

**Solving For Pattern: A Practice-Based Approach to
Social and Ecological Justice Learning and Action**

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Abstract

This research contributes to the ongoing discussion of how to address social and ecological justice as interconnected objectives in the promotion of learning and action. The design and development of the research project has been guided by two assertions: one, that an integrated approach to social and ecological justice is needed to respond to crises facing our world; and two, the development of learning and action must be grounded in experiential knowledge gained through working towards solutions to social and ecological problems as a daily practice.

Through a qualitative research process, semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirteen individuals working in community-based organizations that focus on child and youth safety, nutrition, and education; environmental and outdoor education; settlement experiences and the needs of new Canadians; inclusion of individuals with special needs; healthcare and safety of those living with poverty and addictions; and challenging racism, homo/transphobia, and colonialism. The research study was guided by the following question: *In what ways can experience-based knowledge of working towards social and ecological justice inform theorizing on integrated social and ecological justice learning and action?*

A critical approach to constructivist grounded theory was used in the gathering, analysis, and discussion of research data. The research process involved open-ended interviews; verbatim transcription; memoing; primary, secondary, and tertiary coding with NVivo software; and, testing for thematic saturation. Key questions discussed in the semi-structured interviews included: What role does learning and action toward social and/or ecological justice play in your work within the community? What do you see as the problem (or problems) giving rise to the conditions you are working to improve in your daily practice? What kinds of strategies do you use to achieve your goals of learning and action? And, what obstacles do you face as you seek to address problems you observe in the community?

The analysis and discussion of research data considered links between foundational ideas from multiple disciplines and insights shared by participants about their daily practice. The analysis chapter presents a detailed account of participants' stories that invites readers to draw their own connections between the reviewed theory and participants' insights. The discussion chapter centres on three themes that highlight the intersections between participants' insights and key ideas drawn from the theory. The three themes—the normalization of dominance, resistance masquerading as neutrality, and witnessing as a foundation for learning and action—are presented as learning foundations that can support learners in critically examining multiple linked forms of oppression and ecological degradation. These foundational learnings are proposed as a basis for guiding learners in the process of meaningfully engaging a diverse range of social and ecological justice issues. The research considers how learning might contribute to the development of a capacity to embrace varied learning objectives that are associated with social and ecological justice. The underlying goal of this work is to promote approaches to social and ecological justice that address both the individual factors relevant to a particular issue and the broader patterns that impact the issue. The vision for such an approach is to support unity among those individuals and organizations working toward social and ecological justice objectives, and to imagine solutions that in Wendell Berry's (2005) words “solve for pattern” (p. 33).

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Chapter One: Introduction

The goal of advancing an integrated approach to social and ecological justice has been an anchor and guide for my thought and study over the past decade. When I was first introduced to this idea in the context of an educational mandate, I was inspired by its potential for responding to the pressing problems we collectively face and for designing education that aims to promote solutions toward "a better state of things in the world" (Greene, 1995). From the time I first began giving careful thought to the notion of social and ecological justice, I have been interested in engaging it as a framework for understanding the human experience, and examining a diverse range of problems in ways that may reveal meaningful solutions (Berry, 2005; Greenwood, 2008). At its core, this research is about seeking clarity and coherence regarding the interrelationships between social and ecological justice as a foundation for learning and action. The vision for the study is to contribute to a growing cross-disciplinary dialogue on the need for an integrated analytical approach to social and ecological justice as a vehicle to respond to current and future crises facing the world (Furman & Greenwood [formerly Gruenewald], 2004; Kahn, 2010).

This vision is reflected in Wendell Berry's (2005) conceptualization of "solving for patterns:" namely, an approach that examines the interconnections or patterns among problems and designs solutions to address both the part and the whole (p. 33). Framing his conceptualization in a farming context, Berry (2005) advocates for "a reciprocating connection in the pattern of the farm that is biological, not industrial, and that involves solutions to problems of fertility, soil husbandry, economics, sanitation—the whole complex of problems whose proper solutions add up to *health*: the health of the soil, of plants and animals, of farm and farmer, of farm family and farm community, all involved in the same interested, interlocking pattern – or pattern of patterns" (p. 33). From this understanding, Berry argues that "A good solution is good because it is in harmony with those larger patterns. ... A good solution acts within the larger pattern the way a healthy organ acts within the body" (pp. 33,34). The concept of kincentricity adds an ontological dimension to the farming and corporeal analogies provided by Berry. Kincentricity is a "form of kinship [that] entails familial responsibility to the world around and establishes relational terms of engagement across all species and environments. It compels the awareness that other agents (in this instance, place) and co-presences possess and demand rights through their inherent character and order" (Kearney, 2018, p. 2). Solving for patterns reflects the

interconnectedness that is represented in kincentricity, and centers this interconnection as a driver for learning and action. The practice of engaging social and ecological justice involves becoming immersed in specific justice issues that are based in a particular history and lived experience. It must also engage the meaning of individual issues within a broader pattern of problems that implicate other important histories and lived experiences. As an educational objective, solving for pattern seeks a fluid, coherent pedagogy for shifting between various parts and the whole, and from one crucial justice context, history, and experience to another.

To begin thinking about human understandings, values, and behaviors in the present era, it is necessary to examine human existence and experience as both fundamentally social and ecological (Godfrey & Torres, 2016; Andrzejewski, Baltodano, & Symcox, 2009). An increasing number of researchers, educators, and advocates working toward a wide array of justice objectives emphasize a need for a clearer engagement with social and ecological aspects of problems observed in the world. While individuals may draw information from diverse sources, and differ with respect to approach, that which is increasingly seen as going wrong involves an integrated matrix of *social oppression* and *ecological degradation*. Scholars and citizens have begun centering analysis on this interconnection of the social and ecological as a foundational basis for exploring humanity's past, present, and future (Calderon, 2014; Greenwood, 2003; Kahn, 2010; Tuck, McKenzie, McCoy, 2014; Pulido, 2015).

There is also a growing interest among scholars and educators to spell out the links between ongoing oppression and ecological degradation and what John McMurtry (1998) calls the life-blind money code of values. McMurtry's critique of the pervasive influence of neoliberal capitalism on the everyday lives of communities across the globe is well-suited to integrated theories of social and ecological justice. McMurtry argues that the code of values found in pervasive political and economic discourses is largely indifferent to the social and ecological attributes that are associated with life, wellness, and justice. To McMurtry, the life-blind pursuit of profits and the means and mechanisms to generate profits leads to both oppression and ecological degradation. Therefore, the interrogation of this influential and dangerous code of values is key to integrated social and ecological justice efforts.

In this study, I aim to contribute to theorizing on social and ecological justice by drawing on a broad range of relevant literature, as well as exploring ways that social and ecological justice learning and action are enacted as a daily practice by community organizers, advocates,

and educators. This exploration is focused on the experiences and insights of individuals working within community-based organizations whose goal is to advance social and/or ecological justice in real and substantive ways. Employing qualitative research methods, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen individuals associated with community-based organizations that focus on child and youth safety, nutrition, and education; environmental and outdoor education; settlement experiences and needs of new Canadians; inclusion of individuals with special needs; healthcare and safety of those living with poverty and addictions; and on challenging ongoing racism, homo/transphobia, and colonialism. In this study, the insights and experiences shared by community organizers are interwoven with theory drawn from a range of research fields. This supports a synthesis that extends literature on educating and organizing for social and ecological justice.

In this study, the *social* includes the interpersonal, institutional, structural, and political dimensions of human experience, wherein values, customs, ideologies, discourses, and power play out in complex ways that are suffused throughout our collective past, present, and future (Bourdieu, 1984; Butler, 1990). Social oppression (or simply oppression) is understood as the lived consequences of a history of unequal power relations among social groups, where the dominant group controls the material, structural, and discursive aspects of social reality, employing various means to preserve and enhance its domination (Kumashiro, 2000, 2009; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The hierarchy, objectification, and violence deployed through this unequal power relation is infused in all socio-political institutions, and is hegemonic when the discourse flowing from the dominant group becomes the default, taken-for-granted perspective within the society as a whole (Butler, 1990; Kumashiro, 2000).

The *ecological* is interpreted as the interconnected relationships among networks of living systems that establish the foundations of life. As Fritjof Capra (2005) explains,

First, *every* living organism, from the smallest bacterium to all the varieties of plants and animals, including humans, is a living system. Second, *the parts of living systems* are themselves living systems. A leaf is a living system. A muscle is a living system. Every cell in our bodies is a living system. Third, *communities of organisms*, including both ecosystems and human social systems such as families, schools, and other human communities, are living systems. (p. 19, Italics in original)

Ecological degradation is understood as the state and/or process in which the attributes of living systems are disrupted, degraded, and/or pushed beyond the limits of recovery. Ecological

degradation encompasses disruptions in living systems at multiple levels of organization, from an individual stream or aquifer to global climate patterns (Capra, 2005; Greenwood, 2008).

Contextualizing “Social and Ecological Justice”

To participate in the complex conversation on social and ecological justice learning and action, a number of important starting points must be established. First, “social and ecological justice” is framed theoretically in this study as a set of interconnected and inter-embedded analytical systems, each seeking to illuminate and transform oppression and/or ecological degradation. The weaving of diverse theoretical orientations to social and ecological justice and the relationship of core values and principles therein is of key interest to this study. The aim is to focus on identifying and articulating patterns found within the theories and consider how these patterns can inform social and ecological justice learning.

The reading across diverse social and ecological justice disciplines is guided by an inductive analysis in which theoretical tenets of one research area/domain are taken up in general and explored in relation to related research areas. For example, in Kevin Kumashiro’s (2000) theorizing on anti-oppressive pedagogy, he states, "...oppression originates in discourse, and, in particular, in the citing of particular discourses, which frame how people think, feel, act, and interact. In other words, oppression is the citing of harmful discourses and the repetition of harmful histories" (p. 40). In this statement, Kumashiro describes a particular approach to investigating the underlying conditions that lead to oppression. For Kumashiro, the "citing" of harmful discourses is important to understand how oppression is perpetuated and how interventions might be developed. Kumashiro continues (drawing on Luhmann), "...the ‘problem’ that anti-oppressive education needs to address is not merely a lack of knowledge, but a resistance to knowledge, and in particular, a resistance to any knowledge that disrupts what one already ‘knows’" (p. 43). In Kumashiro’s theory, the practice of citing harmful discourses is more complex than simply resulting from a lack of knowledge or flaw in character. This practice is part of daily life and necessitates a critical awareness to disrupt and transform its harmful effects.

Kumashiro’s (200) theory on citing discourses may be applied productively to a range of social and ecological justice issues, from inequitable labour policies to resistance to environmental protections. The methodological approach employed in this study invites an exploration of how a core idea such as the one expressed by Kumashiro might open new ways to

examine a range of problems associated with social oppression and ecological degradation. By identifying useful patterns in social and ecological justice theorizing, educators may adopt more effective strategies for addressing multiple social and ecological problems simultaneously.

