Some feel that it exploitive of painful realities and can create harm and discomfort for those with marginalized identities and those with privilege may feel unintentional shame or guilt. In that perspective, the capital marketplace exercise would also fall under similar critique as a resource for education.

## ***Module 6: Intersectionality and Solidarity (Being With) and Transformation***

For our final session, we reflected on the ways in which our shared learning and reflection shaped or framed our interactions with neighbors during the sack lunch ministry. We reviewed content from previous sessions and engaged with questions of the participants from past modules. We completed the fourth quadrant of Sam Wells' approaches to outreach to others, which he argues is the most paradigmatic of the incarnation and ministry of Jesus, "being with." We read the prologue to John's gospel<sup>51</sup> as it describes the incarnation of Jesus as the divine disclosure of God. Jesus was *with* God, and God in Jesus, came to be *with* humanity.

We discussed that "being with" presupposes connection for the sake of genuine connection, over against a project or task that may hinder authentic relationship. We also read Jeremiah 29.1-14, in which the word of the Lord comes to those in exile, encouraging the Jerusalemites to seek the welfare of the place in which they find themselves. They are to seek the well-being of their captors, the Babylonians, who differ from them and their identities. We talked about how this scripture encourages solidarity across polarities with the intended outcome to benefit and transform all parties.

This biblical reflection led into our discussion of the ultimate goal in the life of a disciple: that of transformation. The seeds of transformation are sown by engagement with the biblical text and supported by tools and terms from social justice education. We spoke of transformation

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<sup>51</sup> John 1.1-14.



occurring in four spheres:<sup>52</sup> individual, interpersonal, institutional and ideological. That is, transformation can occur like Russian nesting dolls. As one begins to disrupt the cycle of socialization towards actions and thoughts on the cycle of liberation, the individual engages in critical self-reflection that spirals outward to impact not only interpersonal relationships but to effect change in institutions and ultimately influence ideological change. Transformation begins in acknowledging the disparities that undoubtedly exist between those who have varying degrees of power and privilege.

We considered that identity and its relationship to power is a key ingredient in the transformational process and so we took a deeper look at the theory of intersectionality. While we touched on its definition in earlier modules, we spent significant time on unpacking and understanding the term and how it bears on the dynamics of both socialization and liberation.

Finally, for our participatory exercise, we considered how to measure transformation as it pertains to faith and as it concerns both thought and action by volunteers towards neighbors in the food pantry. For use on individual, interpersonal and institutional levels, I introduced Bobbi Harro's "Cycle of Socialization"<sup>53</sup> and "Cycle of Liberation" and the "Action Continuum" as means to evaluate change and gauge transformation. I asked participants to silently assess where they may be both within the two diagrams of cycles and on the continuum in preparation for their post-intervention one-on-one interview with me. Their homework from our last module and before our one-on-one interviews was to use this metric to measure where in the cycles and on the continuum they would locate themselves. We ended our six sessions with each person

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<sup>52</sup> We also noticed that those four spheres also apply to the barriers that divides us like classism or racism. Thus, some people may claim that they are not racist or classist on individual levels, though interpersonal actions and acceptance of institutional policies that are fraught with racism, are the concern of the individual, too.

<sup>53</sup> See Appendix F for the Cycle of Socialization. See Appendix O for the Cycle of Liberation and Appendix G for the Action Continuum,

sharing at least one helpful learning from the experience and one question that they were continuing to ponder.

## **Data Analysis and Evaluation**

The intended outcome of the curricular intervention is an increase in critical thought and an impact in thoughtful action in the food pantry by volunteers. How do I evaluate if this intervention was effective? What would transformation look like?

The task of analyzing data and evaluating qualitative transformation includes observing indicators of a process of change. In this project, transformation comes through a variety of signposts such as a willingness to commit to a curricular process, a learning posture during the curriculum modules, an engagement in group discussion, and participation in experiential activities. Additionally, a commitment to continued and additional educational opportunities about social justice issues outside of the curricular process is another signpost towards a trajectory of transformation. Other indicators of transformation include developing neighborly connections with neighbors and demonstrating empathy towards their life situations, especially as it relates to economic issues (for example, not saying disparaging remarks about having access to nice clothes or cars, etc.). The transformative goal for volunteers is to create a genuine “frame for appearing”<sup>54</sup> in the fullness of *imago Dei* for neighbors whose socio-economic class (and other disadvantaged intersecting identities) has obstructed volunteers’ affirmation of neighbors’ full flourishing as human beings.

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<sup>54</sup> See Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Furthermore, I asked volunteers to indicate their own measurement of transformation using the “Action Continuum” and the “Cycles of Socialization and Liberation.” These instruments are helpful not only in the self-awareness of one’s own privilege but also in identifying ways to disrupt patterns of obliviousness and actively confronting the oppression of others. A signpost of this awareness includes recognizing and avowing that sin is the lie that privilege obscures.

Another signpost of transformation is energy to modify or change existing ministries that promote mutuality and dignity. For example, moving beyond ‘what do the neighbors need?’ to “what assets do the neighbors offer?” demonstrates an approach to an asset-based ministry design that values the contributions of the minoritized. In light of the Good Samaritan story and the intention of neighborly love, how can those historically in power receive care from the ‘other?’ And, does that care then alter policies and procedures (explicit curriculum), interior design and culture (implicit curriculum), and opportunities for neighbors and volunteers to “be with” one another, without an exchange of goods? In other words, as a result of the curricular process, are demonstrable changes made to the sack lunch ministry in any way?

In terms of reporting the data, I obtained a triangulation of data<sup>55</sup> which offers three analytical frames including perspectives from the researcher, the insider and the outsider. As the researcher, my data includes observation of volunteers (before and after the intervention) as well as field notes from our conversations. The volunteers are the insiders and their data are the words they use in group sessions and individual interviews. The neighbors are the outsiders, or the experts and their words in focus groups provide a third data point for the evaluation. The neighbors are stakeholders in the efficacy of the curricular process so they, as consultants, bring an expertise that is invaluable. They share what they observe in terms of actions and behaviors.

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<sup>55</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72-74.

How do they experience hospitality, for example? Has that changed over the time of education and training, and in what ways? These three angles of evaluation together interpret if the curricular intervention was effective at transformational thought and behavior.

The data from all sources is organized and coded in thematic threads from interviews, focus groups, and curriculum modules. Tim Sensing recommends organizing raw data for qualitative analysis “into logical, meaningful categories” that “facilitates interpretation.”<sup>56</sup> To this end, he references the work of Mary Clark Moschella<sup>57</sup> who builds on the idea of Jennifer Mason<sup>58</sup> about reading data in three ways: literal reading; interpretive reading and reflexive reading. For example, a literal reading of my one-on-one interview transcripts or focus group notes includes key words that are repeated by volunteers and/or neighbors. An interpretive reading involves naming the meaning found in the data, whether or not it is explicitly stated in an interview. Perhaps a volunteer implied a particular theological concept without directly articulating it; or a neighbor referred to a tacit element of the culture at Community Crossroads. A reflexive reading concerns the role of the researcher as part of the participatory action research model; the response of the researcher in interviews and focus groups and field notes plays a role in shaping the overall accumulation of a triangulation of data.

In all three types of reading, the researcher discovers convergence and divergence in the data from the triangulation of sources. I relied on Sensing’s evaluative organization of the data around three main groupings of data: overlapping themes of patterns that emerge from all sources;

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<sup>56</sup> Sensing, 194-195.

<sup>57</sup> Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Sage, 2002).

slippage, which are areas of disagreement within the data; and silences, that which is missing in the data.<sup>59</sup> The overlaps, the dissonance, and the omissions collectively help organize the qualitative process and evaluate the data.

The accumulation, interpretation and evaluation of the data are enhanced and sharpened by employing three sources of data (insider; outsider; researcher) and three types of reading data (literal, interpretive, reflexive) and three types of evaluative frames (themes, slippages, silences). The variety of angles seek to add accountability to the data and aim to arrive at more accurate interpretations. Moschella says that a researcher might misinterpret meaning from one data set alone, but “if you look at two or more pieces of data related to the same phenomenon, you are likely to get a better reading. This does not guarantee that you are comprehending the phenomenon correctly, but it increases your chances of grasping the situation.”<sup>60</sup> Patterns from multiple angles from the data emerge that generate themes and categories that assist in the interpretation of data.

Accordingly, I coded the data into groups and subgroups from the themes that emerged. This indexing of the data from interviews, focus groups, curricular content and field observations allowed for a manageable report of the data and the implications of the data. The interpretation and evaluation of the data not only answers my project’s original inquiry but also generates additional questions, observations, and future implications. In the final chapter, I will report my interpretations of the data and its implications and significance for the food pantry ministry, the volunteers, the neighbors, the church, and wider community.

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<sup>59</sup> Sensing, 197-202.

<sup>60</sup> Moschella, 184.

## CHAPTER 5: DATA INTERPRETATION AND MINISTRY IMPLICATIONS

### Significance of the Research

The overall objective of this research project was to determine how active volunteers who engage in an intentional curricular process informed by critical theories, theological rationales, and social justice education around issues of class enhance their self-awareness and interpersonal engagement with neighbors in our congregational sack lunch outreach ministry. I was curious to know if a structured process could assist volunteers in identifying systemic beliefs and practices and ways to reduce the inequalities inherent in asymmetries of power while they continued their ongoing practice of ministry. That is, with intentional education, would volunteers be able to recognize their own privilege vis-à-vis the neighbors and notice the impact of their privilege upon people without them? Additionally, this project sought to understand how the curricular process impacts the programmatic decisions of the sack lunch ministry operation as well as to determine how this curricular process could be advantageous to use with other ministries of outreach in our congregation.

At the outset of this project, I expected to discover that thoughtful action, paired with critical reflection, would yield deeper relational and transformative engagement with the neighbors who come to our sack lunch ministry. I assumed that the data would indicate that the volunteers progressed in measurable ways along Harro's Action Continuum<sup>1</sup> after weeks of meeting together for the curricular intervention. I also expected that such an educational intervention

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix G.

would lead to modifying models of ministry that minimize the inequities inherent in socio-economic class. I have seen, over the course of many years of ministry, genuine transformative thought and behavior develop through theoretical and theological education in church members and also in myself! I have changed thoughts and behaviors after deeper theological engagement, particularly with liberation theology and pastoral theology, and from social justice education.

And yet, after reading the literature for this research project, I was also aware of how powerful class is in defining and shaping opinions and attitudes about poverty and wealth, especially in our North American neo-liberal capitalist context. The “dramatic rise in economic inequality that accompanies global neoliberalization”<sup>2</sup> has far-reaching implications that are not easily dismantled. Class, unlike race and gender, is less obvious and also more fluid;<sup>3</sup> and, as such, I think an increased lack of reflection concerning oppression and privilege within class is to be expected.

My hoped-for outcome for the volunteers was a recognition of their own privilege and also how it impacts others through thought and behavior who do not share it, specifically those in our sack lunch ministry. Structural inequity can be attributed to systems beyond an individual’s control such as neoliberal capitalism and historic oppression; and, as such, individuals can fail to see how their own life can be complicit in inequities. A goal of social justice education is to assist people to learn to “recognize and interpret their own complicity in the reproduction of systems of privilege and oppression...how our own values, ideas, and behaviors contribute to

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce Rogers-Vaughn, “Class Power and Human Suffering: Resisting the Idolatry of the Market in Pastoral Theology and Care,” in *Pastoral Theology and Care: Critical Trajectories in Theory and Practice*, Nancy Ramsay, ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2018) 55.

<sup>3</sup> Joyce Ann Mercer explores these nuances and concludes: “With this individualist ideology of class mobility, the social and contextual features shaping and constraining class identities remain hidden.” See Joyce Ann Mercer, “Economics, Class, and Classism” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2012) 438.

perpetuate someone else's mistreatment or disadvantaged location.”<sup>4</sup> Secondly, I hoped that volunteers would themselves question and revise some of the practices of the sack lunch ministry to align with providing more dignity and hospitality. And, ultimately, I hoped that this experience would lead to interest in collective social impact; what are other oppressive and inequitable issues in the lives of our neighbors and greater community? How does mercy collaborate with justice? My desired outcome for the neighbors was that their feedback would include ways to broaden their full participation in the ministry. I wondered if they had suggestions for ways to improve the experience of the food pantry in which they felt that their presence truly mattered and that our ministry affirmed this through its design and implementation. I desired, as the pastoral researcher, to gain a great awareness of if, and which, pedagogical elements work in teaching modules to volunteers. I also hoped to brainstorm with volunteers and neighbors about constructive ways to modify the ministry through procedural practices and ways to enhance a welcoming atmosphere.

## **Interpreting the Data**

After collecting, compiling, and synthesizing data from the neighbor focus groups, individual interviews with the six volunteers, the six curricular modules, and my notes and experiences as a researcher/participant, I identified themes and patterns to interpret the data into meaningful categories. I examined almost two hundred pages of data through a literal reading, an interpretive reading, and a reflexive reading. I looked for patterns of confirmation and continuity

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<sup>4</sup> Maurianne Adams and Ximena Zúñiga, “Getting Started: Core Concepts for Social Justice Education” in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* 3rd ed. Maurianne Adams and Lee Anne Bell with Diane J. Goodman and Khyati Y. Joshi. eds. (New York: Routledge, 2016) 114.



of data across all sources, and I looked for contradictions and omissions.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the majority of the qualitative data from my project falls under the thematic threads that offer continuity and confirmation from all sources; then, subsequently, I address contradictions and omissions that I noticed in the data.<sup>6</sup> Under each category, I list the dominant and repetitive themes.