Relationship Between Theory and Practice

A second focus for developing research on social and ecological justice is the relationship between theory and practice. This objective of combining the material aspects of daily practice with relevant theory is consistent with Paulo Freire's (1970) emphasis on praxis. For Freire, meaningful endeavour requires attention be given to both the realities of everyday experiences and theoretical frameworks that offer a pathway for improving lived-circumstances. The intersection of these two forms of inquiry is essential in Freire's view to guide action that can respond effectively to oppression (p. 76)¹. Each approach to researching oppression and ecological degradation draws on information grounded in everyday lived experiences and empirical data to generate meanings of what is going wrong within place, and what needs to change (Greenwood [formerly Gruenewald], 2003).

A core aim of this study is to explore the interrelationships between theoretical and practice-based components of social and ecological justice. The theoretical component is engaged through drawing on literature from a range of research areas encompassed within social and ecological justice. From a theoretical standpoint, the linked projects of social and ecological justice are understood as interconnected and inter-embedded analytical systems. The practice-based component is engaged through dialoging with individuals who experience the daily challenges and struggles of working toward specific outcomes linked to their vision of justice in the community. In a similar way that the study focuses on the interrelationships between diverse approaches to social and ecological justice, it emphasizes the interrelationship between theory and practice. This interrelationship is understood as the dynamic interplay between problems faced as part of a daily practice working towards social and ecological justice and problems perceived from a broader theoretical perspective. The process involves the continuous examination of the relationships between specific events and broader patterns that provide

¹ Theoretical and philosophical representations of practice go beyond Freire's conceptualization. In sociology, for instance, recent interest has been paid to exploring the philosophical basis of practices as they function as everyday actions taken by individuals operating within societal structures (Grootenboer, Edwards-Groves, & Choy, 2017).

context for those events. The goal is to enhance meaning through identifying patterns across various approaches to social and ecological justice, and between theory and practice.

Informing Pedagogy

A third consideration for discussing social and ecological justice involves addressing pedagogy that critically analyzes real, lived problems both locally and globally, and examines patterns among those problems. The imagined pedagogical design would focus on components of individual forms oppression and ecological degradation—the histories, discourses, political-structural forms, consequences, debates, personal investments, transgressions, and tensions—while considering how these components relate to other forms. This approach to pedagogy centres on a process of shifting back and forth between individual forms and experiences of oppression and ecological degradation and broader patterns generating and reproducing such injustices. Within such a pedagogy, the problem or question is understood to involve both concrete lived-consequences and patterns of complex historical, political, and ideological systems linked to the consequences. Therefore, learning and action in response to the problem requires investigating both the immediate, lived dimension of the problem and the way the problem is nested within a broader system of discourses, structures, and values that must also be critiqued. This approach to pedagogical design aligns with Freire's (1970) concept of conscientization, placing an emphasis on the development of theory and practice that is informed by the lived contexts from which the theory and practice is derived.

A helpful metaphor for understanding this pedagogical approach can be found in Fritjof Capra's (2005) *Theory of Living Systems*: “At all scales of nature, we find living systems nested within other living systems – networks within networks. ... Choosing strategies to effect those systems requires simultaneously addressing multiple levels and recognizing which strategies are appropriate for different levels” (pp. 23-24). Richard Kahn (2010), citing the work of Edgar Gonzalez-Gaudiano, similarly advocates “a problem-posing pedagogy that seeks knowledge of how the environmental factors that contribute to disease, famine, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression, and other forms of sexual, ethnic, or religious violence can be examined as complex social and economic problems deserving everyone’s attention” (p. 14). The development of pedagogy through layering multiple social and ecological justice considerations creates new possibilities for transformative learning and action. Such possibilities are directly

related to the goal of designing education to respond to the pressing problems "deserving everyone's attention" (Kahn, 2010, p. 14).

Overview of Chapters

This study is driven by the potential for what social and ecological justice could achieve as an educational mandate. From both a theoretical and methodological standpoint, the aim of this study is to identify connections and patterns across a range of research areas along with statements of participants who work within community-based organizations. The objective is to develop a basis for approaching social and ecological justice as an integrated whole, informing pedagogy that is designed to support learning and action that addresses a range of justice issues. The goal is not to define social and ecological justice once and for all, but to identify and articulate insights that may inform learning and action in response to problems impacting the present moment. The chapters that follow document each stage of the research process. The remaining sections of chapter one provide a description of how I arrived at the research question and my vision for the empirical component of the study. Chapter one concludes with an account of my own positionality in relation to the research, which I see as necessary to provide context and transparency to the vision of the study as a whole. Chapter two presents a literature review consisting of two parts. Part one, concentrates on literature that directly addresses the relationships between the social and ecological with respect to problems observed in the world. Part two reviews a range of complementary research areas fitting broadly within social justice and/or ecological justice with the goal of identifying connections within and across the theories. Chapter three outlines the methodological foundations informing the research process, and details the design and methods employed in the gathering and organization of data. Chapter four presents the data organized into themes that emerged through the grounded theory data analysis process. The presentation of data within the themes is intended to enable the reader to become immersed in the stories of participants and consider how the data connect with broader theoretical perspectives and provide insight for developing effective pedagogical design. Chapter five explores select connections between insights provided by participants and patterns identified in the review of social and ecological justice literature. The goal of the discussion chapter is to explore ways participants' commentaries on the realities of working toward social and ecological justice within the community can inform theorizing on social and ecological justice learning and

action. The conclusion chapter revisits the research journey and considers implications of the research in relation to both theory and practice.

Arriving at the Research Question

Social and ecological justice have become touchstones and drivers of my own explorations and learning, and central to my thinking on what is worth studying. Through this study, my goal is to explore both daily, lived experiences of working towards social and ecological justice, and broader ideas and understandings of the roles that social and ecological justice learning and action (or their absence) play within the society. Put bluntly, the study seeks to better understand what *is* happening within the community and wider world, and what *needs to* happen in order for people to more adequately respond to oppression and ecological degradation (Greenwood [formerly Gruenewald], 2003; Kahn, 2010).

Inspiration for the empirical component of this study is found in the many dedicated individuals investing time, energy, creativity, and struggle in response to the consequences of oppression and ecological degradation. While individuals fitting this description may be found in many segments of society, this research focuses on social actors who dedicate their energy to working with local community-based organizations. The empirical component is focused on ways individuals working within community-based organizations promote social and ecological justice through learning and action as a daily practice. The stories that participants tell about the realities of this work offer valuable perspectives on advancing social and ecological justice objectives. The experiences of participants encountering problematic social norms, values, and constructs while attempting to respond to significant unmet needs provide a vital component to the development of theory that is grounded in practice.

Individuals dedicating their time and energy to social and ecological justice are driven by visions of a just, equitable, and sustainable society. They are also guided by perceptions and interpretations of what is going wrong in the community, and how they see needed change occurring. Whether explicitly or implicitly, each individual and organization is occupied intellectually and emotionally by attributes of the problem as it is perceived. The ways in which individuals and organizations define problems help to shape the type of programming and strategies they implement, and informs the type of learning and action they see as needed.

The aim of this research is to draw connections between how community-based organizers conceptualize problems and how they envision and enact programs of learning and

action. The study centres on direct experiences of working for social and ecological justice as a basis for developing an integrated approach to learning and action. The hope of the study is to discover within a combination of theory and practice some useful foundations that support and can amplify diverse streams of social and ecological justice work. The anticipated benefit of identifying intersections in practice is to design pedagogy that addresses multiple social and ecological justice goals concurrently.

Building from these foundations, the following research question has guided the study: *In what ways can experience-based knowledge of working towards social and ecological justice inform theorizing on integrated social and ecological justice learning and action?* Key questions discussed in the semi-structured interviews included: What role does learning and action toward social and/or ecological justice play in your work within the community? What do you see as the problem (or problems) giving rise to the conditions you are working to improve in your daily practice? What kinds of strategies do you employ to achieve your goals of learning and action? What obstacles do you face as you seek to address and confront problems you observe in the community?

I conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen individuals working in a range of community-based organizations, grappling with problems ranging from the health and wellbeing of children and youth to environmental education programming to the struggles of settlement for new Canadians. The study sought out individuals from organizations working on diverse problems in order to identify a broad range of perspectives and insights that could be analyzed with the theory. Engaging a diverse set of organizations allowed for a comparison of viewpoints among the participants, and invited the emergence of unique perspectives. Aligned with the overarching methodological aim of the study, participants were invited to share and comment on experiences and events they see as related to social and/or ecological justice, and then draw connections to broader ideas and themes of social and ecological justice in the community. A more complete detailing of the study's methodology and methods is provided in chapter three. The research question has emerged through a professional and intellectual interest in social and ecological justice learning and action, but also a personal interest in understanding myself and my own positionality in relation to social and ecological crises.

Self-Positioning

The practice of self-positioning, interpreted against an awareness of unequal social power, has become common in theoretical disciplines seeking to elucidate and transform historical, ideological, and institutional roots of oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). While it is less common for researchers working toward environmental and/or ecological goals to position themselves in relation to social power systems, some are recognizing the merit of such a practice (e.g., Gosine & Teelucksingh, 2008; Tuck, McKenzie & McCoy, 2014). The emergence of this practice is grounded in an awareness that theorizing around social power is influenced by the social and cultural landscapes in which researchers have been steeped throughout their lives (Battiste, 2000). The notion of being steeped in systems of power highlights the integration of dominant narratives about the self, other, and world into patterns of thought and values (Bourdieu, 1984; Foucault, 2003). Recognizing the role of unequal power in knowledge construction is well established as requisite to critical thought, and as an essential field of inquiry in social theory (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2009). Experiencing the world from the dominant position in unequal power arrangements infuses different ideas about social reality than meanings derived by individuals occupying subaltern positions—in particular, regarding the presence and consequence of particular power imbalances (Kumashiro, 2009; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Critical analysis of one's position within social power systems becomes particularly complex when taking into consideration multiple forms of oppression—racism, heterosexism, colonialism, classism, ableism, etc. Such forms of oppression operate simultaneously to mediate experiences and perceptions, and to impact individuals on the basis of differentiated physical attributes, personal presentation styles, intimate relationships, physical and linguistic characteristics, beliefs, material possessions, occupation, citizenship, and so on. It is within complex interrelationship of multiple forms of oppression that I position myself.

I grew up in a small city in Saskatchewan, Canada. My maternal lineage is characterized by attributes associated with rural, white-settler, Canadian nation-building; lower-middle class, farming, Christian, social conservatism; and, genealogical roots tracing back to Romania and Germany. My paternal lineage is characterized by attributes of urban, white-settler, Canadian nation-building; middle class, sales work and nursing, Christian, social and fiscal conservatism; and, roots tracing back to Sweden and Germany. Growing up I was steeped in narratives

associated with these attributes, and learned to read the world through preconfigured lenses—including what was going right and what was going wrong in the world around me.

As I negotiated the places and networks of my formative years, I did so identifying with dominant heteronormative and cisgendered iterations of what it means to be male, and the kinds of intimate relationships that are prescribed. I was content to participate in and make meaning of socio-cultural norms and practices in ways encouraged for young, white males: ways that have been described as dominant-hetero-masculinity (Kumashiro, 2009; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The socialization I experienced, together with my unquestioned participation in patterns of settler colonialism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, classism, and ableism stands out to me now as foundational to understanding what is going wrong.

Throughout my youth, I cannot point to a time when the dominant assumptions I held about the world were disrupted; or, when advocacy came to represent something other than being charitable and/or treating others with respect. Reflecting back, it wasn't that I believed everything to be just and equitable in the world, but injustice and inequality were seen as existing in foreign, corrupt places, far removed from Saskatchewan and Canada. Problems perceived in the local community were reduced and externalized via discourses of Canadian settler innocence, multiculturalism, individualism, and Christian iterations of charity. The innocence and detachment built into discourses of racism, heteropatriarchy, and Canadian nation-building were securely embedded in my identity and worldview (Memmi, 2000).

The motivation for undertaking this research is grounded in my own journey of personal and professional discovery. As an educator, the questions I keep coming back to (or that keep coming back to me) are, how can I design my learning and related endeavors to more coherently engage the multiple urgent problems impacting the world? How can I design my educational practice in a way that illuminates and intervenes in the myriad conditions and consequences of oppression? And, as a white-settler-heterosexual-middleclass-male, what is my role and legitimacy in speaking and writing about racism, colonialism, heterosexism, and environmentalism? As a personal directive, the research process is designed to enrich my own learning and understanding in response to these questions. Through conducting a broad reading of social and ecological justice literature, and engaging in dialogue with participants on a range of justice topics, I have been provided a rich resource to guide my thinking and my practice. One notion that became evident throughout the research process was that the exploration and learning

around vital questions will never be concluded, and that every context of social and ecological justice work is unique and will require both specific strategies and a broader holistic perspective. In the following chapter, I review literature that engages social and ecological justice both as an integrated whole and as a set of independent but related parts. The review casts a wide net across a range of complementary research areas with a deliberate interest in identifying connections and patterns. The objective of the review is to provide a picture of how the terms social and ecological justice are taken up in the literature as a basis for identifying intersections within the theory. The overarching goal of the literature review is to develop a theoretical base that can be read against the field interview data in order to identify foundations for social and ecological justice learning and action.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature review chapter is presented in two parts. Part one centres on literature that directly discusses the relationship between social and ecological factors associated with pervasive problems observed in the world. Literature reviewed in part one focuses specifically on the relationships between the social and ecological as an essential pivot point for understanding what is going wrong and what ought to be done to effect meaningful change. The pieces included in part one are distinguished by their assertion of the need for an engagement with relationships between the social and ecological as a core organizing feature of research. Part two casts a wider net, drawing from a range of complementary research areas that take up social and ecological justice in diverse ways. The goal of part two is to take a different kind of dive into the literature to look for connections in the theory that relate distinct research areas. Such connections are central to the research objective guiding this study. The connections and patterns found across diverse social and ecological justice inquiries are viewed in the study as a key starting point for the further integration of the social and ecological in justice theorizing.

Part One: Centring the Relationship Between the Social and Ecological

This section draws from theorists working in a variety of disciplines to gain an understanding of how the complex concepts of social justice and ecological justice are brought together as a unified focus. It is apparent that the path to develop theory around social and ecological justice is not fixed or defined. Researchers have employed a range of strategies to elaborate the specifics of what they mean by social and ecological justice. The literature reviewed below is organized into two generalized approaches, based on the way the relationship between the social and ecological is theorized. The first approach may be thought of as additive in nature, where discussions of social justice issues and ecological justice issues are addressed in tandem, but not integrated within a unifying framework. The additive approach focuses on compiled works that contain distinct sections or chapters that discuss individual social justice or ecological justice issues. These works argue that the issues ought to be considered together, but do not attempt to integrate their theoretical underpinnings. The second approach centres on the interconnections among social and ecological factors that are associated with identified problems. This approach is further divided into two subsections providing a more nuanced grouping. The first subsection focuses on literature that seeks to identify correlations among areas of environmental contamination and demographics of people who are affected by the

contamination. In particular, literature in the first subsection documents the longstanding correlation between industrial pollution and waste sites with areas inhabited by people of colour and those with low socioeconomic status (e.g., Bullard, 1999). The second subsection looks at literature that aims to identify connections within the theoretical underpinnings at the heart of social and ecological justice theories. Literature in this subsection addresses connections found in the underlying discussions of social and ecological justice theories to demonstrate how the research areas intersect and overlap.

Additive Approach to Theorizing the Social and Ecological

Characterizing the approach of researchers as additive signals a strategy of lining up particular analytical frameworks side by side to create a foundation for understanding. The clearest example of this is found in edited works where the expressed aim is to establish a picture of social and ecological justice through showcasing discipline-specific works that each provide a piece of the overarching theoretical landscape (e.g. Andrzejewski, Baltodano, & Symcox, 2009; Godfrey & Torres, 2016; Goldstein & Selby, 2000). In such examples, syntheses of the analytical frameworks are to various degrees open-ended, and at times it is left to the reader to generate their own integration of the social and ecological. The goals and rationale for these writings are typically closely aligned with the other approach mentioned, and likewise based on a conviction that there are serious social and ecological problems that need to be addressed. However, they differ from the others in that they do not seek to generate new avenues of theorizing that go beyond the investigatory approaches common within established disciplinary areas. In other words, these works generally do not illustrate ways that integrated explorations of social and ecological problems may lead to new insights and strategies.

An example of the additive approach, Goldstein and Selby (2000) begin their edited book *Weaving Connections: Educating for Peace, Social and Environmental Justice* with a dialogue regarding how their research intersects. Although each author is grounded and guided by his or her own scholarly discipline, their work often overlaps. The authors conclude that in order to effectively articulate and confront the problems they are seeing in the world, there must be efforts to cross disciplinary boundaries and seek out forms of analysis exposing dimensions of problems otherwise obscured. In the book, Goldstein and Selby (2000) bring together researchers writing on anti-racist education, anti-homophobia education, gender equity education, environmental education, and global education, among others. In the closing chapter, Goldstein

and Selby reiterate a commitment to guide educational programming in a way that is informed by theories working toward the transformation of systemic racism, homophobia, and sexism, and the promotion of ecological justice and sustainability. However, beyond asserting that these cross-disciplinary topics must be given added attention, the authors do not explore what a synthesis of the topics might look like and offer as a guide for learning and action.

In another edited work entitled *Social Justice, Peace, and Environmental Education: Transformative Standards*, Julie Andrzejewski, Marta Baltodano, and Linda Symcox (2009) also begin by emphasizing the fundamental need to cross disciplinary boundaries to understand and confront "problems of a magnitude unknown to previous generations" (p. 1). The authors make the point by citing the intersection of the anthropogenic impacts on "oceans, rivers, lakes, forests, plains, mountains, tundra, deserts, arctic regions, and the earth's atmosphere" and the reality that a global majority "are born, live, and die in utmost despair and deprivation, and while millions have experienced hunger and starvation for decades with inadequate global response" (p.1). Andrzejewski et al. (2009) draw together chapters on Indigenous and anti-colonial education, gender justice and queer education, anti-racist education, and environmental and sustainability education, among others.

Although one of the central tenets the authors arrive at is that social and ecological justice is "indivisible," they are not explicit about how they perceive this connection other than to say that problems such as climate change and environmental contamination are related to political and economic power. The core problem identified by the authors is an oppressive, racist-colonialist political economy that is founded on a competitive drive for private wealth and consumption. Focusing on problems with both social and ecological roots, the authors begin to demonstrate what an integrated approach to theorizing might entail. However, while Andrzejewski et al. (2009) provide a notable example of researchers aiming to provide a robust, operationalized response to social and ecological problems, they do not endeavor to theorize the social and ecological as an integrated whole.

In *Greening the Academy: Ecopedagogy Through the Liberal Arts*, Fassbinder, Nocella, and Kahn (2012) set out to present a series of avenues for theorizing the social and ecological, highlighting the importance of such initiatives in a range of disciplines. The approach of the authors is consistent with the works discussed above in that it layers the chapters in an additive fashion. However, it is also evident in the book that the ongoing goal is to imagine and jointly

engage with the social and ecological as a starting point for transformational change in each of the disciplines represented in the chapters. Although the authors present the chapters in series, they are unified by a vision of a shift toward academic programming that more effectively responds to the interlocking crises observed in the world. Thus, the edited work by Fassbinder, Nocella, and Kahn (2012) may be seen as an example of an additive approach serving as an intermediary step in developing more holistic integration of the social and ecological. It is apparent that each of the authors discussed above employs the additive approach in an effort to lay the groundwork for developing a language and frameworks through which the social and ecological may be approached as an indivisible whole.

Correlation of Ecological Degradation and Community Demographics

This approach to theorizing social and ecological justice is grounded in lived conditions for which there is a clear, measurable correlation between social status and ecological degradation. Examples of conditions highlighted in this approach include, the tendency to locate toxic industrial and waste sites closer to non-white and low-income communities (Bullard, 1999; Pulido, 2015); the global burden of contaminated water, air, and soil that falls disproportionately on people of colour and the poor, particularly within non-industrialized countries (Anguelovski & Martinez Alier, 2014); vulnerability to the ramifications of changing global weather patterns and other climate-related consequences such as rising sea levels and drought (Kopina, 2016; McKinney & Fulkerson, 2015); and, the disproportionate resource use and enjoyment of benefits involved in processes leading to ecological degradation (Furman & Greenwood, 2004). The social is often highlighted in this approach through demographic and/or social categories such as sex, age, race, class, and nationality, and other social variables related to political and economic power. The ecological is taken up in terms of regions and specific locales in which ecological damage has been manifested. Research engaging social and ecological justice under this approach is often seen as part of subfields or approaches such as ecological justice (or ecojustice), environmental justice, environmental racism, and/or climate justice. A more extensive discussion of literature fitting into these categories is provided in part two of the literature review.

Many researchers have focused on empirical bases for understanding relationships between forms of oppression and ecological degradation (Bullard, 1990; Bryant & Mohai, 1992; Gosine & Teelucksingh, 2008). One of the earliest and most widely cited works is a study

commissioned in 1987 by the United Church of Christ (UCC) mapping the location of hazardous waste sites, landfills, incinerators, and polluting industries in low-income communities and communities of color across the United States (UCC, 1987). The study—the first of many that verified such findings—found that race was the most significant factor in predicting where toxic sites would be located relative to residential areas (Bullard, 1990). This widely recognized finding generated new questions about the relationship between racism (along with other forms of oppression) and ecological degradation. Since the revelations of the UCC-study, further research has revealed the diverse and far-reaching ways ecological degradation in its many forms is linked with social disadvantage and oppression (Gosine & Teelucksingh, 2008). For a growing number of researchers, it has become impossible to think about any environmental catastrophe without examining the dynamics of social inequality and oppression that are intricately connected with it (Anguelovski & Martinez Alier, 2014; Greenwood, 2003; Pulido, 2015).