### **Data Categories: Confirmation and Continuity**

#### *Class Chasms*

A theme that emerged repeatedly from the data, and even early on in interviews with the volunteers, was the enormous economic gap between volunteers and sack lunch ministry neighbors. I did anticipate this as a major theme from the data because, in many ways, this economic gap, is the “elephant in the room.” The reason for the interaction at the center is because the volunteers offer ways to mitigate economic insecurity through food and other necessities. Neighbors who come for sack lunches not only face food insecurity, but the majority of neighbors lack shelter and safety necessities. Neighbors are preoccupied with meeting daily, survival needs, and our volunteers not only have stable shelter and food sources, but none of the six volunteers have ever experienced homelessness. One volunteer, after explaining interactions with a variety of people of varying classes over their lifetime, said, “But I must admit, I don’t really understand where our neighbors are. I really don’t understand what it would be like...I see

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<sup>5</sup> Tim Sensing suggests similar data groupings, organized around what he calls “themes, slippage and silences.” Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 197-202.

<sup>6</sup> Quotations are verbatim statements from data sources (i.e., volunteers and neighbors).

some of the folks that come in, they're dirty and disheveled, and I say, 'oh, how do they survive out there?'" Even volunteers who have experienced economic insecurity at some point in their<sup>7</sup> lives say that, even so, that they had a strong social support system (social capital) where survival was not their main concern.

Thus, the level of dissonance in life circumstances makes relatability difficult in some instances. I experience this as a research participant and as a pastor working with people in material need for years. A volunteer echoed what I have both felt and heard many times throughout my ministry: "when we are finished at the center, we can get into our cars and go to our homes with our nice things" and our systems of support and care.<sup>8</sup> While volunteers' interactions with neighbors in material need may last for a few hours a day, for neighbors, there is no reprieve from their circumstance and stress. "As you lie in the security of your warm bed, you think of people whose names you know and whose lives you have encountered hours before who have no warm and safe place to be." For some, the experience of volunteering at the sack lunch ministry is "other-worldly" from almost every other single experience in their routines and lives. The reach to genuine empathy is challenging and complicated for some volunteers. This challenge indicates that engendering empathy for neighbors requires prolonged reflection on the oppressive nature of class; and, in hindsight, this problem is helpful in considering strategies for future education and reflection.

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<sup>7</sup> In order to obscure the gender of volunteer comments, I will use the pronouns "they, them, their" instead of he/she, him/her.

<sup>8</sup> One volunteer, in a first interview, even noted the incongruity of checking personal stocks on a smart phone while serving at the center.

While neighbors did not express the class chasm as a concern,<sup>9</sup> the data from volunteers and my own experience and observation frequently confirmed this theme. The needs of the neighbors far exceed a singular sack lunch and stretch into larger realms of health care including mental health, housing, education, and safety. Volunteers mentioned in their pre-intervention interviews that they feel “unequipped” to address larger needs of neighbors. Volunteers spoke of “a feeling of hopelessness” and “being overwhelmed to see the needs” when interacting with neighbors at the sack lunch ministry because the volunteers “want to make things better” for people experiencing homelessness. For example, in our six curriculum modules, I gave time for the group to process their interactions and thoughts at the sack lunch ministry in light of our discussions. In four of the six sessions, the group discussed the conundrum of a particular neighbor who, despite the repeated efforts at assistance and support from the professional staff and volunteers, remained living on the street. The volunteers were troubled by this, especially because they believed that she is extremely vulnerable as a single, older woman.

Volunteers did not explicitly indicate in the data the ways in which their privilege shapes the inequalities they saw but felt ill-equipped to address. Certainly, volunteers named their economic privileges, but not in correlation to how their privileges keep inequities in place or the impact of their privilege on others. Volunteers, myself included, can easily “dismiss or overlook the real impact of economic and political realities” and “will likely collude unwittingly with those forces that can lead to harm.”<sup>10</sup> Explicitly explaining the symbiotic relationship between

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<sup>9</sup> The fact the neighbors did not mention the economic gap is perhaps because the socio-economic class of the volunteers is less obvious to neighbors. In practice, it is the neighbors who give their time, but it an institutional church (supported by many individual donors) who provide the food. In fact, we have several volunteers in our food pantry who are economically insecure themselves.

<sup>10</sup> Ryan Lamothe, *Care of Souls, Care of Polis*, 3.

one's privilege and another's correlated oppression was a missed opportunity in the curricular process.

Additionally, a reflexive reading of the data from my standpoint as a researcher is that the mammoth issue of wealth inequality seems far removed from individual action; what impact can one person have upon a multitude of people who come to our center? The needs are so great; if volunteers assume that one must meet economic needs of neighbors with their own pocketbook or stock portfolio, then most volunteers will feel limited in their ability to help.<sup>11</sup> However, my curricular process failed to emphasize that the volunteers have the capacity to consider how their privilege can help them engage in a “fuller range of possible systemic change;”<sup>12</sup> this oversight is a consequence, perhaps, of a less developed understanding of the sources of oppression and the imagination for collective change.

Although we did an exercise in social and cultural capital, volunteers did not mention in the data using those types of capital to support neighbors and their needs in the larger community. I think this is partly attributed to the ways in which we prioritize “the elite’s doctrine of individualism” as it “privatizes both suffering and care.”<sup>13</sup> In the neoliberal capitalist society in which we live, the hyper focus on the individual extends to pastoral care and so “suffering and care remain privatized.”<sup>14</sup> As such, the collective nature of suffering and compassion is overlooked. Thus, volunteers did not mention modifications to the ministry model that would

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<sup>11</sup> Even beyond financial resources, volunteers are, by and large, not aware of social programs in our community that can assist neighbors should they choose to engage with those services.

<sup>12</sup> With appreciation to Nancy Ramsay for this phrase.

<sup>13</sup> Bruce Rogers-Vaughn, “Class Power and Human Suffering: Resisting the Idolatry of the Market in Pastoral Theology and Care” in *Pastoral Theology and Care: Critical Trajectories in Theory and Practice*, Nancy Ramsay, ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2018) 71.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

impact more than an individual; and also, I, as a researcher, did not ask about implications for involvement in our larger community.<sup>15</sup> For example, are there task forces or social or political networks that address the needs of our neighbors in the community at large?

Finally, I imagine that the range of possible actions to make a difference seems limited in scope to volunteers because the “problem” is seen as securing housing, food, mental health for neighbors, and making the assumption that what volunteers think neighbors need is what neighbors actually want. Furthermore, revising a neighbor’s situation is typically much more time-intensive than a hours-long weekly volunteer shift at the pantry. While the role is not one of a professional case manager, the natural support a volunteer can give can easily blur the boundaries that are established when volunteering at the center. Thus, “affecting dramatic change” may require more time with an individual or may require an obligation to be involved at community and coalitional levels of justice and compassion.

### ***Earned Worth***

A second theme that emerged in all sources was the theme of “earned worth” – that an individual experiencing poverty must be actively working to change economic situations through popular notions of meritocracy such as rugged individualism, hard work, and diligent adherence to thrifty and strategic budgeting. An accompanying part of class chasms is the presence of value judgments from volunteers over how neighbors could improve their economic situation. (This, of course, is the inciting comment that prompted my research; the value judgment that a neighbor

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<sup>15</sup> This was reflected in a comment in which a volunteer in a post-intervention interview said, “I guess the frustrating thing is one’s ability to affect dramatic change and so our limitations are severe.” This illustrates that I, as the educator/researcher did not emphasize how privilege can be leveraged to impact change.

coming for assistance should not have access to a ‘nice’ car.) That is, the poor should be, in all manners, poor.

In both curricular sessions and individual interviews, volunteers consistently mentioned the concept of “earning” their privilege. One volunteer said that their parents taught them that “you can’t take something you haven’t earned,” and, for that volunteer, the Protestant work ethic narrative continued to influence their perception of worthiness, despite their recognition of the deep connections to meritocracy. Of course, the volunteers understand that the neighbors who receive free sack lunches have not earned them – that is not the intention of the ministry in any way. However, the need to correlate worth and work sneaks up in conscious and subconscious ways with the volunteers in my project. Neighbors who are judged to be more worthy, or deserving, of assistance are ones who are perceived to be actively seeking to further their prospects at employment, education<sup>16</sup> or (what volunteers consider) prudent financial decisions.<sup>17</sup> While many benevolent non-profits may have this as a stated value or goal,<sup>18</sup> Community Crossroads or any of the church outreach ministries, for that matter, have not explicitly encouraged a path to self-sufficiency as requisite for assistance.<sup>19</sup> That said, encouraging and empowering those in material need to enhance their economic security and survival is not in and

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<sup>16</sup> The continuity from the data is that neighbors did express interest in Community Crossroads offering classes that are educational in nature (“a math class,” a “GED class”) and offering spaces and resources for finding employment. Neighbors may want access to these resources but not as a precondition to receiving services.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, a volunteer implied multiple times that we want neighbors who receive sack lunches to be “functional” and “productive members of society.”

<sup>18</sup> Requiring demonstrable proof of movement towards “self-sufficiency” is not uncommon as explicit or implicit goals in benevolence and philanthropic endeavors. Phrases like a “hand up, not a hand out” or “helping those who help themselves” are tag lines for some organizations.

<sup>19</sup> The creation of opportunities for persons prevented by racist class systems to have access and opportunity to fair compensation and the dignity of work is a positive action. However, it not required to be “worthy” to receive assistance.

of itself a negative approach to charitable activity.<sup>20</sup> However, imposing standards of merited or deserved mercy to neighbors is not the priority of our ministry, and it can lead to unintended prejudice and discrimination, both of which impede hospitality and dignity, two of the descriptive goals of the ministry.

Additionally, the myth of meritocracy coupled with the fool-proof belief in the American dream feeds suggests that if people would only work harder and prioritize the values of the wealthier classes (education, frugality, and financial forethought), neighbors could escape from cycles of poverty. This myth is deeply ingrained in all institutions that are complicit in maintaining the status-quo, including a Western lens of Christianity that elevates the individual over the collective whole.<sup>21</sup> While there are many examples of individuals who have indeed transcended socio-economic classes through education and effort, their success does not discount the interlocking forces, systems, and policies that subjugate millions of people in generations of poverty.

Volunteers recognized over and over that they themselves, in their comparative economic privilege, did not all together earn what they have.<sup>22</sup> One volunteer reflected about landing a job that began a career: the curricular experience “helped me to understand how I could get to where

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<sup>20</sup> *Toxic Charity* and *When Helping Hurts* are popular resources in contemporary Christian outreach literature. In fact, they both have been helpful in modifying programmatic designs of church ministries that increase dignity and add mutuality. See Robert Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)* (New York: Harper One, 2011) and Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert in their book, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> The concept of “personal salvation” became a leading trajectory for the U.S. church in the twentieth century.

<sup>22</sup> One comment is indicative of part of a conversation: “We have pretty good resources...we supposedly earned it. Is it really ours? Oh, no, I don’t think so.”

I am today because I am white...I wouldn't have had that experience if I'd been living poor and black in the same community. And I know that."<sup>23</sup>

This was not a new discovery for them, but what was surprising was that instead of attributing their economic opportunities to privilege, two volunteers mentioned the role of luck in the pre-intervention interviews. "There is no substitute for luck," a volunteer said. Another said, "I think your own socio-economic status is as much luck as it is, as it is your own endeavors, your own skill. You know, luck or God looking after you." These volunteers do not directly ascribe privilege to their socioeconomic advantage but, rather, credit luck as the contributor to economic class; however, the data did not ascribe bad luck, disadvantage, and oppression as contributors to a lower socio-economic class.

Luck connotes happenstance, fluke, fortune; it could happen to anyone. On the other hand, privilege recognizes intentional, interlocking structures of advantages and disadvantages inherent in systems and institutions that benefit some and are detrimental to others. Disregarding privilege as a contributor to economic status discounts social justice education altogether. I did not follow up with these comments in our curricular time or second interviews, and I missed a crucial opportunity for deeper reflection and discussion on white privilege.

### ***Controlled Environment***

A third thematic theme that was continuous in the data was that the interaction of neighbors and volunteers occurs in a structured environment: at a church outreach center, with

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<sup>23</sup> Another volunteer said about neighbors: "A number of people here are in circumstances not entirely within their control."



figures of authority present (professional staff, police officers) that contribute to a constructed environment. How is it that these two diverse groups of people from vastly different socio-economic situations have these opportunities to interface with one another? For over two decades, First Presbyterian Church has made a concerted effort to provide avenues for church members to respond on a face-to-face level to those in material need. Beyond anonymous check writing or donating in-kind gifts, or referring to a non-profit agency, person-to-person ministry renders the ability for volunteers and neighbors to connect. However, at its outset, the occasion for the interaction is foregrounded in a power dynamic of “giver” and “receiver.” The relationship does not originate in reciprocity. As a volunteer stated, “I think that when you go [to Community Crossroads], you try to show as much identification with the people that are there, but you can’t, and they know you can’t. And there is a barrier. And you are the power base,” meaning the one holding the power.

The volunteers mentioned that the presence of contracted police officers changed the dynamic of the interaction.<sup>24</sup> As a volunteer stated: “I think people are very respectful, but keep in mind, we’re in a controlled environment with a policeman standing at the door, and I think he sets an atmosphere for the room.” Another volunteer echoed a similar sentiment: “I don’t know that I could go down to East Lancaster<sup>25</sup> and do a street ministry without some type of controlled situation. I’m confident when we have a police officer [at Community Crossroads].” An interpretive reading of the data suggests that in an environment where people in material need gather, inherent within it exists an element of threat of unordered behavior and potential

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<sup>24</sup> Community Crossroads hires police officers during the operation hours of some of its ministries.