In an innovative example of this approach, Laura McKinney and Gregory Fulkerson (2015) examined empirical evidence to engage ecofeminist assertions of the correlation between oppression of women and causes and consequences of climate change. To do so, the researchers compared variables associated with the degree to which women have agency and representation within a nation (e.g. number of seats held in leadership) (p. 297) and components of a nation's ecological footprint that are directly related to climate change (e.g. preservation of areas that sequester carbon dioxide) (p. 295). The researchers concluded there is evidence that nations in which women have a relatively higher degree of agency and representation have more proactive policies around climate change. As a corollary, nations in which women have relatively less agency and representation have less effective policies and practices around climate change. They also found that women are disproportionately harmed by the consequences of climate change and ecological degradation in general (McKinney & Fulkerson, 2015).

The above paragraphs provide examples of an approach to theorizing social and ecological justice centring on the geographical correlation between ecological degradation and social-group oppression and disenfranchisement. A deeper exploration of relevant literature fitting into this category is reserved for the section below, which looks more closely at what is encompassed within literature on ecological justice. McKinney and Fulkerson (2015) provide an example of researchers mapping the correlation between social oppression and ecological degradation, going beyond explorations of race and class, to include gender. Thus, the authors

expand the scope for exploring potential correlations between forms of social exclusion and ecological degradation. The insights provided by McKinney and Fulkerson (2015) lend support to assertions made by theorists identified within the below approach: namely, that the roots of social and ecological problems are intertwined and often inseparable (Canty, 2017). The authors discussed below begin with this premise and seek to articulate and operationalize these interrelationships as a guide to learning and action.

Identifying Underlying Connections Among Social and Ecological Justice Theories

Scholars embracing this approach to theorizing social and ecological justice tend to begin with the assumption that the origins and outcomes of the crises we collectively face are both social and ecological, and that devising strategies for productive learning and action requires an understanding of these interconnections. Although the delineation of approaches discussed above is subtle, the distinction lies in the articulation of the relationality of elements considered social or ecological as a valued end in itself. Working from this perspective, Furman and Greenwood (2004) developed an examination of social and ecological justice education by considering key attributes of complementary research areas to create a useful synthesis for guiding practice. The research areas selected by the authors include, environmental justice (e.g., Bullard, 1993), ecojustice (e.g., Bowers, 2001), ecofeminism (e.g., Warren, 2000), and ecospheric or post-humanist ethics (e.g., O'Sullivan, 1999). Reviewing this literature, the authors explore relationships between ecological and cultural systems; the relationship between the domination of nature and the domination of oppressed groups; the geography and political economy of pollution; the role of non-commodified traditions as a model for socioecological justice; and, commitment to future generations through fostering a planetary consciousness that transcends political and economic boundaries (Furman & Greenwood, 2004).

Furman and Greenwood (2004) develop a theoretical framework they term critical pedagogy of place (see also Greenwood, 2003). Described in greater detail elsewhere (see Greenwood, 2003; 2008), a critical pedagogy of place is based on two interrelated objectives, "reinhabitation" and "decolonization." Reinhabitation is described as an emphasis on "learning to live-in-place in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation" (p. 58). Decolonization is described (building on hooks, 1994) as a "process of cultural and historical liberation; an act of confrontation with the dominant system of thought" (p. 58). The pedagogical practices promoted by the authors involve

direct and engaged experiences within place in order to gain an appreciation for the local ecology, a connection with the cultural life of the local community, and to conceive of and undertake projects designed to create change based on investigations into cultural and ecological problems.

Furman and Greenwood (2004) do not address how they interpret and define terms such as “domination” and “exploitation,” and how a closer examination of these concepts might be integrated with core ecological justice understandings. To do so would require reading further into research areas related to critical race theory, queer theory, and anti-oppressive theory, in order to undertake a deeper interrogation of unequal social power. In addition, while the authors advocate a critical assessment and transformation of cultural assumptions based on progress, growth, globalization, competition, and individualism, there is only brief mention of colonization and Indigenous land rights as concerns for social and ecological justice work.

In line with the objectives of Furman and Greenwood (2004), Jeanine Canty (2017) puts forward her own understanding of the integration of social and ecological problems:

Suffering across the globe extends to both our human and more than human communities, ... whether through species loss, pollution and toxicity, wide-scale poverty, resource and religious wars, violence against women and children, racism and other forms of social injustice, mental illness, addictions and spiritual loss. We are all submerged in an era that heralded mechanistic science and the objectification of nature, including people, religious dogmatism, patriarchy, colonization, genocide, enslavement and the large-scale consumption and accumulation of surplus. (p. 24).

Canty's statement reflects a deep sense of the integrated, holistic nature of problems that are often seen as separate. Her response is to embrace the metaphor of healing and wholeness as guides to working across disciplinary borders to formulate new ways to examine and confront problems.

Phoebe Godfrey and Denise Torres (2016) similarly centre the notion of intersectionality as an entry point to examining the interrelationship of social and ecological problems. The researchers begin by outlining an original goal of intersectionality, that being to illuminate the connections among forms of oppression that tend to get overlooked as a result of disciplinary processes that analyze problems individually. Whereas early forms of intersectional analysis concentrated on racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, Godfrey and Torres (2016) seek to add “nature” as a relevant component, "which includes the physical body, in that bodies

as well as air and water are always present in any analysis" (p. 4). For the authors, "Intersectionality's heuristic ability enhances our 'seeing' how these social signifiers intersect and co-construct in relation to each other and the environment" (p. 9). As an example, they explore race and class together with the politics and economics of clean air to understand how structures and discourses maintain inequality. The authors argue that understanding both the material-ecological components of oppression and the structural-discursive components of ecological degradation are necessary (Godfrey & Torres, 2016).

Consistent with this approach to theorizing is an aim to identify and articulate connections among factors that contribute to the outcomes of oppression and ecological degradation. Proponents of critical ecopedagogy (Kahn, 2010) and ecofeminism (MacGregor, 2017; McKinney & Fulkerson 2015) have taken this approach to engaging social and ecological justice. Motivated by the work of Richard Kahn (2010), critical ecopedagogy blends theoretical foundations of critical pedagogy with critical approaches to environmental/ecological education. Critical pedagogy draws from critical theory, which has roots in the Frankfurt School, and integrates it with the revolutionary, participatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire (McLaren, 2013). For Kahn (2010), any approach to educational research and practice that describes a vision for society must address both the violence occurring within human communities and the violence that is being done to ecological communities. Ecofeminism, according to Sherilyn MacGregor (2017), represents a "theoretically sophisticated, empirically grounded collection of approaches that have a common set of concerns about gender injustice and the degradation of the natural environment" (p. 1). MacGregor adds that "an *intersectional* analysis of capitalism, rationalist science, colonialism, racism, (hetero)sexism, and speciesism has always been central to feminist environmental scholarship" (p.1; italics in original). As described by Kahn (2010) and MacGregor (2017) the fields of critical ecopedagogy and ecofeminism reflect an approach to social and ecological justice research that begins with the interconnection of the social and ecological as a basis for examining and responding to problems.

The above discussion provides an overview of two approaches to engaging the relationship between the social and ecological in justice theorizing. The literature discussed below represents an effort to delve even more deeply into conceptualizations of social justice and ecological justice in order to identify productive connections.

Part Two: Connections and Patterns Identified Across Social and Ecological Justice Theories

Part two of the literature review explores conceptions of social justice and ecological justice in turn with the aim of identifying core ideas and principles which are then addressed in relation to one another. Through this exploration, connections and patterns are considered in an effort to generate a common ground to engage multiple problems simultaneously.

Exploring the ‘Social’ in Social and Ecological Justice Theory

In order to develop an idea of how to engage the *social* and *ecological* in justice theorizing, it seems productive to explore current articulations of both social justice and ecological justice, as well as, ideas of how theory might be mobilized towards effecting change. It is commonplace for writing on social justice to provide some form of definition. In order to develop a definition, concepts such as equity, dignity, human rights, and freedom from discrimination and violence are often emphasized as responses to historical, institutional, political, and economic dimensions of oppression (Dimick, 2012; Rose & Cachelin, 2014). In addition, researchers often emphasize the necessity to critically examine ways social group identifiers—race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, nationality, religion, body type, etc.—are related to multiple dimensions of historical and contemporary oppression (Warren et al., 2014).

In their book, *Is Everyone Really Equal?*, Ozlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo (2012) interrogate the notion of social justice as it tends to be interpreted by the public, and how it is interpreted within some spheres of research and academic practice. The authors propose that while a majority of individuals in a liberal pluralist society would assert their support for principles of equal opportunity and protection from discrimination and violence, there are limits to what the same individuals are willing to question and what they are willing to advocate for in terms of social change. The authors describe these limitations as a form of “social justice illiteracy” (p. xvii), or inability to accurately recognize and interpret the historical and contemporary factors giving rise to inequality, discrimination, and violence. Albert Memmi (2000), in his book *Racism*, begins with a similar assessment, “There is a strange kind of tragic enigma associated with the problem of racism. No one, or almost no one, wishes to see themselves as racist; still, racism persists, real and tenacious” (p. 3). For these researchers, a key consideration for defining social justice involves being aware of a limitation in the way the term

is understood and used both within popular discourse, and in some approaches to research and advocacy.

Throughout their book, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) develop their description of social justice by contrasting it with populist conceptualizations they examine in everyday discourses. They assert that in addition to challenging the obvious and overt injustices that tend to inspire public outrage, social justice must begin with a keen awareness that everyday (seemingly mundane) practices are always and already influenced by unequal power relations among social groups—mediated by, for instance, race, class, and/or gender identity. The unequal power relations have a deep and profound history, and are reproduced through material and discursive systems, perpetuated in part as a result of social justice illiteracy. Finally, the authors contend that in order for one to have a meaningful connection to social justice, there must be an examination of one's own social group membership. They argue that such an examination is a key and necessary step in research, educational programming, policy writing, advocacy, and so on (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

As researchers move from general ideas of equity and rights toward more specific justice issues, they typically draw on a complementary array of fields and schools of thought, e.g., Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory, Feminist Theory, Queer Theory, Anti-Oppressive Theory, and Decolonization. The brief overview of each provided herein is helpful for the purposes of this dissertation, but to gain a more in-depth understanding of what is encompassed within each area, a deeper exploration is required. In literature on social justice, researchers will often transition back and forth between more general conceptualizations of social justice and more focused conceptualizations articulated within specific research areas. Social justice is often being conceptualized in relation to one or several of the more focused research areas found under this umbrella term. This is significant to consider when looking for the connections and patterns present within diverse social justice theorizing.

The discussion below is limited and selective. The breadth of the body of work developed around each area necessitates a selective reading. The research areas and pieces selected within those areas in no way represent an exhaustive sample of relevant literature. The selection of areas and pieces is connected to my own journey seeking an understanding of social and ecological justice. Through valuable experiences with course work, teaching, collaborating with mentors and colleagues, publishing, and participating in conferences, I have been drawn to these works. I

believe the literature discussed below offers a useful basis for exploring new connections in the theory that unite and enhance the individual disciplines. The aim of this section is to strategically identify a number of potentially foundational elements that can support a more holistic, integrated, and serviceable approach to social justice theorizing.

Insights From Critical Theory

According to Henry Giroux (2009) (see also McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007), critical theory grew out of a collaborative body of work in the mid-twentieth century by a group of theorists known as the Frankfurt School (e.g., Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Habermas). In general, the aim of the researchers was to illuminate and confront ways in which laws, institutions, policies, scholarship, media, values, cultural practices, and so on, favour, empower, and enrich some members of the society, while silencing, disenfranchising, and oppressing others. According to Giroux (2009), the School's "members developed a dialectical framework by which to understand the mediations that link the institutions and activities of everyday life with the logic and commanding forces that shape larger social totality" (p. 27). Thus, critical theory guides one to deconstruct structures and systems in order to reveal how they really impact individuals within the society. Frequently, policies and procedures that have a profound effect on the day-to-day lives of individuals are created and recreated with little serious attention. Critical theory brings to bear questions such as, who designs the policies and procedures? Who benefits? Who suffers? What assumptions are being made? And, what voices and perspectives are missing? While critical theory may be concerned with illuminating inequities related to all social groups, it often focuses on means and control of production and wealth, and the ways these arrangements influence legislation and governance. In other words, the focus is often on the political economy, which is read through a class analysis, and therefore has connections with Marxist and Neo-Marxist theory (Giroux, 2009).

According to Giroux (2009), foundational ideas guiding early work in critical theory included, self-conscious critique, social transformation, and emancipation (Giroux, 2009). These ideas organized research in a way that departed from the instrumental rationalism that was common in the Academy, as well as other influential institutions. Giroux argues that, through centring these commitments, there was a shift in both the object of study and the approach to research. For example, "By examining notions such as money, consumption, distribution, and production, it becomes clear that none of these represents an objective thing or fact, but rather all

are historically contingent contexts mediated by relationships of domination and subordination" (p. 27). Critical theory recognizes that the institutions and systems shaping everyday life are not neutral entities, emerging naturally out of a free and democratic society. Rather, they are designed and produced within a historical moment that is hierarchal and therefore (re)produces oppression. This recognition is foundational to social justice theorizing, and is key to confronting all forms of injustice and oppression (Giroux, 2009).

Insights From Critical Race Theory

The research area known as critical race theory began with the focused and necessary objective to debunk the “science of race” of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Memmi, 2000). The linked ideas of pure race and hierarchies of race were long held as truths in many centres of power and knowledge creation. As Albert Memmi (2000) outlines, given the unintelligible premises on which these theories were based, it required a studied myopia and considerable political commitment to maintain this supposedly scientific field of inquiry. Although the historical and biological foundations behind the hierarchy of pure races have been rejected for the most part, the phenomena of race and racism remain pervasive mediators of daily social experience. Thus, critical race theory has evolved—just as racism itself has evolved—to interrogate the presence of racism in contemporary liberal discourse (Memmi, 2000). Critical race theory recognizes that the phenotypical characteristics used to distinguish race (skin color, hair texture, facial bone structure, etc.) are always and already marked with meaning and value, and influence both identities and understandings of the Other (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). These meanings and values are not derived from personal experience, nor are they individual or independent of historical and contemporary systems of power; rather, race discourses are passed down, consumed, repeated, and internalized, and exert influence on and through both the dominant and minoritized group (hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009; LaRocque, 2010; Memmi, 2000).

In his book *Race, Whiteness, and Education*, Zeus Leonardo (2009) explores the most effective way to promote understandings of critical race theory, taking into consideration both various perspectives (or camps) within the field and the state of public (mis)understandings around race and racism. Leonardo concludes that the current challenge and potential of critical race theory lies foremost in the exploration and analysis of whiteness. Leonardo’s vision is to engage the “problem of whiteness and white supremacy within the color-blind era,” toward

bringing to light “the codes of white culture, worldview of the white imaginary, and assumptions of the invisible marker that depends on the racial other for its identity” (p. 9). The objective of illuminating these codes, worldviews, and assumptions is to name and counter “direct processes that secure [white] domination and the privileges associated with it” (p. 9). While the study of race and racism often focuses on the discrimination and violence that is committed against people of colour, Leonardo (2009) recognizes that it is at least as important to illuminate and interrogate the way whiteness as an identity category is produced and defended by individuals and structures of power.

Another key element of critical race theory, outlined by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (2006), is the importance of story, the sharing experiences of racism as a valid and authoritative element of research. For Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006), story in research validates the lived, nuanced ways racism shapes lived reality; it can serve as a means of psychic preservation against the internalization of oppression; and, finally, “naming one’s own reality with stories can affect the oppressor” (p. 21). In order to understand race and racism as pervasive social phenomena, critical race theorists utilize tools familiar to many social scientists, including analyses of history, demographics, legislation, political-economy, and so on. But, there is also an understanding that these tools cannot illuminate everything about how race and racism play out in day-to-day experience. In critical race theory, story is used as a link between general ideas and particular circumstances.

Insights From Feminist and Queer Theories

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (1999) opens her discussion by exploring a question of how the subject in feminism is interpreted and addressed. It is clear to Butler that feminism’s objective “seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects” (p. 3), and to confront and transform the patriarchy and phallocentrism common within society. What concerns Butler, and has invigorated debate within the field, is how the principal subject of feminism is represented by researchers. Butler states, “The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms. There is a great deal of material that not only questions the viability of ‘the subject’ as the ultimate candidate for representation, or indeed, liberation, but there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women” (p. 4). For Butler, it is undeniable that there is a force of domination and oppression that extends from categories of male/masculinity/heterosexuality. However, the way in which this

force plays out on a daily basis in the lives of diverse individuals who do not have membership within the dominant group is complex, and does not conform to reductive, binary conceptualizations of “the subject.” Butler (1999) further complicates the subject of feminist (and/or social justice) research and advocacy by stating: “If one ‘is’ a woman, that is surely not all one is: the term fails to be exhaustive ... because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities” (p. 6).

The problematizing and reframing of the subject in feminism creates new opportunities for understanding the nature of the oppression originating from the dominant centre, and a vision for what social justice might look like in practice. A key consideration for Butler (1999) in her discussion of gender as a category of study is the function of intelligibility, and how this is entangled with performativity and the representational politics of sex, gender, and desire. For Butler, the absence of intelligibility—to be recognized, understood, and represented—exists as a crucial factor in the way oppression operates as a daily reality. Arguing the importance of opening the possibility of advocacy in relation to the intelligibility of the subject, Butler asserts, “One might wonder what use ‘opening up possibilities’ finally is, but no one who has understood what it is to live in the social world as what is ‘impossible,’ illegible, unrealizable, unreal, and illegitimate is likely to pose that question” (p. viii). Thus, any approach to research or advocacy must be critical of the way the research or advocacy approach itself may omit, deny, and/or negate those whom the effort aims and/or purports to represent. Butler’s (1999) contribution to troubling the categories of sex, gender, and desire blends into a discussion of queer theory. Queer theory similarly seeks to illuminate and confront oppression extending from male-masculine-heterosexual dominance, but also endeavors to centre non-heterosexual and non-cisgender realities as the lenses through which analysis is conducted (Kumashiro, 2000).

Max Kirsch (2000) begins his discussion of queer theory by establishing its foundation in postmodern and post-structural theoretical traditions. The significance of these movements to Queer theory, according to Kirsch, is an interrogation of knowledge constituted within the context of power and dominant discourses, and which then serves to reproduce regimes and systems of power. Kirsch continues, “What demarcates Queer theory from its postmodernist and post-structuralist foundations is its referral to a range of work ‘that seeks to place the question of sexuality as the centre of concern, and as the key category through which other social, political,

and cultural phenomena are to be understood" (Edger & Sedgwick, cited in Kirsch, 2000, p. 33). Although Queer Theory centres analysis on gender and sexuality, it involves a method of critique that is relevant to all modes of interrogating unequal power and oppression. Kirsch references how the New York advocacy group Queer Nation early embraced the term *queer* "to signify a free-flowing organization of resistance that promises to transcend mainstream politics and include all who were against any set conceptions of gender, sexuality, and power" (p. 33). Kirsch discusses the "principle" of queer as "the disassembling of common beliefs about gender and sexuality from their representation in film, literature, and music to their placement in the social and physical sciences," and the "activity of 'queer' [as] the 'queering' of culture, ranging from the reinterpretation of characters involved in cinema to the deconstruction of historical analyses" (p. 33). Thus, the notion queer signals a departure from normative, taken-for-granted codes and protocols of identity politics and performativity (Butler, 1999), and a challenge to the assumed fixity and stability of social group categories.

Kevin Kumashiro (2009) outlines a similar critique of "normal" as he contemplates forms of activism to which he is drawn: "Being normal requires thinking in only certain ways, feeling only certain things, and doing only certain things. And it punishes those who do not conform, such as those who do not look normal, or love the right kind of person, or value the important things" (p. 52). From this perspective, the question of oppression extends beyond instances and events of discrimination and violence—though these are never omitted from analysis—to the ways we are all embedded and entangled in hierarchies set up by the norm. Although all are influenced by the hegemony and reproduction of the norm, each individual negotiates the landscape of privileging and marginalizing uniquely, depending on which sources of privilege one has access to. Such investments pose a significant challenge to implementing change aligned with social justice principles. For Kumashiro (2009), investment in the normal is linked with the way compliance to the norm offers comfort and opportunity in both political and psychosocial ways.

Insights From Anti-Oppressive Theory

In the opening of Kevin Kumashiro's (2000) article, *Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education*, he offers a point of reference for engaging the theory: "In an attempt to address the myriad ways in which racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression play out in schools, educators and educational researchers have engaged in two types of projects:

understanding the dynamics of oppression and articulating ways to work against it" (p. 25). Reflected in this introductory statement is Kumashiro's (2000) assertion that there is value in examining ways the phenomena of racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism intersect and interrelate in daily experience. The approach balances a goal of understanding the dynamics of each form of oppression with a recognition that within lived experiences multiple forms of oppression play out simultaneously. Thus, for Kumashiro (2000), anti-oppressive theory originates in the moments and spaces where multiple dimensions of oppression shape how difference and inequality impact day-to-day life.

Kumashiro (2000) describes oppression as "a situation or dynamic in which certain ways of being (e.g., having certain identities) are privileged in society while others are marginalized" (p. 25). Although this definition is quite general, it focuses research and advocacy on processes of privileging and marginalizing, rather than on a particular form of oppression. This is not to say that an anti-oppressive approach avoids naming realities of racism, classism, heterosexism, etc.; in fact, naming and exposing these are core objectives. Anti-oppressive theory explores social group identifiers not as individual subjects of study, but as integrated and interconnected mediators of social organization and experience that promote the hierarchies that ensure the privilege of dominant groups. In other words, anti-oppressive theory examines the intersection of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, and ability as always and already working on and through social actors in ways that privilege and marginalize. In this project, anti-oppressive theory draws on critical race, queer, and feminist theories in order to develop a more coherent understanding of the intersectionality of multiple forms of oppression (Kumashiro, 2000).