<sup>25</sup> East Lancaster is an area in our city where many people experiencing homelessness congregate because of the presence of the three main emergency shelters and day shelter.

discomfort. Interestingly, the neighbors did not reference the police presence in the focus groups except to say that they felt that Community Crossroads “felt safe.” I have heard before that neighbors like to know that authority figures will keep the peace if there are grumblings or disagreements among neighbors. While volunteers and neighbors both appreciated the presence of police for safety, the neighbors liked that they keep peace and ensure safety from other neighbors, and some volunteers presumably like it also for protection from neighbors.

Thus, the environment in which neighbors and volunteers encounter one another is different from a relationship that occurs without the restrictions of need and regulation. Volunteers and neighbors report and demonstrate through my field observations that they do genuinely care for one another, but the structured context influences the tenor of the relationships.

### *Places to Appear*

A fourth thematic confirmation in the data was that a high priority is placed on being seen as fully human at Community Crossroads, from volunteers and neighbors alike. Not only is it said in words and interviews, but I observed this in field notes and actions. Gestures like eye contact, addressing others by name, and beginning a ministry of listening companions for neighbors all indicate the importance of creating welcoming places for people to be present and noticed. Despite the regulated manner of encounter, the primary theme of genuine welcome was not thwarted. Recognizing the other as a human being, with a name and story and inherent worth as a child of God, diminishes the class typologies that humans use to categorize people and discriminate against them. People are then more than the sum of learned prejudices or

stereotypes; people are more than “people in need,” or “the underserved” or “the less fortunate;” they are children of God with lives, stories, dreams, and desires.

Volunteers frequently emphasized the importance of taking the time to see one another, or, as Mary McClintock Fulkerson describes, giving one another “a frame for appearing.”<sup>26</sup> What Fulkerson means is that by diminishing obliviousness to the other, a space of appearance is a “place to be seen, to be recognized and to recognize the other.”<sup>27</sup> In fact, this theme appeared as an essential component of neighbor and volunteer experiences. The scripture most cited as influential for volunteers is the parable of the good Samaritan and the parable of the judgment of the nations, as both emphasize sight as instrumental to compassionate action. One volunteer said, “you have to choose to see;” and, thus, not seeing, is a deliberate choice, ‘a negation of relation’ in other words, sin.<sup>28</sup> What was not clear in the data is once a volunteer saw a neighbor differently, did they also understand themselves differently?

The volunteers named that taking time to see a neighbor as an individual person, “a child of God,” remembering their names when they greet them, was meaningful in their volunteer experience. One volunteer said, “I feel that we’re really making them feel like people.” I observed how both volunteers and neighbors call one another by nicknames, demonstrating their familiarity and comradery with one another. A neighbor also mentioned enjoying being called by name, and suggested that a way to improve everyone being seen, not just those who regularly

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<sup>26</sup> See Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Fulkerson, 21.

<sup>28</sup> Thanks to Fumitaka Matsuoka’s definition of sin as lie, “the negation of relation.” Matsuoka, *The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998) 58.

come, is to provide nametags so that people can be called by name.<sup>29</sup>

A volunteer anticipated in a pre-curricular interview that they hoped the process would help them “learn something about the things that might help, particularly that the neighbors feel recognized with dignity.” A frame for appearing was a hope of the process. That same volunteer, post-intervention, said the experience “caused me to put in more effort in the way I receive and respond to people.” And a volunteer commented on the reciprocal gift of having a frame to appear as more than the person who takes the paperwork. They said, “One of the things that strikes me is how I feel when I am accepted [by the neighbors]. And I didn’t go into this with the idea that I needed to be accepted. And when somebody asks me my name, that’s the highest compliment. It’s like, wow, he or she wants to know me as a person.” A recognition of the humanity of another, be it a volunteer or neighbor, emerged as a high priority in transcripts and also in my observations of welcome and greeting.

### *Sense of Community*

A fifth thematic thread is the sense of community articulated by neighbors and volunteers created by a “frame for appearing.” People felt that they belonged and that Community Crossroads was a way to build community among neighbors, among volunteers and between both groups. Several neighbors commented on the welcoming atmosphere they sensed from volunteers. One said, “I see the love – that brings hope to me.” A volunteer said that several neighbors call her “Momma” which is a term of endearment for her and makes her feel a deeper

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<sup>29</sup> At the time of this research, neighbors are alerted that they can receive a lunch when the number that they have received that day is called.

connection to the neighbors. She commented that those neighbors' names and faces make it into her prayers as part of her community of faith.

When the sack lunch ministry began, it was to meet a need for another day to offer a sack lunch for those experiencing homelessness. Soon, however, the ministry expanded to function not solely as a place to pick up food and leave, but as a place to receive a lunch and sit down and eat it inside at round tables if people wanted to stay. Then, volunteers wanted to include other acts of hospitality like serving breakfast foods and hot coffee inside while people visited and waited for lunch. I observed that this expansion of the ministry contributed to the sense of community that people experienced, especially on Mondays since the only people visiting the food pantry on that day are those receiving sack lunches. Many of the neighbors mentioned that some of their friends also attend the sack lunch ministry so Community Crossroads is a safe place for fellowship and connection in their lives.

The thread of strong community was expressed most notably by volunteers who, without exception, remarked that the collegiality among volunteers is a highlight or benefit of volunteering in the sack lunch ministry. They enjoy the company of serving with other people who share a similar interest in working at the food pantry. The volunteers are a tight knit group as they see one another at least once (and usually more) every week, and together carry out the sack lunch ministry. As they volunteer, they share about their lives, and they check on one another if someone is unable to volunteer. The connection that volunteers share was mentioned in the data as a compelling reason for continuing to serve.

### *Priority of Faith*

A sixth theme confirmed by the data from volunteers and neighbors is the importance of faith as a defining characteristic of the ministry. A motivating factor in volunteers' involvement at Community Crossroads is the priority that they give to faith. Formative scriptures and memorable sermons were mentioned as influencing their desire to serve and give of their time and energy. Whether perceived as an "ethical obligation" or a "commandment of Jesus," discipleship to most of these volunteers includes acts of service and mercy. My congregation has long valued hands-on mission and outreach, and the volunteers also mentioned this fact in their interviews of wanting to be part of a congregation where these types of opportunities are available.

Volunteers also commented that inasmuch as they want to "be the hands and feet of Christ" through this ministry, they also receive a personal benefit from their experiences. "I get a reward from doing this." "I receive more from the ministry than I give." "It fills a need for me." These comments from volunteers are not uncommon in ministries of compassion where caring for another brings personal satisfaction and joy. Compassion and generosity, key hallmarks of Christian virtues, have also proven to be indicators of happiness in pop and social psychology, when the focus on self is redirected to others. From a reflexive reading, I am glad that volunteers feel good about helping others and establishing genuine community, and, also, I am hopeful that interactions between neighbors and volunteers can have reciprocity (i.e., neighbors also feel good) so as not to become sentimental colonialism, which continues to benefit the privileged at the expense of the oppression of the poor.

To my surprise, neighbors described how Community Crossroads is a touchstone of faith in their lives. Certainly, those who attend on Wednesday evenings enjoy the spiritual aspect of worship and Bible study offered each week, but I did not expect to hear that from neighbors who come to the sack lunch ministry. While we do not proselytize, neighbors encouraged me in our focus groups to offer spiritual resources during the day as optional for those who wish to participate. When I asked a neighbor to elaborate on this, I was told, “it’s like a small church where everyone desires to hear the word of God.” More than a community outreach center or a food pantry, Community Crossroads, although with no explicit religious overture in its name, is seen as church or an extension of church.

### *Awakening Awareness and Sustained Engagement*

The final consistent thematic thread from the data that I observed is that transformative thought and behavior was directly linked to a prolonged, sustained engagement with theological and theoretical resources concerning class and other interlocking systems. The more the volunteers engaged in reflection and education, the more they demonstrated modifications in thought and, to some degree, action. Conversely, the people that participated less showed less progression along certain metrics of growth and change.

From the context of faith, as the pastor who oversees Community Crossroads, I reached out to both volunteers and neighbors to ask if they would participate in my research. The commitment time frame for the volunteers was more extensive than for the neighbors as the curricular process was part of my time with the volunteers. Though unsolicited, I was gratified to hear from a neighbor in our first focus group that this person thought our volunteers could

benefit from training that could help them “understand the economic needs and concerns of the people who come to Crossroads.” When I asked this neighbor to expound on the statement, they mentioned that although they were now without a job and a home, they had previously worked in volunteer management of a non-profit and observed that the volunteers were largely out of touch with understanding the realities of the lives of people who were working on day-to-day survival. This person thought if volunteers could understand the challenges that they faced and the stress that they endured as housing and food insecure, then the volunteers could be more sensitive to the needs of the neighbors. While this empathetic understanding was part of my assumption of transformation, I did not expect this statement to come from neighbors; my assumption was that neighbors may be more hesitant to suggest changes like training for volunteers due to the dynamic in powers as inherent in my role.

Volunteers reported that the participatory exercises from social justice education were extremely insightful and helpful in their ability to process concepts and terminology. Upon reflection on the curricular process, the volunteers related that the most memorable parts of the education were the participatory exercises that applied the social justice education to real life scenarios. Two volunteers said that the “Where I’m From” exercise helped them to see that “values are culturally-appropriated” and some of our earlier experiences “have profound impact on how we see and understand the world.” When considering how neighbors’ responses may differ drastically from their own, volunteers were mindful of their own heretofore unrecognized privilege and others’ systemic disadvantages. One volunteer appreciated the privilege walk exercise as it demonstrated that the playing field they believed had been neutral and level, “with equal opportunity for everyone,” was fraught with complications of inequity. The circles of types of capital made a “deep impression” upon a volunteer because this person had equated class with



income and wealth only and had not considered “access to people and experiences as things that can greatly impact one’s socioeconomic standing.”

Although awareness of systems of advantage and disadvantage can assist in disrupting cycles of socialization and prompt actions in the cycle of liberation, the data from my research indicates that substantive transformation occurs with sustained engagement in social justice education and liberative practices. I will address this later in more detail, but I noticed that the one volunteer who had prior intentional exposure to social justice education around issues of class and race, for example, identified at a point further along the Action Continuum than others who were newly discovering some of the education.

## **Contradictions**

### ***Perceptions of Hospitality***

Although neighbors and volunteers alike noted that welcome and community were strong aspects of the ministry, I noted that my data did show some contradictions around the issue of hospitality. At the first neighbor focus group, one neighbor remarked: “We are not rushed to get out; you can enjoy your lunch.” Another neighbor confirmed this same sentiment two months later at our final focus group: “At other places, it’s get out of here as quick as possible, but here, nobody rushes you.”

Yet another neighbor pointed out that body language and visible attitudes of volunteers connote discomfort and set a tone of discontentment. They said, “the people sitting by the door don’t want to be here. Their frustration comes through their attitude.” The way a person is

registered for the ministry – for example, the attitudes of the volunteer, visible through noticeable levels of patience or frustration – contribute to a neighbor’s experience of hospitality.

A volunteer notes that the process we had in place is also not hospitable and contributes to feelings of uneasiness. The forms that neighbors must complete, in the volunteer’s opinion, are “cumbersome and they chip away at dignity.” The volunteer goes on to elaborate:

We say you’ve got to complete this form. I mean, I don’t care how nice you are saying that. You see a lot of faces just drop... I say the less we can complicate their visit, the better it’s going to be. Because these people spend a lot of time at the end of line. And it really bothers me... We just ought to say, look, if these people are important, let’s act like it.” There are procedural elements of the ministry that are obstacles to expressing hospitality and nurturing a sense of community.

Part of hospitality includes embracing Sam Wells’ quadrant of “being with” people, without completing a task or project.<sup>30</sup> While neighbors report that volunteers are “encouraging” and “respectful” and “nice,” a neighbor also suggests that volunteers “sit down with people. A lot of people are lonely.” Hospitality is more than courteousness and friendliness. Hospitality includes demonstrating mutuality and solidarity by connecting with neighbors and showing genuine interest and investment in their lives.

### ***The Trajectory of Transformation***

The second contradictory thread in the data was how to measure and understand transformation. In fact, transformation is a central concern of my project because my research

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<sup>30</sup> Sam Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God*. West Sussex: Wiley, 2015.

explored the question of whether a curricular intervention generated substantive change in thought and behavior. Do the researcher, neighbors, and volunteers notice indicators of progressive change in the volunteers' actions?

All six volunteers were willing to engage in the curricular process, knowing that it would require meeting times, homework, and a desire to reflect critically upon the ministry at Community Crossroads. Most of the participants were very engaged in their commitment to attend and participate in group discussion. Several of the volunteers said that self-measurement tools like the Action Continuum and the Cycles of Socialization and Liberation helped them to see that there is an aspirational aim beyond simply being nice as volunteers and doing one's volunteer job efficiently. The work of liberating practices of pastoral care requires intentional ways to interrupt personal obliviousness and actively confront oppressive thoughts and behaviors individually and systemically.

That said, the majority of the data suggests that six modules is not sufficient to engender noticeable change. The comparison of the comments from the neighbor focus group post-intervention did not indicate demonstrable change in volunteers that was noticed by neighbors.<sup>31</sup> One volunteer commented that the curricular process "did not affect much change in thought or behavior."<sup>32</sup> When asked to identify their progression on the Action Continuum, volunteers indicated that any movement along the continuum in their lives has occurred over a longer period

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<sup>31</sup> However, a few neighbors who attended the second focus group were not present at the first focus group, and vice versa. Also, it is difficult for a neighbor to assess change in thought, and to some extent, behavior, in the volunteers.