Insights From Decolonization

In order to address current realities connected to a lack of social justice, it is necessary to examine the role that colonialism has played (and continues to play) in the production of unequal power, and the endemic discrimination and violence that are involved. In *The Wretched of The Earth*, Franz Fanon (1963) describes how colonizers dehumanize and objectify the Peoples and lands over which they seek domination. In order to justify the violence required to achieve domination, Fanon outlines the colonial project in terms of the "fabrication" of the colonial subject, which becomes inscribed in the colonizer's law, philosophy, science, and worldview. The colonizer's identity as well is constructed in opposition to this fabrication. Fanon (1963)

discusses colonialism's project of domination as an historic event that has profound implications across generations and that continues to shape contemporary realities.

In her book, *When the Other is Me*, Emma LaRocque (2010) reviews decades of literature used in the fabrication of the colonial subject in Canada (though her discussion is relevant across the globe). LaRocque outlines her findings in terms of a binary, established as the "civilized" versus the "savage" (or civ/sav):

[T]he civ/sav dichotomy is spelled out in terms of cultural 'traits' that reflect binary opposites, each civilized trait corresponding, inversely, with a savage one. In Canadian terms, civilization is consistently associated with settlement, private property, cultivation of land and intellect, industry, monotheism, literacy, coded law and order, Judeo-Christian morality, and metal-based technology. Civilization stands for what is illuminated, progressive, and decent, while savagery is its shadowy underside. Such a 'civilization' is repeatedly outlined against 'Indian savagery,' in which savagism is seen as a psychosocial fixed condition, the antithesis of the highest human condition. Indians, then, by contrast, are delineated as wild, nomadic, warlike, uncultivating and uncultivated, aimless, superstitious, disorganized, illiterate, immoral, and technologically backwards (p. 41).

Aman Sium, Chandni Desai, and Eric Ritskes (2012) describe contemporary modes of colonialism as a reproduction of the civ/sav discourse, which reinforces a sense of entitlement to colonized lands (manifest destiny) that continues to shape colonial practices and justify the ongoing erasure of Indigenous knowledges and realities. Delores Calderon (2014) describes decolonization as "uncovering how settler colonial projects are maintained and reproduced" (p. 28). For Calderon, a significant obstacle to decolonization is settler territoriality, which represents settler control over land, resources, and the institutions that control these, but also the perceived entitlement to this control and the agency to dictate the future direction of Indigenous-settler relations (see also Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). Calderon describes a cooptation by settlers of Indigenous culture, identity, and epistemology, and positions this cooptation as linked to a deeper colonial process in which the colonizer sets the terms for how relations can be negotiated—even within justice-based priorities such as decolonization and reconciliation. This is consistent with Fanon's (1963) description of the colonial process as an historical event with long-term, ongoing significance. Decolonization, therefore, necessitates an examination of how colonialism and settler territoriality are understood and represented, and how discourses associated with land and Indigenous-settler relations are delimited by a history of fabrication and cooptation that cannot be separated from present realities.

Initial Connections Identified Across the Theories

Each of these fields of inquiry has many additional implications. My goal has been to examine a broad a range of considerations for social justice research and advocacy, and to see if some form of operational framework might emerge. One significant outcome of this type of review is to reveal how multiple approaches to social justice overlap and complement one another, creating a more complete and coherent picture of how oppression operates within lived realities. The review suggests that social justice research will be enhanced when it starts by acknowledging that socio-political structures are infused with unequal power relations that play out in complex ways. The dynamics of unequal power are manifested across a multi-variable set of social group categories (Giroux 2009, Kumashiro, 2000, Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The dominant group, as in the examples of racism and colonialism, employs all available means (juridical, scientific, political, narrative) to "fabricate" the Other in order to justify and reproduce oppressive and violent structures (Butler, 1999; Fanon, 1963; LaRocque, 2010). This fabrication is established to dehumanize and to justify exploitation, but is also used to define the dominant group in opposition to the negative attributes imputed to the targeted subaltern group. The dominant group, as in Leonardo's (2009) discussion of whiteness, becomes invested in the identity established in opposition to its derogatory fabrication of the Othered subject. Thus, social justice research must work towards both transforming discrimination and violence, and challenge the "codes," "worldview," and "assumptions" of the dominant group (Leonardo, 2009).

Another consequence of this fabrication is it serves as the criteria for defining the subject as intelligible in the eyes of the dominant group (Butler, 1999). Butler (1999) argues that the performativity of expectations for what it means to be sexed, gendered, and desiring subjects, positions difference or "queerness" as unknowable and thus forced clumsily into partial and largely inaccurate stereotypes. Those who hold such stereotypes subsequently enact the partial and inaccurate views with some combination of uncertainty, distrust, disdain, and ultimately, prejudice and violence. Thus, intelligibility becomes an important guiding consideration for learning and advocacy. Critically analyzing the way intelligibility plays a role in the power dynamics of daily interactions provides a constructive basis for establishing cross-disciplinary processes for inquiry and transformation. These initial connections inform a process of inquiry that may be applied as one revisits diverse theories within social and ecological justice.

Engaging the “Ecological” in Social and Ecological Justice

The array of ecological justice research is as almost as large as the body of work focusing on social justice. For the purpose of this paper, discussion will concentrate on orientations to research that focus on the interrelationship between ecological and social, political, and economic systems. Specifically, the review centres on analyses of these relationships employing critical perspectives that are consistent with those that guided the previous section. Cognizant of the profound need to confront and transform oppression, this section explores how ecological and social justice research may be engaged in concert in ways that enhance the cogency of both. In parallel with the format already used for reviewing social justice literature above, the following section provides a sample of ideas explored within a number of complementary research areas. The selected fields of inquiry include Environmental Justice, Environmental Racism, Climate Justice, Critical Ecopedagogy, and Land Education. These fields of research all emphasize the intersection between social and ecological systems and bring to bear a critical examination of ecological problems

In 1983, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD), or Brundtland Commission, was formed by the United Nations to outline a framework for global human activity aimed at preserving the ecological stability of the Earth. After four years of research and consultation, the Commission released its report entitled *Our Common Future* (or The Brundtland Report) (United Nations, 1987). The report was significant because it would influence a collection of rapidly emerging research areas related to environment, ecology, and sustainability (Nolet, 2016). The Report emphasized that sustainability must involve a rigorous engagement with issues of poverty, growth, resource use, food security, water availability, population, pollution, and armed conflict (United Nations, 1987).

For researchers concerned with these fundamental issues, it quickly became clear that their efforts must involve addressing questions that go well beyond environmental preservation. Indeed, today it is impossible for many to think of the challenges of poverty, resource use, pollution, food and water availability, population growth, and armed conflict as being independent of classism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and colonialism. In 2015, the UN General Assembly released its most recent list of Sustainable Development Goals entitled *17 Goals to Transform Our World* (United Nations, 2015). Many of the key issues are reiterated from the 1983 report, however, the document includes specific language related to the

transformation of injustice and oppression that exists globally in the forms of classism, racism, and sexism—though unfortunately issues of heterosexism and colonialism are not explicitly addressed.

Insights From Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice operates as a subset of a broader field of environmental (and/or ecological) research and action. Early orientations of environmental research concentrated on goals of conserving nature spaces, protecting wildlife, mitigating polluting industrial and household activities, and promoting a deep relationship with nature (Palmer, 1998). While these priorities undoubtedly remain essential for many environmental researchers, some have also moved to engage with deeper questions of human interconnection with the environment. This emerged in no small part due to a series of international conferences and commissions on the global environment beginning in 1967—one of which being the aforementioned WCED (Palmer, 1998). As seen in *Our Common Future* (United Nations, 1987), environmental researchers have long held an implicit understanding that measures to safeguard the stability and resilience of the planet's natural systems can only be achieved in relation to and together with social justice.

In 1987, Reverend Benjamin Chavis and the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice undertook a research project focusing on how the benefits and harms of environmental destruction are distributed disproportionately along class lines and, in particular, race (UCC, 1987). This study was inspired by a series of actions taken across the United States by predominantly Black, Latino/a, and Indigenous communities to resist plans to establish toxic and nuclear waste sites adjacent to their homes (Gosine & Teelucksingh, 2008). Inspired by these community actions, the study headed by Reverend Chavis, along with a number of complementary studies (Bryant & Mohai, 1992; Bullard, 1990), enabled environmental researchers and activists to establish unequivocally the correlation between environmental destruction and classism and racism. This development in the field solidified that the conditions at the core of environmental destruction have a clear and important relationship with the conditions at the core of social oppression and violence. One clear implication is the way *bodies* are devalued based on race- and class-based codes, and therefore systemically “zoned” as bodies suitable for contamination.

Another important parallel between questions of social justice and ecological justice is the way that *land* is understood, represented, and engaged. From the perspective of Reverend

Chavis (UCC, 1987), Robert Bullard (1990) and other environmental justice researchers (Bryant & Mohai, 1992), the key consideration is how land (also water and air) is determined appropriate for contamination. At the heart of the critique are patterns of deep-seated discrimination that are embedded in legal, economic, and ideological orientations to land. As such, the focus of research centres on historical and contemporary discriminatory housing policies, roots of economic disparity, inconsistent environmental regulations, representation in government, public indifference to the poisoning of bodies that are devalued, and so on (Gosine & Teelucksingh, 2008). While these are all essential, as we will see below, researchers interested in social and ecological justice engage *land* in additional significant ways.

Research that focuses on decolonization strives to expose and confront how historical and contemporary narratives and structures have and continue to empower this appropriation and exploitation of land. Contemporary forms of colonization—whether in the forms of settler colonialism, military-backed imperialism, or economic globalization—are largely driven by the interests of those in positions of power to control and draw wealth from land and the resources available therein. This includes the exploitation of cheap labor and operating in the virtual absence of environmental regulations.

In Canada, many of the most contentious struggles around First Nations, Métis, and Inuit rights centre around land and resources. Invariably, the settler colonial objective seeks control of land and the ability to draw wealth from it (Gosine & Teelucksingh, 2008). Given this position, it is easy to see that narratives grounded in racism and classism serve a function in the contemporary colonial project, and therefore that decolonization be taken up as a key focus of environmental justice. This can also be seen globally in the forms of armed conflict and/or geopolitics employed to gain access to commodities for influential corporations, and in corporate purchase of or license over foreign land for mining, agriculture, waste disposal, etc., all at the expense of local populations. Narratives and structures grounded in racism and classism serve these arrangements as well, both as moral justification and as a means to gain support (or avoid resistance) from leaders or populations of the states.