<sup>32</sup> It is noteworthy to observe that this volunteer also participated the least in terms of attendance and discussion.

of time. Thus, a relatively brief period of education and reflection may influence an overall progression, but does not alone instigate significant transformation.<sup>33</sup>

Notably, volunteers entered this project at different points of conscientization about class in my pre-intervention conversations. Speaking directly to the issue of judging neighbors by the quality of their transportation, one volunteer confirmed the comment I once overheard: “When I see somebody drive up in an Escalade, and they’re getting groceries...well, that kind of pisses me off.” But another volunteer said, “If I were to get in that vehicle with them and drive to where they’re going to park it, I might get a whole different picture. We have to discipline ourselves to not look at superficial marks of success.” Clearly, the two volunteers entered the curricular process from different mindsets.

Some of the data did suggest that while transformation is an extended process of continual engagement, the curricular intervention caused deeper relational engagement with neighbors and volunteers. In my field observations, I noticed that while all the volunteers have personal connections with neighbors, four volunteers demonstrated interest in learning more about the personal stories of neighbors. The volunteers spent greater lengths of time in conversations with a few neighbors, and one said, post-intervention, that “these classes cause me to be more aware of the stories of people I encounter.”

Four volunteers participated in additional educational opportunities about social justice issues offered simultaneously through our congregation beyond our curricular process, and two volunteers, in particular, continued robust engagement with learning groups concerned with privilege and race. This suggests that the intervention can contribute to interest in sustained

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<sup>33</sup> My expectations about change centered around noticing progressive movement in the Cycle of Liberation and the Action Continuum. Both measurement instruments were introduced to the volunteers, though I would introduce them earlier next time in order for clear expectations of how to measure transformation.

engagement with reflection and action on issues of social justice. The motivations of volunteers to participate in this outreach ministry also vary as does their level of engagement with social justice and theological issues about asymmetries of power prior to the curricular intervention.

However, my curricular process neglected to speak to theories of change and moving beyond self-awareness as a critical early step in generating the change that I sought to find in my research question. I made an unreflective assumption about change theory in that I failed to give adequate attention to *how* modifications in thought patterns can translate into demonstrable actions.<sup>34</sup> Russell Dalton explains: “a deepening of one’s understanding of an issue in social ethics and one’s own privilege and biases does not necessarily translate into a change in how one carries out their social action activities.”<sup>35</sup> It is not enough to learn new ways of thinking, naively assuming that this knowledge will evolve into behavioral changes.

Nancy Ramsay underscored this oversight as well. Even though my project question is framed as wanting to evaluate both thought and action, my focus – in part by using Sam Wells’ quadrant to frame four modules – evolved into a concentration on reflection and thought. Using Wells’ quadrant to frame the curricular time suggested that “being with” was the ultimate goal of this curricular intervention. Solidarity requires more than “being with” others in pain or listening to oppression. Social justice education aims to create coalitional change, by “working to change individual and institutional actions and policies that discriminate” and “making sure target group members are full participants in organizations or groups.”<sup>36</sup> Liberative practices, which I failed to emphasize as part of my educational goals for the neighbors includes

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<sup>34</sup> Russell Dalton reminded me of this assumptive (and flawed) correlation in the Western church.

<sup>35</sup> Russell Dalton, personal email, 10 November 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Harro, “Action Continuum,” Appendix G.

“coalescing,” and “critically transforming institutions and creating new culture” through “influencing policy, assumptions, and structures.”<sup>37</sup> One volunteer did mention this in a post-intervention interview: “I don’t know if there is any structural platform...how can we play a role? We have this man from the city here to help people get housing...are there other things we do with people?”

Social justice education has expectations about outcomes for fuller justice for people that extend beyond befriending and noticing. Social justice education goes beyond Wells’ framework to solicit action to understand the impact of privileges on those who do not share them and to change inequities through coalitional strategies and partnerships. This is a pathway to a trajectory of transformation.

## **Omissions**

### ***Intersectionality***

The first notable omission from the data is the theme of intersectionality, in which multiple, simultaneous intersections of identities can enhance privilege or, as an interlocking force, contribute to oppression. In the metatheory of intersectionality, “asymmetries of power organize the co-construction of social identities such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism at both individual psychological and social identity group levels.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, intersectionality not only explains how intersecting identities contribute to economic

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<sup>37</sup> Harro, “Cycle of Liberation,” Appendix O.

<sup>38</sup> Nancy Ramsay, “Analyzing and Engaging Asymmetries of Power: Intersectionality as a Resource for Practices of Care,” in *Pastoral Theology and Care*, 2018, 145.

disadvantage or privilege on individual levels, but it also addresses the systemic marginalization and advantage of the confluence of domains of power.

In my focus group with neighbors, the identities of race, class, gender, sexual identity, and ability rarely arose in the data. In my time with volunteers, I offered education around the concept of intersectionality in the last module, and we reflected on how intersectionality impacts the identity of socio-economic class. In the individual interviews with volunteers, there was little mention of intersectionality and the role it may have in the interactions and experiences in the sack lunch ministry. One volunteer was aware of their personal privileged interlocking identities and the access that it afforded them, but the co-constructed identities of neighbors was not mentioned in any of the data.<sup>39</sup>

The truth is that it is not possible to sieve out one identity as unrelated to another. Simultaneous identities are inextricably linked one to another, whether explicitly named or not. Historical factors like colonialism, chattel slavery, and neoliberal economics, to name a few, amplify the power inequities of identities and how they shape systems and structures in the “ideology, political, and economic domains.”<sup>40</sup> Intersectionality affirms that our identities are more than personal and singular; our identities are constructed and shaped by social, cultural and economic histories and realities reinforced in structures and systems in our society.

Admittedly, part of the omission of intersectionality in my data can be attributed to my delay in introducing it as a concept earlier in the modules and my neglect of emphasizing the

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<sup>39</sup> One volunteer mentioned that “the best thing to do is keep the race thing down, not mention it” meaning that that this volunteer thought race was not an issue to focus on at Community Crossroads because of the ubiquitous conversations about race in our society. This volunteer repeatedly said that equality, “seeing all people the same,” is priority for shaping interactions with neighbors. This data echoes thought patterns of colorblindness, a theme that denies race and ethnicity as important aspects of identity politics.

<sup>40</sup> Ramsay, 157.

systemic impact of the “forces of dominance and oppression.”<sup>41</sup> When presented in a narrow view of an individual experience of intersectionality, the theory loses its power as a tool to widen the scope of the pervasive nature of privilege and injustice in policies, politics, and practices. Additionally, the dominant narrative experienced by volunteers (and the researcher) is formed by institutions and systems that make privileged identities normative. For instance, a patriarchal, Eurocentric, neoliberal experience is affirmed and supported through power structures, and social and cultural norms. Thus, those with privilege, are often unreflective about the potency of co-constructed identities in contributing both to privilege and to oppression. Intersectionality, then, provides a framework for reflection for understanding and acknowledging power and privilege, and its omission, was a clear oversight.

### ***Programmatic Decisions***

A second omission from the data were suggestions from volunteers to modify the operations and programmatic decision of the food pantry ministry. A signpost of transformation that was not demonstrated in the two months of my research was that no volunteer mentioned significantly changing the way in which we conducted the sack lunch ministry in order to align practices with values. One volunteer mentioned making the check-in process more welcoming and less cumbersome, and one volunteer mentioned adding showers as a new ministry option.

Again, admittedly, I did not frame the question in the post-curricular interviews as directly as I could to generate more thoughtful consideration of possible changes. In hindsight, I would have prompted volunteers to think specifically about changes we could implement that

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<sup>41</sup> Ramsay, 152.



promoted dignity.<sup>42</sup> Could we provide a different selection of food: fresh food instead of shelf stable non-perishables? Could we offer healthier options or food selections that accommodate a variety of diets? Could we have neighbors select the contents of their sack lunch to promote dignity? In other ministries, volunteers changed a grocery distribution to a neighbor choice model in which neighbors select the food that best matches their diet and desires. Some who work in our clothing ministry have considered adopting a shopping experience for neighbors instead of our current model which receives clothes that volunteers select for the neighbor.

Neighbors, nonetheless, mentioned ways to improve the sack lunch ministry and ideas to expand the programs at Community Crossroads. A neighbor commented that “there are too many sweets and I am diabetic.” Another said, “the food in the sack lunches could have more variety” and, instead of non-perishable items only, “include sandwiches” or other fresh produce. Then, several neighbors brainstormed in a focus group that Community Crossroads could offer additional programming such as a “job board,” a resource room with computers, laundry services, haircuts, addiction counseling, health care, movie nights, life skill and educational classes. The neighbors imagined possibilities beyond the sack lunch ministry.

## **Limitations of Project**

Despite best intentions, the research project did exhibit several limitations that contributed to the data gathering and interpretation.

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<sup>42</sup> For example, a process of reflection years before significantly modified a Christmas charitable ministry, increasing dignity for participants.

## ***Methodology***

Participants are encouraged to bring their own sense of expertise to the mix, but I found two limitations to utilizing participatory action research (PAR) as a pastor. First, the participants did not approach me about what they observed as an issue that needed reflection and modified action. This project originates from my initiative to approach them about participating in an educational endeavor in order to answer my research question. Second, my role as a pastor connotes a level of leadership – and to some degree, expertise – and so while I was a co-learner, I was perceived as the de facto authority, and I also asserted myself as the educator and facilitator in the group sessions. As Max Elden and Morten Levin note about the dilemma of PAR: “even though participants are to be in charge of the research process, the researcher cannot give up control completely.”<sup>43</sup> At the same time, because the volunteers engaged in participatory pedagogical activities together, their contribution and participation in “common learning in which action, reflection, and theorizing...take place as a dialogue between equal partners.”<sup>44</sup> However, the topic of addressing issues of class that impede relational connection was not a problem that arose from the volunteers that they needed to solve; it was an issue presented to them from the researcher. Presumably, if I had gathered the volunteers and asked them as a group to think about any problems or issues in the sack lunch ministry that they wished to address through reflection and education, they very well might have brought up class inequalities as a focus.<sup>45</sup> As it was, the reason I gathered these volunteers was to help answer a problem I previously identified.

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<sup>43</sup> Max Elden and Morten Levin, “Cogenerative Learning: Bringing Participation into Action Research,” in *Participatory Action Research*, 140.

<sup>44</sup> Elden and Levin, 148.

<sup>45</sup> Also, the structure of the curriculum may have limited the participation level of volunteers and not only the method of participatory action research. If the curriculum had prompted volunteers through education to ask

### *Volunteer and Neighbor Participation*

Volunteers potentially experienced some discomfort in reflecting on individual social location, self-awareness, interpersonal and institutional reflection on issues of race and class. Two volunteers used the phrase, “if I have to be honest,” which indicated to me that it is can be uncomfortable to name the truth of one’s thoughts and behaviors, and perhaps especially to me, as their pastor who oversees the outreach ministries. Privileged individuals and groups of individuals, including the researcher, may find dialogue that questions cultural and economic assumptions about class and wealth to be disconcerting and, at times, disorienting, particularly in our extremely bifurcated and triggered political era.

Neighbors may have experienced discomfort in speaking candidly about a ministry from which they receive food assistance. Neighbors may be less inclined to share freely, especially with me, as a figure of authority at an organization from which they receive goods and services. Even though explicitly stated in the consent form that their comments would not bear in any way on their ability to participate in ministries, a neighbor might perceive that any critique of our ministry or volunteers could adversely impact their participation. The power dynamic that is present in ministries of outreach exists even if those with power assure neighbors that feedback of any kind is encouraged and solicited.

While the limitations of volunteer and neighbor participation were anticipated in my Institutional Review Board proposal, in hindsight, additional limitations arose in conducting my

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questions and address problems within the food pantry, they may have brought issues to light and solutions to address them.

research. First, despite reminders and encouragement to attend, some of the neighbors did not return for the second focus group. Thus, potential data sets that can offer comparative comments over the two-month period were omitted. Second, while the neighbors gladly answered the questions that I presented in the focus groups, many times certain answers would steer the conversation in a direction not related to the research question. We had limited time together, and I frequently had to redirect the neighbors to consider the question at hand. This, in part, I think was due to the larger size of the group and most likely due to the fact that I (or the church) seldom ask neighbors for their input and feedback. If this is the first time a neighbor has access to share his or her opinions and thoughts about the ministry, he or she may take this rare opportunity to impart feedback that he or she needs to communicate.<sup>46</sup>

Third and finally, I did not explicitly tell the neighbors the overall objective of my research so as not to influence their feedback. For example, I thought that if I made it clear that I was looking for signposts of transformation in volunteers, then that knowledge would sway neighbors to be predisposed to answer affirmatively that they witnessed change. In hindsight, I think that my omission of my purpose in order not to add bias to the data, only made that upon what I was asking neighbors to reflect ambiguous and indistinct. A future approach could include sharing goals for each group. For instance, my goals for the volunteers might include a deeper awareness of oppression and privilege through systems and structures and ways to respond in coalitional change and revising programmatic details of the ministries. My hopes for the neighbors might include empowering neighbors to use their expertise and experience to influence coalitional strategies and programmatic modifications, allowing neighbors to prioritize the focus.

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<sup>46</sup> The obvious learning here for me and the church is to provide multiple options for conversation and feedback about the ministries at Community Crossroads.

## **Researcher Reflection**

Even so, I think the process of intentional reflection and education in a group setting is a meaningful and worthwhile exercise to address patterns of privilege that amplify oppression, obstruct compassion, and hinder relational connection. This intended outcome was achieved, albeit partially, even if the impact was limited by the narrow scope of the curricular process. While six weeks is too brief as a time frame for substantive, transformative thought and behavior around a broad topic like classism, a group that covenants to process together for many months is latent with opportunity for deeper discussion and transformation.

## ***Curricular Process***

As a pedagogical tool, the curricular process worked well, and I would implement this process again with volunteers. The division of content into separate modules, spaced seven days apart, allowed for ample time for comprehension of the material and reflection upon it both in thought and in action at the food pantry (reflective praxis). The most effective tool in the curricular intervention was the participatory exercises that encouraged personal engagement and absorption of the material. Volunteers recalled in their post-intervention interviews the exercises as the most memorable teaching tool over the content that I gave them with definitions and explanations. An obstacle in the process was that some volunteers were unable to attend all of the modules, and their absence effected not only their understanding of the content of that particular module but also impacted group dynamics and processing.

If I were to duplicate this process, I would double the quantity of the group meetings to twelve and locate more participatory pedagogical resources for the class time. As far as the content, I would include much of the same material, but I would foreground intersectionality early on, and give ample space to reflect on the intersecting identities of class, race, gender, ethnicity, and ability in particular. Furthermore, I would emphasize the structural nature of intersectionality and how coalitional action, and not just programmatic designs unique to our church, lead to transformative possibilities in much larger arenas.

Another beneficial participatory teaching would be to use case studies in which the context is not the food pantry but another ministry of our church.<sup>47</sup> That way, volunteers could separate themselves from their specific volunteer context where personal bias may impede generative reflection, yet still be able to relate to situations in which privilege and power play a role in relationships with others. Another engaging teaching opportunity that a volunteer suggested in a post-intervention interview would be for volunteers to serve in different areas of the ministry on a rotational basis during the curricular intervention (i.e., stock shelves, check in neighbors, distribute food, sit down at tables for conversation) and reflect about the different experiences of the food ministry. I can imagine time spent on naming common, unreflective comments from volunteers that are often overheard about ministry with those in material need and engaging with participants as to how and why those comments are unhelpful, harmful, and not generative for Christian discipleship

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<sup>47</sup> The case study method, widely used as a valuable tool for education across disciplines, engages participants in “real-world” application and integration of concepts. Many pastoral theologians engage in case studies as a pedagogical element of instruction (e.g., Scheib, Ramsay). See Maryellen Weimer, *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*. Second Edition. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013) and Daniel Schipani, “Case Study Method” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, ed. (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2012) 91-101.

A significant omission is the concept of allies, those “who work in alliance with others toward a shared goal of change.”<sup>48</sup> Next time, I would include an entire module, if not more, on the importance of leveraging privilege to affect change. This is a key component of social justice education, and the curricular time would have been enhanced with understanding this concept of coalition as a way in which volunteers who often feel helpless with such need could participate in action. In fact, a couple of modules that prioritize examples and ideas for leveraging privilege, knowing about resources (social capital) for neighbors, and participating in coalitional change could help bridge the gap between transformational thought that connects to thoughtful action. I could provide an intentional time connecting how behaviors and words used at the sack lunch ministry and during reflection about the ministry as it pertains to growth in conscientization about oppression and privilege might change behaviors with neighbors and change procedures and structures of the ministry itself.

### ***Data Acquisition***

The interview process with the volunteers before and after the intervention was a helpful tool in gauging the volunteers’ interest in the sack lunch ministry and tracking their progression after the curricular process. One thing I would modify is that I would introduce the Action Continuum on the first interview and allow volunteers to self-identify their location before the intervention (as well as ask them to self-asses after the intervention). That way they can think

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<sup>48</sup> Maurianne Adams and Ximena Zúñiga, “Getting Started: Core Concepts for Social Justice Education” in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* 3rd ed. Maurianne Adams and Lee Anne Bell with Diane J. Goodman and Khyati Y. Joshi. eds. (New York: Routledge, 2016) 114.

about progression throughout the curricular process and while they are directly interacting with neighbors at the food pantry.

I think that serving as the research and participant as their pastor works well in my setting, as opposed to utilizing an outside consultant. I am well known and trusted in the congregation, having served for so many years. One thing that seems to work well in my context is that I am able to be forthcoming about my own privilege and how it influences my thoughts and behaviors, including unintended oppression to others. I find that modeling this posture, however imperfectly, encourages others to engage with issues of privilege and oppression.

Upon reflection, I recognize that my stated hopes for volunteers, neighbors and myself did not correlate to the measurement tools I used. In my post-intervention interviews, more pointed questions such as “how do you see your privilege impacting neighbors who do not share it?” and “has the curricular time prompted you to consider coalitional change, and, if so, what specifically?” would have directly addressed some of the hopes that I expressed.

As far as the focus group with neighbors, I think that this was a weak venue for data acquisition. As stated earlier, neighbor participation was inconsistent. Several times the conversation steered off topic and my overall purpose may have seemed vague to the neighbors. Extending the time in the focus group did seem important as many were ready to leave in order to meet up with friends and receive food. However, I wonder, in retrospect, about my choice to allow only two hours with neighbors and eleven hours with volunteers. I wonder if unconsciously I assumed that neighbors had less insight for, or maybe less interest in, my research question.

I chose a focus group over individual interviews because I imagined that an experience of group dialogue may prompt a thought or opinion for a neighbor when speaking with peers, that



building upon each other, we might uncover themes and threads. Depending on the type of information desired in a future scenario at Community Crossroads, I think surveys, which I have conducted before with satisfaction, and individual interviews would prove more effective at addressing questions directly. Individual interviews would allow more one-on-one time with neighbors and may ensure to a greater degree that their voice is heard. If I wanted research data from a larger sampling of neighbors, surveys have worked well in that context.

I find neighbor input valuable, and I do not recommend omitting their participation. I did consider at one time including neighbors and volunteers together in the curricular intervention, but I decided to keep the two groups separate for a few reasons. One, I wondered if neighbors would feel that they could be transparent about their experiences with volunteers present; I also wondered if the converse would be true. Second, like in many other areas of social justice education, it is incumbent upon those who have privilege and power to “do the homework” on understanding how systems have benefitted some and hindered others.<sup>49</sup> Thinking about issues of class and its correlating inequities with volunteers alone may have also mitigated harmful comments from unwitting oppressors or engendered deep discomfort or further trauma in participating in some of the participatory exercises. Third, generative discussions with a larger group of participants in a limited time frame can complicate group dynamics and overall learnings for each person.

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<sup>49</sup> For example, we have a partnership with a Black congregation in our city. After the protests of the summer of 2020 in response to police brutality disproportionately against people of color, I had my mostly white congregation read *White Fragility* before engaging in a study and dialogue with our partner congregation. We, as the white oppressors, had more to learn about systemic racism than those at the other congregation who have lived it every day of their lives. Thus, when we came together in conversation, the likelihood of insensitive and unreflective comments from our church members (i.e., “I’m not racist.” “I don’t see color.” etc.) was minimized.

### *Surprising and Significant Learnings*

Overall, the research project affirmed my larger take away from the classes and learnings from my entire experience in the Doctor of Ministry degree program: pastoral care is not merely relegated to matters of one-on-one attention and care, and social justice ministry is not simply found in prophetic preaching and organizational activism. Faithful pastoral care is prophetic by challenging master narratives and structural oppression and encouraging liberative and transformative thoughts and actions, reflective of the ministry of Jesus.

The most surprising part of the data was that volunteers commented that the “controlled environment” of the police-monitored sack lunch ministry rendered their experience with neighbors less than authentic. I had failed to consider this factor. Not only does the presence of security change the tenor of interaction but also the fact that the interactions volunteers have with neighbors center around accomplishing the tasks of providing for materials needs. Thus, volunteers can compartmentalize their experience at Community Crossroads, get back in their cars and head to their homes, and feel “overwhelmed by the needs” of neighbors who lack essential necessities like shelter, food, health care, and natural support systems.

I was surprised that the data did not show a move to modify the operations of how we conduct the sack lunch ministry because other times of reflection in the congregation have resulted in a change in approach to ensure that dignity and hospitality stay central in the experience of neighbors. At the same time, we only had six weeks together, and I did not focus on encouraging volunteers to brainstorm ways in which we could alter the ministry or work for collective and collaborative change in our larger community.

As a pastor, I enjoyed facilitating the modules and doing so in a manner that communicated that I am a co-learner over against an expert. Engaging in an educational reflective process helped my own thinking through issues of class and other intersectional identities and how they impact my own thoughts and behaviors when it comes to ministries of outreach. I, too, like volunteers, make value judgments about how those in material need spend their resources or ways that I think neighbors could improve their economic stability. I make these judgments without the experience of systemic oppression. And, at the same time, I have learned in my own life that intentional education, reflection, and engagement can disrupt unhelpful thoughts and behaviors. I appreciate the interruptions to the cycle of socialization and the ways in which, over time, I have progressed along the Action Continuum myself. These movements in my own life and ministry have instigated future and further action of continued education and ways in which I have modified behaviors to imitate those in the Cycle of Liberation.

This curricular process with volunteers reinforced that social justice education, paired with biblical and theological rationales and reflection, does positively inform my practice of ministry and my engagement with both neighbor, volunteers, and the wider church and community. That is to say, this project has underscored that pastoral care is an issue of social justice as disciples of Jesus Christ. This larger arc of justice as critical for faithful pastoral care has helped me realized the significance of this type of ministry for the church. And, in my particular congregation, I recognize how educational opportunities such as this curricular intervention address a largely unmet need. And, more importantly, I see the impact of this type of education and reflection that can benefit my larger community.

Neighbors come to the sack lunch ministry in a stressful season of their lives, many times not knowing the certainties of their next meal. Many are without shelter. The significance of lessening the likelihood of experiencing oppression, judgment, and prejudice and increasing the likelihood of experiencing dignity, welcome, and worth is invaluable to the church's Christian witness in our community. If Community Crossroads serves as an outpost of the kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven,' volunteers have opportunities to communicate empathy, mutuality, and solidarity in their interactions with neighbors, however brief, that demonstrate our priority in human flourishing for all.

This research project undoubtedly changed me and my practice of ministry, and it served as a significant learning tool in my ongoing education. In addition to the months of informative research that heretofore I had not read, I deeply appreciate the feedback from faculty that encouraged my consideration of the structural implications for social justice education as it pertains to a congregational food ministry. As a result, for example, I am now involved in a coalitional partnership in our city, centered around food insecurity in the zip code of our outreach center. I have learned throughout this process also that pastoral care and social justice education mutually inform one another and simultaneously operate at both interpersonal and structural levels. To myopically focus on one level is to misunderstand the scope of Christian ethics and fail to see the cosmic vision of God's transformative vision.

### **Implications and Future Actions**

One of the questions of my research project is if it would be beneficial to duplicate the curricular process, modified perhaps as suggested earlier to include more time and address racial

identity, for other groups in my congregation. I think continued opportunities for social justice education is critical for individual, interpersonal and theological growth and awareness as disciples of Jesus Christ. Thoughtful action, together with critical reflection can yield deeper relational and transformative engagement and encourage liberative behavior. I wonder if offering such classes on a continual basis in small covenant groups that are designed for honest sharing and discussion should be strongly encouraged for all volunteers in our outreach ministries.<sup>50</sup>

I recognize that not everyone in my congregation, or any congregation, will be willing to engage in genuine dialogue about issues of privilege and power and its rippling effects. There are a variety of reasons that people want to volunteer. Some want to serve in ministries of outreach because of the perceived personal beneficial feeling they have in helping others. Some volunteer out of an ethical or theological obligation. Some volunteer because they have gifts of efficiently organizing systems of distribution. A pastoral leader cannot change motivations and intentions, as those are varied, dynamic, and many times unconscious to the volunteer.

However, a pastoral leader can make space for deeper conversation and exploration of biblical and social issues that can influence volunteers in their transformation of self and systems. While such training and education cannot prevent harmful, patronizing postures of giving and receiving, the training can stimulate critical reflection that might impact thoughtful action. It may take much longer than six weeks as the process of transformation is the life-long task of a Christian.

The educational classes and covenant groups can help the next person who hears or makes a value judgment about neighbors who come to Community Crossroads. One option can

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<sup>50</sup> Currently, volunteers who work in our food ministries are required by our local food bank to complete a food handler's license and a civil rights training. Do we add a third training in theological and social justice education?

be to confirm the judgment, either by explicitly condoning it or by keeping silence, which presumes agreement. Another option is to invite conversation that includes questions of challenging master narratives about church benevolence or philanthropy. Does the church only give to receivers who are “deserving” and “worthy,” those who make financial decisions that are agreeable to the volunteers? Is it necessary for congregations to name that their benevolence is a “hand up” and not a “hand out,” that the church only “helps those who help themselves?” Is the path to self-sufficiency a requirement for mercy? Or, can the gospel open up new paths of consideration? Jesus did not, thank God, base grace on worthiness. It seems quite obvious that there is a place for mercy in the church of Jesus Christ, no strings attached.

Thus, the volunteer comments about the deserving-ness of neighbors, as innocuous as they may seem, as familiar as they sound, steeped deep in our notions of capitalism and meritocracy, continue oppression. Those uncritical and unreflective comments and correlated behaviors disallow neighbors to appear fully in the divine image within them. Those comments stunt generative growth in mutuality and solidarity as Christians are called to “love one’s neighbor as oneself.” Therefore, the pastoral leader connects profound biblical and theological claims and convictions to bear upon critical issues of social justice to work towards transformation as the telos of Christian discipleship.

Will people continue to make disparaging comments and value judgments as to which people in need are deserving or worthy? Yes, and even if those people are well-intentioned faithful members of a church community. As Jesus affirms, we will always have the poor with us, and the church of Jesus Christ will continue to respond to material and human needs with compassion, mercy, and justice.