Insights From Environmental Racism

Closely related to Environmental Justice, the more narrowly focused purview Environmental Racism, was initially based on the findings of Reverend Chavis and others (Bryant & Mohai, 1992; Bullard, 1990) that race is the strongest indicator of where landfills,

waste sites, incinerators, and polluting industries are located in the United States (UCC, 1987). Andil Gosine and Cheryl Teelucksingh (2008) demonstrate in their book *Environmental Racism in Canada* that this reality is present also in Canada and elsewhere. This finding has required environmental justice researchers to look more deeply into the role that racism plays in the unequal distribution of environmental contamination, and therefore, to pursue a closer understanding of how racism operates as a mediator of day-to-day lived reality.

While it may be fairly straightforward to show empirically the correlation between the zoning of polluting industries and the locations of communities of color, as Laura Pulido (2015) discusses, it is much more difficult to show how race and racism factor in all socio-economic policies and practices that give rise to this correlation. As Pulido (2000) delves into an analysis of why it is that communities of color bear a far greater burden of environmental contamination than those inhabited predominantly by whites, she concludes that researchers must first understand that all spaces are circumscribed by race and racism, and that these play out in multiple and nuanced ways. This perspective aligns closely with the discussion of critical race theory included above.

Pulido has argued (2000; 2015) that research on environmental racism must go beyond popular understandings of racism, engaging analyses of white privilege and white supremacy to gain more meaningful understandings. In order to clarify what she sees as missing within popular understandings, Pulido (2000) contrasts assumptions of racism as deliberate, overt, and malicious acts committed by individuals with an understanding that “racial meanings are embedded in our language, psyche, and social structures” and that “[t]hese racial meanings are both constitutive of racial hierarchies and informed by them” (p. 13). Consistent with critical race theory, Pulido argues that the goal of environmental racism research is to interrogate the white-ordered historical and contemporary policies that have created “socio-spatial processes of inequality” that are at the heart of environmental racism (p. 14). Pulido does not contend that deliberate, malicious acts of racism and environmental racism do not exist; rather, her objective is to emphasize that such acts are a part of a deeper and more profound phenomenon that impacts social (and socio-spatial) reality (Pulido, 2000; 2015).

Insights From Climate Justice

As may be inferred, Climate Justice research examines the way consequences of climate change are largely borne by the most vulnerable populations across the globe (Roser et al., 2015;

Wallimann-Helmer, 2015). Studies in climate science are inevitably complex given the intricacy and interdependency of systems that must be understood to gain a sense of the potential harm being done to global ecological stability (Knutti & Rogelj, 2015; Nightingale et al., 2020). While the subject is inherently complex, understanding the dynamics involved when certain individuals make decisions from within geographic centres of power (Peet, 2007) that have a profound and damaging effect on social and ecological systems of those who are already marginalized adds an entire additional layer of complexity. Dominic Roser, Christian Huggel, Markus Ohndorf, and Ivo Wallimann-Helmer (2015) assert that recent trends in climate science have been driven by findings from both natural and social science researchers that emphasize questions of justice when investigating the consequences of climate change. The authors add that this trend has emerged in conjunction with what they see as a growing tendency of political philosophers placing an emphasis on the imminent threat climate change poses as core imperative for contemporary philosophy (p. 350).

Similar to environmental justice, climate justice is concerned with the unequal distribution of environmental exploitation and destruction, and how this is mediated by the intersection of uneven social power, valuations of land (also air and water), and discrimination and violence. Climate justice researchers largely explore the relationships among nation-states within the context of climate science, and the responsibilities and international agreements that may be brought to bear to mitigate intensification of climate change across the globe. In particular, discussion tends to be focused on the distribution of climate change consequences and responsibilities between what are often described as developed and developing nations (Wallimann-Helmer, 2015).

Aligned with Pulido's (2015) aim of illuminating how race and racism play out in all social and socio-spatial contexts, climate justice might explore how the structures and ideologies of class and race oppression obstruct action toward mitigating climate change. One outcome may be that reporting on developments such as the increase in frequency and magnitude of storms, vulnerability associated with rising sea levels, and heightened probability of drought with its regional and global impact on food and water takes on new meaning. Specifically, an understanding how deficit narratives about the geographic Other—particularly in regions labeled underdeveloped—are embedded within narratives of class and race, and serve to disassociate the

beneficiaries of unequal resource exploitation from the immediate consequences of climate change.

Insights From Critical Ecopedagogy

Aligned with the aims of Environmental and Climate Justice scholars, Critical Ecopedagogy approaches explore the connection between structures of power and environmental destruction. In his book *Critical Pedagogy, Ecoliteracy & Planetary Crisis*, Richard Kahn (2010) strives to find common ground between *environmental education* and the more politically engaged *critical pedagogy*. Kahn's primary concern is a rational response to the ecological crisis currently impacting all regions of the world. As a researcher and activist working on environmental issues, Kahn examines the complexity of factors that contribute to the growing threat to ecological stability. For Kahn, there can be no solution outside the domains of politics and discourse, and the eradication of species and destruction of ecosystems are closely related to the domination and exploitation of people (p. 6). Kahn's critique of the underlying conditions that give rise to the global ecological crisis begins with a globalized economics of exploitation (neo-liberalism) and extends to the political, educational, and media networks offering ideological cover for the damaging consequences of the economic program (p. 3).

Following the lead of Edgar Gonzalez-Gaudiano, an influential ecopedagogy advocate, and inspired by the work of Paulo Freire, Kahn (2010) envisions a pedagogical program that “seeks knowledge of how the environmental factors that contribute to disease, famine, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression, and other forms of sexual, ethnic, or religious violence can be examined as complex social and economic problems deserving everyone’s attention” (p. 14). Kahn recommends a problem-posing approach to education, in which learners trace patterns of social, political, economic, and ecological factors that shape the challenges identified in local and global contexts (p. 14).

Kahn (2010) draws heavily on the works of Herbert Marcuse and Ivan Illich to develop a theoretical grounding for Ecopedagogy. Kahn argues for the need to challenge and reconstruct “an anthropocentric world view,” that he characterized as “a matrix of domination;” a “global technocapitalist infrastructure;” an “unsustainable reductionist, and antidemocratic model of institutional science.” He also argues for confronting the “marginalization and repression of pro-ecological resistance” (p. 9). For Kahn, the sum of these interventions begins to describe the basis of ecoliteracy that ought to drive environmental education: an ecoliteracy “requiring critical

knowledge of the dialectical relationship between mainstream lifestyle and the dominant social structure. ... [A] much more radical and complex form of ecoliteracy than is possessed by the population at large” (p. 6). Kahn’s (2010) articulates a particular perspective toward understanding oppression, one that focuses on patterns of institutional, structural, and interpersonal oppression together with the commodification and consequence of land use and ecological destruction.

Insights From Land Education.

As discussed above, the question of land is key to addressing both social and ecological justice theory. The research areas of critical theory, critical race theory, decolonization, and environmental justice are interwoven with the layered realities and meanings of land: how it is understood, accessed, inhabited, used, altered, controlled, and represented. This emphasis on land in social and ecological justice work is reflected in a growing body of scholarship published under the heading land education. Land education takes up place-based education’s goal of interrogating “What is happening here? What happened here? What should happen here? What needs to be transformed, restored, or conserved in this place?” (Greenwood, 2009, p. 279). It does so, however, through the lens of decolonization, which has a clear connection to analyses of race and class.

In addition to the myriad ways that unequal power manifests around land as racism, classism, gender discrimination, surveillance, resource extraction, gentrification, industrial waste zoning, etc. (Bullard, 1990; Leonardo, 2009; Pulido, 2015), oppression within colonial spaces is also involves the interplay of distinct ontological and cosmological orientations to land. Kathi Wilson and Evelyn Peters (2005) reveal the paradoxical nature of place for Indigenous Peoples subjected to colonization—as both a source of strength and a space of alienation, restriction, and struggle. The authors emphasize that *place* does not come into being outside of the forces of conflict and violence—just as identity and sense of belonging do not exist outside of these influences (Wilson & Peters, 2005).

Eve Tuck, Marcia McKenzie, and Kate McCoy (2014) see similar tensions of relationality to place within settler colonial contexts as having bearing upon educational design in general and place-based pedagogy in particular. The authors illuminate the distinguishing and operational features of land education in the introduction to a special issue of *Environmental Education Research*. As a nascent field, land education is distinct from place-based education in

terms of how place (land) is understood in relation to political-historical and cosmological framings. Centring on global regions established through mechanisms of colonialism, the territories within which education takes place must be read through this history that is so dominated by the project of colonialism. In their discussion of settler colonialism, Tuck et al. (2014) discuss the ways that settler inhabitants resist understanding and acknowledging that within the knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples is a “pre-existing ontological and cosmological relationship” with land (p. 7). This gap in and aversion to understanding on the part of settlers creates boundaries of identity and presence within place, and serves as a foundation of the ongoing settler colonial project. The impetus to open educational design to Indigenous conceptions of land also involves the enrichment of meaning of land, as the idea of “‘land’ refers not just to its materiality, but also its ‘spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects’” (Styres, Haig-Brown, and Blimkie, cited in Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy, 2014, p. 9). This multidimensional approach to exploring what it means to be present on and have a relationship with land has important implications for social and ecological justice learning and action.

Along with the assumption of a territorial worldview through which place is imagined, Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy (2014) identify the settler colonial presumption of a singular “futurity” as an extension of settler nation-building consciousness (p. 11). Tuck et al. discuss themes of Indigenous agency and resistance in the context of a recent emphasis on place and place-based education as a response to global social and ecological crises (p. 15). Land education both draws on Indigenous knowledge as a key resource for responding to such crises, and energizes the possibility of a plural futurity that is more amenable to just and prosperous arrangements for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants.

Discussion: Identifying Patterns in the Theory

Given the interdisciplinary nature of this approach to reading relevant literatures, it seems helpful to develop the analysis around a holistic framework. Fritjof Capra's (2005) Theory of Living Systems provides a useful model for engaging an integrated discussion of this diverse and dynamic body of work. In Capra's Theory of Living Systems, the first task is to identify a network of interconnected elements that make up the system being researched. The elements comprising the network are understood to act upon one another in what some theorists term dynamic balance (p. 28). In an (eco)system, the network might be established, for instance, through looking at soil, plants, animals, insects, water, climate, air, human activities, etc. In order

to understand the system, it is necessary to examine each of these interconnected components both individually and in a relationship with the others. As this discussion has unfolded, it has become increasingly clear that the path to understanding what is meant by social and ecological justice—or simply what we wish to see improved in the world—follows a similar model. The path to understanding, therefore, involves gaining knowledge of multiple foundations of social and ecological justice, seeking patterns found across the diverse research areas dedicated to guiding learning and action. When a specific problem is established as a starting point for analysis, racism for instance, efforts toward effecting change might be perceived to diverge or even compete with efforts of those who set colonization, heterosexism, or environmental sustainability as the core problem. Referencing a network model, it might be anticipated that a research program centrally concerned with racism will interpret research around colonialism, heterosexism, and environmental sustainability as potentially enhancing understandings and interventions related to racism as these phenomena are intricately interwoven.