Yes, the poor will always be with us, but it is when Christians engage with those who have been disadvantaged from privilege and power in ways that are liberating and life-affirming that will lead to flourishing of our full and shared humanity. This requires a firm level for people to appear, and it also requires the “doing” of justice<sup>51</sup> through working in partnership for coalitional change in ministries and systems. The full implication of *imago Dei* is an ethical obligation to engage in acts of mutuality and solidarity that attend to mercy and reach beyond to transformative justice. The goal, then, of the Christian church is to embody in thoughts and actions liberative practices that make space for everyone to appear in the fullest way possible, especially those most marginalized, and that this appearing happens in relational engagement and with systemic implications.

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<sup>51</sup> Micah 6.6-8

## **Appendix A: One-On-One Interviews with Volunteers (Pre Intervention)**

1. I'm curious: what leads to you participating in this ministry (First HAND sack lunch program)?
2. Currently, how do you understand your role in this ministry?
3. What hopes do you have for this ministry?
4. The acronym for our name, First HAND, stands for hospitality, advocacy, nurture and dignity. How do these aspirational goals align with your understanding of what the church ought to be aspiring to in terms of outreach?
5. In what ways does the sack lunch program reflect any of those aspirational goals?
6. I'm curious: what leads you as a Christian to be a part of this outreach? In other words, how does your decision to participate arise from your faith experience?
7. Can you think of any biblical stories or characters or passages that shape your understanding of service and outreach to others?
8. Describe a specific example of how this ministry has impacted your life, your faith.
9. This project, as you know from the letter, concentrates on issues of race and class in ministries of outreach. Unequal opportunities are inherent in ministries of material need. I wonder what leads you to want to deepen your awareness on these particular issues and the ways in which they bear upon this ministry?
10. I also wonder how your interactions with neighbors have led you to reflect on how your life may be different than some of our neighbors, particularly in terms of access to economic opportunities?
11. I wonder if there have been occasions in which you have been prompted to consider how race shapes our experiences and identities as you have participated in this ministry.
12. How does your experience as a Christian cause you to think about the ways race and class impact our ministry and our aspirational goals? In other words, I wonder how you experience these issues as relevant to our ministry, especially from a faith perspective?
13. I am wondering if you have participated in any previous process of reflecting explicitly on race and class? If so, what was it like?
14. Finally, since you have agreed to participate in this project, I wonder what would you like to learn, explore, and discover in our curricular time together? What are your hopes for your participation personally? How would you know if you achieved those hopes?



## **Appendix B: Focus Group Questions for Neighbors (Pre-Intervention)**

1. I'm curious as to what led you to come to the sack lunch ministry at Community Crossroads.
2. I wonder what led you to participate in this focus group.
3. From your experience, what aspects of the ministry work well for you?
4. From your experience, what aspects of the ministry have room for improvement?
5. The acronym for our name, First HAND, stands for hospitality, advocacy, nurture and dignity. Let's take one word at a time and define it and then let you reflect on each word and how you see it reflected (or not) in the sack lunch ministry.
6. This ministry is run by volunteers. Is there a time of training that could be beneficial for the volunteers that may impact your own experience here?
7. What information would be helpful for the volunteers to know about your experience (keeping your anonymity)?
8. Do you have any other comments for our time together?

**Appendix C: Scope and Sequence of Six Week Curricular Process**

	<b>WEEK 1</b>	<b>WEEK 2</b>	<b>WEEK 3</b>	<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>WEEK 5</b>	<b>WEEK 6</b>
<b>Biblical Theme</b>	<i>Imago Dei</i> and Sin  (as negation of  <i>imago Dei</i> , both  personally and  structurally)	Moving towards  Empathy through  Jesus' pattern of  See, Compassion,  Action	Neighbor Love  (Working For)	Community  (Working With)	Advocacy (Being  For) and the  American Dream	Intersectionality  and Solidarity  (Being With) and  Transformation
<b>Scripture</b>	Genesis 1.27	Matthew 14.14;  Luke 7.13-14; Luke  10.33-34; Luke  15.20	Matthew 28.34-  40; Leviticus  19.18; Luke  10.25-37	Acts 2.43-47	Proverbs 31.8-10	Jeremiah 29:1-  14; John 1.1-14
<b>Participatory Exercise</b>	Where I'm From  exercise	Distribution of  Wealth activity  and video	Unpacking the  Invisible  Knapsack	Forms of Capital  Exercise	Privilege Walk	Cycles of  Socialization,  Liberation,  Action  Continuum

## **Appendix D: Participant Covenant for Volunteer Participants and Neighbor Focus Group**

- We agree to be on time in order to respect others.
- We agree to keep things said in group confidential.
- We agree to attend group as faithfully as possible making it a priority.
- We agree to participate in group, while being careful not to dominate.
- We agree to treat one another with respect at all times, especially in times of disagreement or conflict.

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Signed

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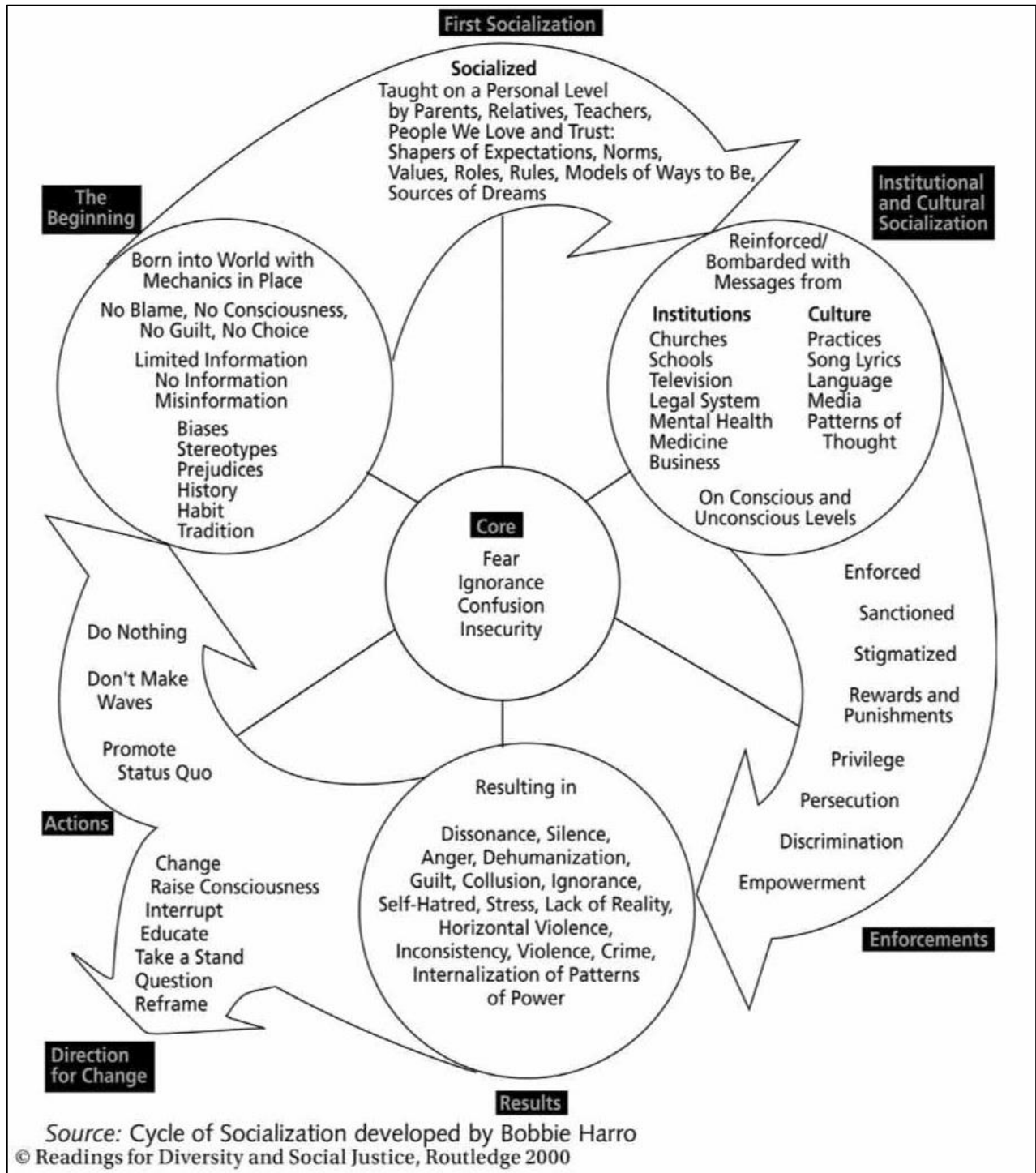
Date

## Appendix E: One-On-One Interviews with Volunteers (Post Intervention)

1. Now that we have completed our sessions with this project, I wonder how the journey has shaped the way you imagine yourself as a Christian participating in this outreach ministry?
2. The first time we met for this project we talked about biblical characters or stories that shape your understanding of outreach and your particular call to participate in this ministry. After our conversations together, I wonder if you would change or add any biblical ideas and images that influence your call?
3. Since we spent a lot of our time together reflecting on race and class, I wonder if you now understand *yourself* differently, especially around issues of racial and economic identity?
4. Looking at Harro's "Action Continuum" that was introduced in our curricular time together, I am curious to know where you imagined yourself along the continuum when we first started this project and also where you might identify yourself now at the end of the project? I will share an image of it again in our conversation now.
5. Thinking about direct action, I wonder if our conversations have affected how you relate to neighbors now in regard to race and class? If so, how? What do you suppose helped to foster those changes?
6. I want to return to a question that we discussed when we first met for this project. How does your experience as a Christian cause you to think about the ways race and class impact our ministry and our aspirational goals (hospitality, advocacy, nurture and dignity)? In other words, I wonder if anything has changed after our conversations in the way you experience these issues as relevant to our ministry, especially from a faith perspective?
7. I am curious about how these conversations we have had may be helpful in our outreach ministries. In your experience, in what ways do you think our conversations and experience about race and class and their intersections shape the ways in which we think about and engage in ministries of outreach? In what ways are such conversations constructive for people of faith?

## Appendix F: Cycle of Socialization

Bobbie Harro, "The Cycle of Socialization" in Readings for Diversity and Social Justice, 3rd ed. by M. Adams, W.J. Blumenfeld, C. Castaneda, H.W. Hacksman, M.L. Peters and X. Zuniga, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2013) 45-51.





## **Appendix H: Focus Group Questions for Neighbors (Post Intervention)**

1. For the past six weeks, our volunteers in the sack lunch ministry have talked about how they see themselves and how they interact with others. We have related those issues to our acronym, First HAND which stands for hospitality, advocacy, nurture, and dignity. Let me review the definition we talked about last time; in fact, I have written them down for us. How do you think we are doing in terms of communicating each of those goals in our sack lunch ministry?
2. How does your interaction with volunteers impact your experience of this ministry?
3. I'm curious if and in what ways this sack lunch ministry has affected your life?
4. To return to a previous question in our first focus group, what information would be helpful for the volunteers to know about your experience with the food pantry ministry (keeping your anonymity)?
5. What are your hopes for your experience at the sack lunch ministry?
6. Do you have any other comments for our time together?

## Appendix I: Where I'm From Poem and Template

[http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/professional\\_development/workshops/writing/george\\_ella\\_lyon.pdf](http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/professional_development/workshops/writing/george_ella_lyon.pdf)

Original Poem:

### **Where I'm From**

**By George Ella Lyon**

I am from clothespins, from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride. I am from the dirt under the back porch. (Black, glistening, it tasted like beets.)

I am from the forsythia bush the Dutch elm whose long-gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses, from Imogene and Alafair.

I'm from the know-it-alls and the pass-it-ons, from Perk up! and Pipe down!

I'm from He restoreth my soul with a cottonball lamb and ten verses I can say myself. I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch, fried corn and strong coffee.

From the finger my grandfather lost to the auger, the eye my father shut to keep his sight. Under my bed was a dress box spilling old pictures, a sift of lost faces to drift beneath my dreams. I am from those moments— snapped before I budded -Icaf-fall from the family tree.

Model Poem:

### **Where I'm From**

**By Ms. Vaca**

I am from bookshelves, from vinegar and green detergent.

I am from the dog hair in every corner (Yellow, abundant, the vacuum could never get it all.) I am from azaleas the magnolia tree whose leaves crunched under my feet like snow every fall.

I'm from puzzles and sunburns, from Dorothy Ann and Mary Christine Catherine

I'm from reading and road trips

From "Please watch your brother\*" and

"Don't let your brother hit you!" I'm from Easter sunrises and Iowa churches at Christmas

I'm from Alexandria and the Rileys,

Sterzing's potato chips and sponge candy

From my Air Force dad's refusal to go to

Vietnam, from my mom's leaving home at 17.

On a low shelf in my new house is a stack of photo albums, carefully curated by my faraway father, chronicling my childhood. I am from these pages, yellowed but firm, holding on to me across the country.



## Where I'm Am From Poem Template

Use this template to draft your Poem, and then write a final draft to share on blank paper.

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (specific ordinary item)

From (product name) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (product name)

I am from the \_\_\_\_\_ (home description)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(adjective) (adjective) (sensory detail)

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (plant, flower, natural item),

\_\_\_\_\_  
(description of above item).

I'm from \_\_\_\_\_ (family tradition) and \_\_\_\_\_ (family trait),

From \_\_\_\_\_ (name of family member) and \_\_\_\_\_ (another family name)

I'm from the \_\_\_\_\_ (description of family tendency) and \_\_\_\_\_ (another one)

From \_\_\_\_\_ (something you were told as a child) and \_\_\_\_\_ (another).

I'm from \_\_\_\_\_ (representation of religion or lack of), (further description)

I'm from \_\_\_\_\_ (place of birth and family ancestry)

\_\_\_\_\_ (a food item that represents your family) and \_\_\_\_\_ (another one)

From the \_\_\_\_\_ (specific family story about a specific person and detail)

## Appendix J: Wealth Inequality In America Transcript

Source: LYBIO.net

<https://lybio.net/wealth-inequality-in-america/nonprofits-activism/>

There is a chart I saw recently that I can't get out of my head. A Harvard business professor and economist asked more than 5,000 Americans how they thought wealth was distributed in the United States. This is what they said they thought it was. Dividing the country into five rough groups of the top, bottom and middle three 20% groups, they asked people how they thought the wealth in this country was divided. Then he asked them, what they thought was the ideal distribution, and 92%, that's at least nine out of 10 of them said it should be more like this.

In other words, more equitable than they think it is. Now, that fact is telling admittedly the notion that most Americans know that the system is already skewed unfairly, but what's most interesting to me is the reality compared to our perception. The ideal is as far removed from our perception of reality as the actual distribution is from what we think exists in this country. So ignore the ideal for a moment. Here is what we think it is again. And here is the actual distribution, shockingly skewed, not only to the bottom 20% and the next 20%, the bottom 40% of Americans barely have any of the wealth.

I mean, it's hard to even see them on the chart, but the top 1% has more of the country's wealth than nine out of ten Americans believe the entire top 20% should have, mind-blowing.

But let's look at it another way, because I find this chart kind of difficult to wrap my head around. Instead, let's reduce the 311 million Americans to just to a representative of 100 people, make it simple, here they are. Teachers, coaches, firefighters, construction workers, engineers, doctors, lawyers, some investment bankers, a CEO, maybe a celebrity or two.

Now, let's line them up according to their wealth, poorest people on the left, wealthiest on the right, just a steady row of folks based on their net worth. We'll color code them like we did before, based on which 20% quintile they fall into.

Now, let's reduce the total wealth of the United States, which was roughly \$54 trillion in 2009 to this symbolic pile of cash, and let's distribute it among our 100 Americans. Well, here is socialism, all the wealth of the country distributed equally. We all know that won't work, we need to encourage people to work, and work hard to achieve that good old American dream and keep our country moving forward.

So here is that ideal we asked everyone about, something like this curve, this isn't too bad, we've got some incentive as the wealthiest folks are now about 10 to 20 times better off than the poorest Americans. But hey, even the poor folks aren't actually poor, since the poverty line stayed almost entirely off the chart; we have a super healthy middle class with a smooth transition into wealth. And yes, Republicans and Democrats alike chose this curve. Nine out of ten people, 92% said this was a nice ideal distribution of America's wealth. But let's move on, this is what people think America's wealth distribution actually looks like, not as equitable clearly.

But for me, even this still looks pretty great. Yes, the poorest 20% to 30% are starting to suffer quite a

lot compared to the ideal, and the middle class is certainly struggling more than they were; while the rich and wealthy are making roughly 100 times that of the poorest Americans, and about 10 times that of the still healthy middle class. Sadly, this isn't even close to the reality. Here is the actual distribution of wealth in America.

The poorest Americans don't even register, they are down to pocket change, and the middle class is barely distinguishable from the poor. In fact, even the rich between the top 10 and 20 percentile are worse off, only the top 10 are better off, and how much better off, so much better off that the top 2% to 5% are actually off the chart at this scale, and the top 1%, this guy, well his stack of money stretches 10 times higher than we can show. Here is his stack of cash restacked all by itself, this is the top 1% we've been hearing so much about. So much green in his pockets that I have to give him a whole new column of his own, because he won't fit on my chart.

1% of America has 40% of all the nation's wealth, the bottom 80%, eight out of every ten people, or 80 out of these 100, only has 7% between them, and this has only gotten worse in the last 20 to 30 years, while the richest 1% take home almost a quarter of the national income today. In 1976, they took home only 9%, meaning their share of income has nearly tripled in the last 30 years. The top 1% own half the country's, stocks, bonds and mutual funds. The bottom 50% of Americans own only half a percent of these investments, which means they aren't investing, they are just scraping by.

I'm sure many of these wealthy people have worked very hard for their money, but do you really believe that the CEO is working 380 times harder than his average employee? Not as low as paid employee, not the janitor, but the average earner in his company. The average worker needs to work more than a month to earn what the CEO makes in one hour.

We certainly don't have to go all the way to socialism to find something that is fair for hardworking Americans. We don't even have to achieve what most of us consider might be ideal, all we need to do is wake up and realize that the reality in this country is not at all what we think it is.

# White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

by Peggy McIntosh

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>

## DAILY EFFECTS OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

I decided to try to work on myself at least by identifying some of the daily effects of white privilege in my life. I have chosen those conditions that I think in my case attach somewhat more to skin-color privilege than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographic location, though of course all these other factors are intricately intertwined. As far as I can tell, my African American coworkers, friends, and acquaintances with whom I come into daily or frequent contact in this particular time, place and time of work cannot count on most of these conditions.

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.
3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
7. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
9. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
10. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
11. I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which s/he is the only member of his/her race.
12. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
13. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
14. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
15. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
16. I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their race.
17. I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my color.
18. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.
19. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
22. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's

Peggy McIntosh is associate director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. This essay is excerpted from Working Paper 189. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (1988), by Peggy McIntosh; available for \$4.00 from the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA, 02181. The working paper contains a longer list of privileges. This excerpted essay is reprinted from the Winter 1990 issue of Independent School.

majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.

23. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.

24. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge", I will be facing a person of my race.

25. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.

26. I can easily buy posters, post-cards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race.

27. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared.

28. I can be pretty sure that an argument with a colleague of another race is more likely to jeopardize her/his chances for advancement than to jeopardize mine.

29. I can be pretty sure that if I argue for the promotion of a person of another race, or a program centering on race, this is not likely to cost me heavily within my present setting, even if my colleagues disagree with me.

30. If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my race will lend me more credibility for either position than a person of color will have.

31. I can choose to ignore developments in minority writing and minority activist programs, or disparage them, or learn from them, but in any case, I can find ways to be more or less protected from negative consequences of any of these choices.

32. My culture gives me little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of people of other races.

33. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.

34. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.

35. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.

36. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had racial overtones.

37. I can be pretty sure of finding people who would be willing to talk with me and advise me about my next steps, professionally.

38. I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.

39. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.

40. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.

41. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.

42. I can arrange my activities so that I will never have to experience feelings of rejection owing to my race.

43. If I have low credibility as a leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.

44. I can easily find academic courses and institutions which give attention only to people of my race.

45. I can expect figurative language and imagery in all of the arts to testify to experiences of my race.

46. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.

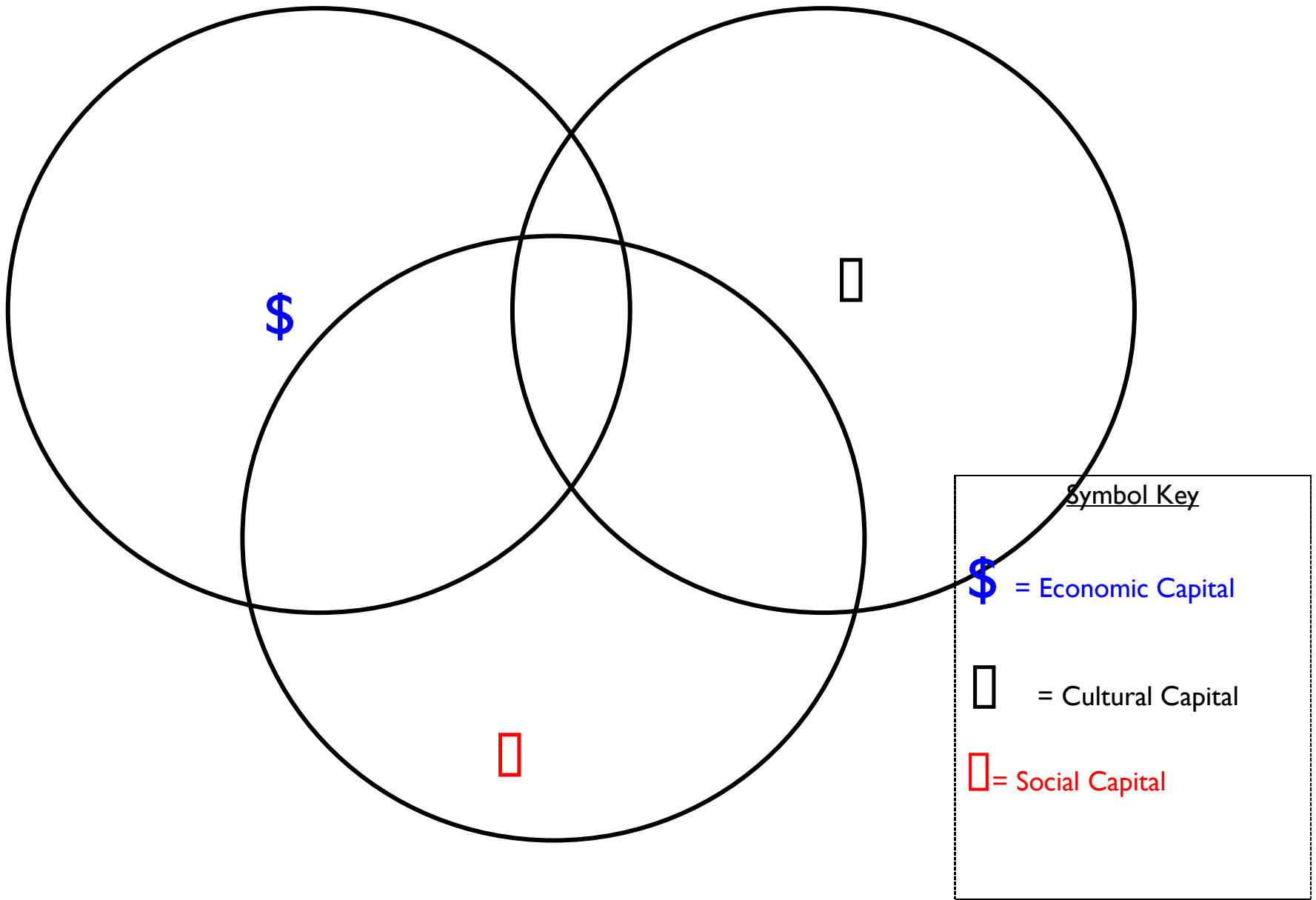
47. I can travel alone or with my spouse without expecting embarrassment or hostility in those who deal with us.

48. I have no difficulty finding neighborhoods where people approve of our household.

49. My children are given texts and classes which implicitly support our kind of family unit and do not turn them against my choice of domestic partnership.

50. I will feel welcomed and "normal" in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social.

**Appendix L: Forms of Capital Exercise**



Forms of Capital, Cody J. Sanders, Ph.D. 2018, used with permission

“The social world is accumulated history,” writes French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. Understanding the operations of “capital” in all of its forms (not just economic) enhances our understanding of how the social world functions, he argues.

Bourdieu explains capital as “a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures...underlying the immanent regularities of the social world.” Capital is what makes the “games of society...something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle.” He theorizes three different forms of capital and, in some cases, sub-types as well. They are:

**Economic Capital:** This is any capital that is “immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights.”

**Cultural Capital:** “Convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications.” Three forms:

(1) *Embodied* in long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body, often in the form of time-intensive projects of self-improvement (e.g. formal education). Some forms can be acquired unconsciously without any deliberation inculcation. Cannot be passed on to others, but dies with its bearer. It functions symbolically as capital and is thus “unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence.” Accumulation of the symbolic cultural capital, however, is expedited exponentially if one’s family is endowed with strong cultural capital. Bourdieu calls cultural capital “the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital.

(2) *Objectified* in the form of cultural goods (books, instruments, art collections, etc.). The ownership of objectified capital itself can be transmitted. What cannot be transmitted is the embodied capital that provides one a means of “consuming” or appropriating the objectified capital (e.g. knowing how to use a machine, ways of understanding art, ability to

interpret a text, etc.). Here, Bourdieu points to “the performative magic of the power of instituting, the power to show forth and secure belief or, in a word, to impose recognition.”

(3) *Institutionalized* in the case of educational qualifications that certify a certain form of cultural competence. However, “the investments made (in time and effort) may turn out to be less profitable than was anticipated when they were made (there having been a *de facto* change in the conversion rate between academic capital and economic capital).”

**Social Capital:** “Made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized.” Social capital is “linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group.” Bourdieu says, “The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected.”

Bourdieu argues that “economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital and that these transformed, disguised forms of economic capital, never entirely reducible to that definition, produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal (not least from their possessors) the fact that economic capital is at their root, in other words – but only in the last analysis – at the root of their effects...Thus the more the official transmission of capital is prevented or hindered, the more the effects of the clandestine circulation of capital in the form of cultural capital become determinant in the reproduction of the social structure.”

Where Bourdieu leaves wanting is in considering the ways that race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, and various other forms of the embodiment of human difference intersect with the forms of capital and the ways they are transmitted and position us in relation to one another in society.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.) Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education (New York, Greenwood), 241-258

## Appendix M: The “Value” of Human Difference (or Capital Marketplace) by Cody Sanders

- Got a Bachelor’s degree, take one piece of **cultural capital**:
- Do you have confidence that you could go anywhere in the country and name the school(s) that you attended and those names would be recognized outside of the region in which they are located? If so, take one piece of **social capital**.
- Has a family member, family friend, or other connection ever served as a conduit through which you gained an introduction to another person that led to an interview or a possible job opportunity? (**Social Capital** – minimum wage job, 1 piece; blue-collar job, 2 pieces; white-collar, 3 pieces)
- If you’ve ever lived in what might be considered a “select neighborhood,” take one piece of **social capital**.
- If you’ve ever belonged to what might be considered an “exclusive club,” (country, Greek) take a piece of **social capital**.
- If you’ve inherited property from a family member, take 3 pieces **economic capital**.
- If you frequently eat out at restaurants, take one **economic capital** for each time a week (on average) that you do.
- If you’ve inherited a commercial enterprise from a family member, take 2 pieces **economic capital**.
- If you’ve inherited money from a family member, take 1 piece of **economic capital**.
- If you’ve belonged to a neighborhood watch (informally or formally), take 1 piece of **social capital** (this is a network you can trust and in which you experience reciprocity).
- Grew up in a house with a subscription to the local newspaper take 1 **cultural capital**. If it was the New York Times (and you didn’t live in New York), take 2 pieces of **cultural capital**.
- Grew up in a family with season tickets to the opera, symphony, ballet, or membership at an art museum – whether or not these tickets were for you specifically. Or if you have these tickets or memberships now. (take 1 **cultural capital** for each institution/organization applicable)
- If you’ve ever received a substantial loan from a family member for the purchase of something major like a first home or car, take 2 pieces of **economic capital**.
- If you have been incarcerated, take away one **economic capital** for each year you served.
- If English is your first language, take 1 piece of **social capital**.
- If you had a family member who cosigned a lease with you, take 1 piece of **economic capital**.
- If you learned from your parents how to “dress for success” and that form of dress accorded with the expectations you later experienced in your workplace, take 1 piece of **social capital**.
- If either of your parents have a college degree, take 1 piece of **social capital** for each parent.
- If you’ve never had to try to alter your mannerisms or accent or appearance from those which you developed growing up, take 1 piece of **social capital**. If you have altered your mannerisms or accent or appearance, give up 1 piece of **social capital**.



- If you had more than 50 books in your household growing up, add 1 piece of **cultural capital**. If not, put give up 1 piece.
- If the majority of your friends, neighbors, and coworkers throughout life celebrate the same religious and cultural holidays that you do, take 1 piece of **social capital** and 1 piece of **cultural capital**, if not, give 1 of each piece back.
- If you could always go to the doctor for a minor medical concern without fear of financial hardship, add 1 piece of **economic capital**. If you've ever had to reserve seeing the doctor for real emergencies only, take away 1 piece of **economic capital**.
- If for school, you had to take out loan, give away two **economic capital**.
- If a connection has ever given you advantage for membership in a group or privilege for medical access, take one **cultural capital**.
- If you had to work to put yourself through school take away one **economic capital**.
- If your gender/race/sexual orientation or identity, religious tradition, ethnic tradition/physical or mental ability has kept you from inclusion in social circles at work that could advance your career, give up two pieces of **Social Capital**.
- If you wouldn't hesitate to call the police if there was some trouble, add 2 piece of **social capital**. If you might hesitate for your own safety or the safety of your family, give up 2 piece of **social capital**.
- If you can always count on a friend or relative to take you to the doctor or pick you up from a procedure, add 1 piece of social capital. If you would struggle to locate a ride, take away 1 piece of **social capital**.
- If you believe you've ever been steered away from the home you wanted to rent or to buy because of your race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality, give up 2 pieces of **social capital** and 2 pieces of **economic capital**.
- The curriculum I studied in my elementary school consistently validated or affirmed the cultures and practices with which I most identified or that I practiced at home. Take 2 pieces of **cultural capital**.
- If you've never hesitated to seek medical attention because of concerns relating to citizenship status, sexuality, religious affiliation, being able to pay for the appointment, or any other concern. If so, take 2 pieces of **social capital**. If not, give up 2 pieces of **social capital**.
- If you have a United States passport. If so, take 1 piece of **cultural** and 1 piece of **social capital**.
- If you have surprised people in your academic pursuits because of your gender, race, ability status, family background, and/or perceived cognitive ability, give up 2 pieces of **social capital**.
- If you see your religious, ethnic, or national identities represented positively in the media you consume, take 1 piece of **social capital**. If not, give up 1 piece of **social capital**.
- If you were able to take an unpaid internship during college or graduate school because your family supported you? Take 1 **economic capital**, 1 **social capital**, and 1 **cultural capital**. If not, give up one of each.
- If you've never suspected that you have been denied an opportunity, such as a job, because of you religion, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability status, social class, documentation status, and/or race. If so, take 2 **social capital**. If not, give up 2 **social capital**.
- If your physical presentation (including body, clothing, and/or mannerisms) generally falls within the bounds of societal expectations. Take 1 **social capital**. Give up 1 **social capital**.

- If you've never been uncomfortable disclosing my sexuality, gender, religion, ability status, documentation status, mental health, and/or socioeconomic status. If so, add 2 pieces of **social capital**. If not, give up 2 pieces of **social capital**.
- If you feel positively connected to your culture through things like food, art, and music. Add 2 pieces of **cultural capital**. If not, give up 2 pieces of **cultural capital**.
- If you drive a luxury car, take one piece of **cultural capital**.
- If you own any designer clothes, shoes, accessories, take one piece of **cultural capital**.
- If you regularly give to philanthropic causes, take one economic capital.
- If you have hired help of any kind in your home, take one for each work of **economic capital**.
- If you travel at least once a year on a vacation, take one **economic capital**. Take two if it is out of the country and take 3 if it is more than 10 days a year.

## **Appendix N: Privilege Walk**

Privilege Walk Stemmed from Peggy McIntosh's concept of White Privilege  
<https://www.eiu.edu/eiu1111/Privilege%20Walk%20Exercise-%20Transfer%20Leadership%20Institute-%20Week%204.pdf>

Instructions: Everyone will stand in a horizontal line in the middle of the room. All participants will have their eyes closed until the end of the exercise. As the facilitator reads a statement or question, the participant will step forward or step back if it applies to them. If anyone feels too uncomfortable to take a step, they have the option to remain still.

Facilitator should give participants a heads up about the intensity of the exercise that could provoke certain emotions. Ensure them that room is a safe space (mentally and emotionally) for conversations to develop at the end of the activity.

Objective: Raise awareness of various forms of privilege; understand the intersectionality of race, socioeconomic class, gender and other demographic variables that shape individuals; appreciate the diversity of individual backgrounds; and team-building

Examples to start with:

- If you are right-handed, take one step forward
- If your sex or race is widely represented in the U.S. Congress, take one step forward.
- If you have difficulty finding hair products, make-up for your skin complexion, or a hairstylist/barber in your current community, take one step back.

### **STEPPING FORWARD**

1. If one or both of your parents graduated from college, take one step forward.
2. If you ever attended a private school or a summer camps growing up, take one step forward.
3. If you were told by your parents that you were beautiful, smart, or successful, take one step forward.
4. If you knew since you were a child that it was expected of you to go to college, take one step forward.
5. If you have immediate family members who are doctors, lawyers, or work in any degree-required profession, take one step forward.
6. If you studied the history and culture of your ethnic ancestors in elementary and secondary school, take one step forward.
7. If you grew up with people of color or working class people who were servants, maids, gardeners, or babysitters in your home, take one step forward.
8. If you or your family never had to move due to financial inabilities, take one step forward.
9. If you almost always see members of your race, sexual orientation, religion, and class widely represented on television, in the newspaper, and the media in a POSITIVE manner, take one step forward.
10. If you were to walk into a business and asked to speak to the person "in charge" you will see a person of your race, take one step forward.
11. If school and work is not in session during the major (religious) holidays or other cultural events that you celebrate, take one step forward.
12. If you feel that people do not interpret your personal opinions as a representation of your entire race, take one step forward.

13. If you almost always feel comfortable with people knowing your sexual orientation, take one step forward.
14. If you feel certain that you will not be followed, harassed, or watched under close surveillance while shopping, take one step forward.
15. If walking alone at night, you never have to worry about anyone feeling threatened because of your presence, take one step forward.

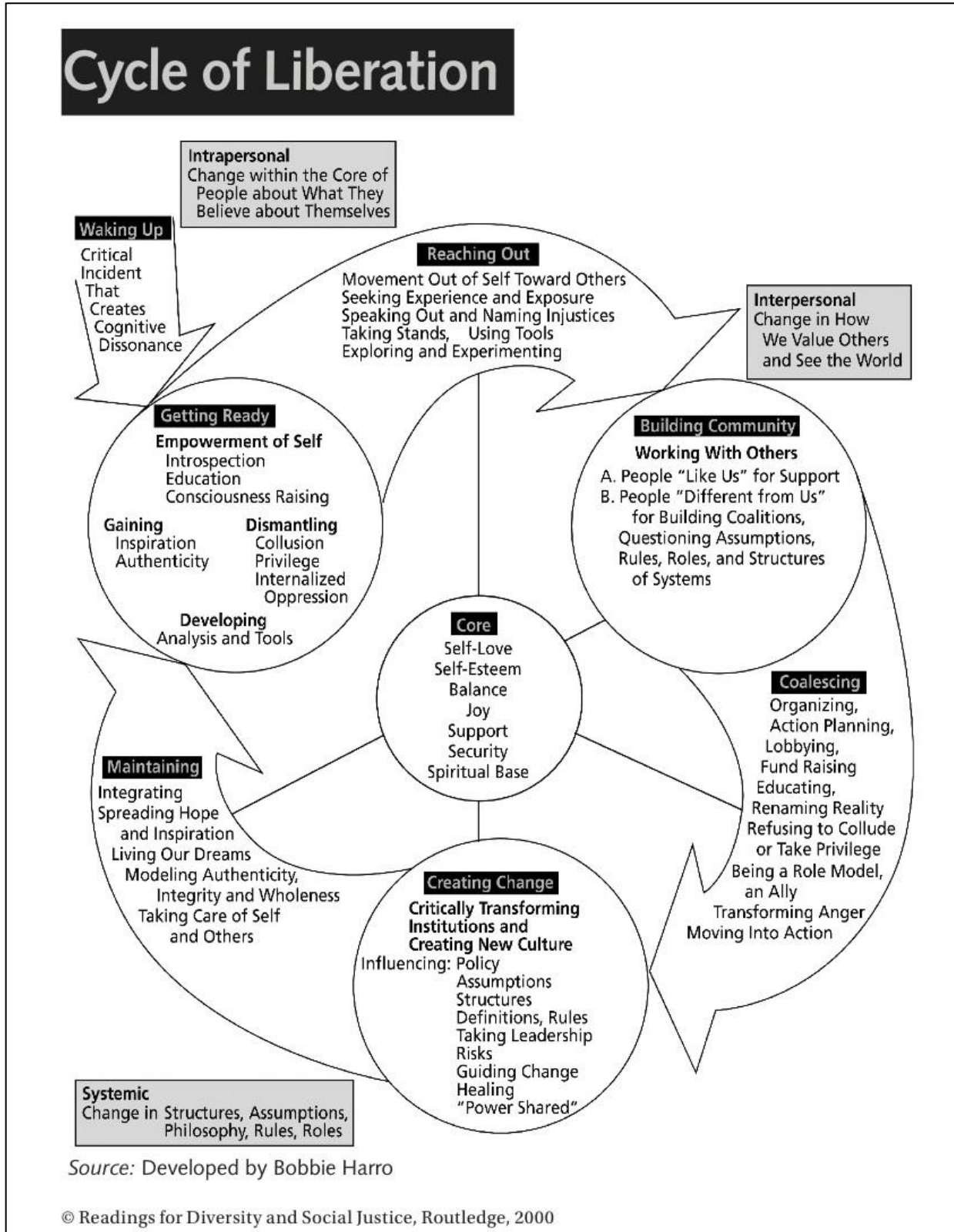
#### STEPPING BACK:

16. If you are going to be the first person in your immediate family to graduate from college, take one step back.
17. If you started school speaking a language other than English, take one step back.
18. If you have ever been the only person of your race/ethnicity in a classroom or place of work, take one step back.
19. If you grew up in an economically-disadvantaged or single-parent home, take one step back.
20. If you were ever discouraged from any personal goal or dream because of your race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, or physical/learning disability, take one step back.
21. If you have ever had to sacrifice personal interests for the responsibility of others or other circumstances, take one step back.
22. If you have ever been called names regarding your race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, or physical/learning disability and felt uncomfortable, take one step back.
23. If you or someone you know has ever been mistrusted or accused of lying, stealing, or cheating without sufficient evidence, take one step back.
24. If you were ashamed or embarrassed of your clothes, house, or car and wished to change it to avoid being judged or teased, take one step back.
25. If you have ever been hesitant to speak to avoid being ridiculed because of your accent or speech impediment, take one step back.
26. If you have been mistreated or served less fairly in a place of business because of your race or ethnicity, take one step back.
27. If you never worry about crime, drugs, rape, or any other violence threats in your neighborhood, take one step forward.
28. If you have ever skipped a meal or went away from a meal hungry because there was not enough money to buy food, take one back.
29. If anyone in your immediate family has ever served time in a state or federal penitentiary, take one step back.
30. If anyone in your immediate family has ever been addicted to drugs or alcohol, take one step back.

#### Reflection questions:

- What was the purpose of this exercise?
- What did you learn from it?
- What happened during the exercise?
- Were you surprised by anything?
- How did it feel to be in the group that took a step forward or a step back?
- How did it feel to be in the front or back of the room?
- Was there a time when you wanted to be a part of the group moving forward?
- What might we draw from this exercise that can help us in our everyday lives?
- How can you apply what you have learned here to the work you will do as a leader?

**Appendix O: Cycle of Liberation**



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