Although the above review of social and ecological justice theory is merely a sampling of the extensive work that has been done, it allows us to look for useful overarching or shared and recurring approaches to complex problems, and to contemplate how such framings might inform learning and action. One core pattern that can be clearly identified is the necessity to dig deeply into the construction, reproduction, and inculcation of dominant group identities (Butler, 1999; Calderon, 2014; Fanon, 1963; Kumashiro, 2009; Leonardo, 2009; Pulido, 2015). As Kumashiro (2009) has argued, “The reason we fail to do more to challenge oppression is not merely that we do not know enough about oppression, but also that we often do not *want* to know more about oppression. It is not our lack of knowledge but our resistance to knowledge and our desire for ignorance that often prevent us from changing the oppressive status quo” (p. 27). Often this resistance to knowledge is anchored in a deep yet largely unexamined investment in narratives based in dominant positionalities. An integrated understanding of social and ecological justice will thus require ongoing, systematic examination of how investments in dominant narratives play out through our performativity (Butler, 1999); and, how such investments by others play out through performativity directed towards us.

In addition, through more deeply examining the construction and reproduction of dominant-group narratives, commonalities may be discerned with the ways that identity constructs such as talent, success, and social value (all of which are tied to class) are performed

through codes of consumption. Just as our identities are bound up with narratives of social group membership, our identities are also heavily mediated by our ability to purchase “goods” that will serve to telegraph our status in a competitive society. Due to this integral relationship between consumption, status, and identity, it becomes difficult to internalize new knowledge about how our consumption contributes to the present ecological crisis, and that mitigating the crisis will require departing from and subverting the dominant codes of consumer culture (Kahn, 2010; Kumashiro, 2000).

A second pattern or repeated focus that has emerged in this review is the centrality of land as a locus for understanding and working towards social and ecological justice. Throughout the world, the desire for land and the wealth it provides have been a motivation for violence, as well as, the ideological and moral fabrications required to maintain and disassociate from such horrific acts (Fanon, 1963; LaRocque, 2010). While the origins of all oppression cannot be directly linked to the appropriation of land, all forms of oppression coalesce within dominant cultural identities that are situated on and rooted in the land (Calderon, 2014; Tuck et al., 2014). An integrated theory of social and ecological justice centring on land therefore asks the questions: through what processes of annexation, violence, exploitation, fabrication, and consumption have we come to this social and ecological reality in this time and place? And, in what ways do our actions in this time and place maintain these processes both locally and globally? In order to respond to these questions, we can see the value (and necessity) of drawing on insights from critical theory, critical race theory, feminist theory, queer theory, decolonization, environmental justice, climate justice, and land education.

Through engaging these critical questions about our presence on the land, we can also recognize the importance of digging deeply into the framing and reproduction of dominant narratives. For many researchers, engaging such questions means seeing our identities as entangled with the problems we wish to interrogate, and our very presence on the land as rooted in a history and futurity defined by social and ecological injustice. By centring land, the objective shifts from identifying a specific problem and seeking solutions within a specific research realm, to observing, naming, and challenging the ways colonization, racism, classism, heteropatriarchy, anthropocentrism, and all other forms of discrimination and violence are embedded within and play out in our relationships with one another and with the land.

Conscious, deliberate engagement with such critical questions then becomes a formative part of who we are and how we live together.

This type of analysis that is advanced by many of the subfields and areas of inquiry reviewed here is sometimes labeled intersectionality, and is increasingly a requisite for social and ecological justice theorizing (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Such analysis may also require us to see ourselves paradoxically (Kumashiro, 2000; 2009). Kumashiro (2000) encourages justice researchers to be open to the possibility of being influenced by and reproducing oppression, while simultaneously striving to transform it. Whether or not we can relate to a conceptualization of paradoxical identities embedded in systems of unequal power and oppression, we must include in our methodological approach a deliberate examination of potential “blind spots,” and place value on identifying new forms of analysis. Understanding “the problem” in social and ecological justice is extremely complicated, and our interpretation of the problem will always be partial. This is in part due to our identities being bound up in narratives and structures of oppression, which necessitates a constant process of critical reflection (Kumashiro, 2009). What we might take away from this acknowledgement of the messiness and complexity of social and ecological justice work is a commitment to posing questions that challenge our own beliefs, values, and identities.

Reflecting on what one might learn from these literatures about how to pursue social and ecological justice in a changing and complex world, it becomes apparent that generating a useful understanding of what is going wrong requires an interdisciplinary framework that goes beyond aggregating an array of discrete methodologies. It requires identifying patterns and symmetries within the diverse research areas, empowering analyses able to articulate and confront the multiple factors that give rise to our problems. Wendell Berry (2005) states that “a bad solution is bad, then, because it acts destructively upon the larger patterns in which it is contained. ... A good solution is good because it is in harmony with those larger patterns” (p. 33). When we ask what is going wrong and what we might do to make a difference, it seems promising to approach social and ecological justice through a practice of solving for pattern. We need to become more able to address multiple, interlocking problems simultaneously, and to better recognize the contributions of those around us who are working toward similar visions of social and ecological justice.

Chapter Three: Critical Constructivist Grounded Theory

Methodology

As introduced above, the core aim of this study is to explore an integrated, practice-based approach to social and ecological justice. The vision for pursuing this goal involves exploring the connections between theory and the realities associated with working towards social and ecological justice as a daily practice. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), and later Juliet Corbin (Straus & Corbin, 1998), developed grounded theory as a formalized process for investigating phenomena without a predetermined path or structure for generating meaning. The researchers saw the potential of integrating and examining multiple, diverse sources of data and approaches to analysis to arrive at new foundations for understanding the world (Mills et al., 2006). The researchers promoted an inductive methodological practice in which observed lived conditions are explored in relation to a diverse and range of theory in order to generate new theoretical tools (Birks & Mills, 2015; Mills et al., 2006). The aim of this deliberate, constant comparative process is to continuously refine theoretical tenets and develop new useful frameworks to guide inquiry and action (Charmaz, 2006). The precepts of grounded theory align well with the theoretical and practical goals of this study.

The methodological architecture upon which the study is built draws from grounded theory, constructivism, and critical analysis. As an evolving qualitative research methodology, grounded theory enables researchers to employ an established procedure for conducting research, while offering a level of flexibility to explore emerging theoretical frameworks that may shed new light on lived realities (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010). According to Birks and Mills (2015), the appeal of grounded theory is that while research questions may be diverse and complex, the methodology lays out a procedure for systematically organizing the research process and engaging data. The initial step, as stated by Birks and Mills (2015), is to develop a discussion of the underlying philosophical underpinnings that inform the research process. By philosophical underpinnings, the authors refer to both one's "unique conceptualization of existence and reality" and the way one's "understanding [of] the world is influenced by [one's] history and the context in which [one] find[s] [oneself]" (p. 1).

An entry point from which this discussion begins is the assumption that there are multiple approaches to generating meaning and knowledge, each having its own purpose and potential value. The context in which meaning and knowledge are generated figures significantly in

determining the quality, value, and import of knowledge generation. This perspective is consistent with a constructivist approach to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2017), and departs from earlier versions oriented around the pursuit of universal truths (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A constructivist orientation to grounded builds from a body of theory that is influenced by the work of John Dewey, among others (Charmaz, 2017). A key feature of John Dewey's work was his endeavour to establish a theoretical basis for inquiry that could respond to a complex world and generate useful knowledge and insights that would support better practice (Garrison et al., 2012). This contrasted with the prevailing ethos of his time, which was predicated on the ability to isolate and control for individual, measurable variables (Schulkin, 2011, p. 106). For Dewey, inquiry was about pursuing knowledge and understanding about the world, but it also involved asking questions aimed at generating meaningful insights that would promote improved practices. Contributing to the emergence of both constructivism and pragmatism, Dewey's ideas on inquiry and knowledge expanded the landscape of what could be considered valid and relevant research (Shook & Kurtz, 2011). Now well accepted, Dewey argued that inquiry and knowledge had validity and relevance not solely if it was proven to be universal and reproducible, but if it could be demonstrated to improve or enhance the systems and structures mediating social life. Dewey's ideas on the role and purpose of inquiry as a human enterprise aligns well with the epistemological philosophies and orientations that motivate this research design (Garrison et al., 2012).

According to Kathy Charmaz (2000), a constructivist approach to grounded theory begins with an emphasis on the meaning and significance generated dialectically between the researcher(s), participants, research questions, and lived contexts in which the research is taking place. She states, "A constructivist grounded theory recognizes that the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed. Data do not provide a window on reality. Rather, 'discovered' reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural and structural contexts. Researcher and subjects frame that interaction and confer meaning upon it" (Charmaz, 2000, pp. 593, 594). In a constructivist approach to grounded theory, the researchers, research questions, participants, and contexts all factor into the development of the research methodology and the findings. In this way of understanding and conducting the research process, the outcomes and implications of the research are always understood in context and, it is hoped, will support clarity and comprehension. The clarity and comprehension have value based

on an ability to inform practice, which connects back to one of Dewey's central tenets: namely, that inquiry be motivated by meaningful questions designed to guide action in response to lived realities (Garrison et al., 2012).

The *critical* component of the methodology is one that informs all aspects of the study; it guides the selection and framing of the research question, the reading and analysis of theory, and the role of the researcher. Although there has been little written on a critical approach to constructivist grounded theory, a few theorists have begun to explore the potential in engaging with the methodology starting from a critical orientation (Acosta et al., 2017; Bondy et al., 2015; Charmaz, 2017; Redman-MacLaren & Mills, 2015). An innovator in grounded theory, Charmaz (2017) has recently emphasized the potential of interpreting grounded theory through a critical lens. Charmaz leads off her discussion on critical grounded theory by emphasizing the necessity of researchers "scrutinizing our positions, privileges, and priorities and assessing how they affect our steps during the research process" (p. 35). This, for Charmaz, is a fundamental principle, which she terms "methodological self-consciousness." Charmaz adds focus to this principle by arguing for a careful critique of the historical, contextual, and political dimensions of all aspects of the research process. She further develops her conceptualization of critical grounded theory by invoking critical *inquiry* as a driver of critical *theory*. This foundation incorporates a broad body of work that includes Marxist and neoMarxist contributions, Frankfurt School theorists, and newer postmodern and poststructural forms of inquiry. In addition, her interest in evolving orientations of critical grounded theory, Charmaz cites "feminist theory, critical race theory, and queer theorizing" as guiding emergent research designs (p. 35).

In this study, I interpret critical grounded theory as a methodology aimed at exploring how the complex dynamics of power influence personal and interpersonal life and become embedded and encoded in social conventions, policies, and structures. The descriptor "critical" signifies that the roles of (unequal) power are not automatically revealed in research. In this thesis, examination of the role of unequal power is a primary consideration, one that is fundamental to addressing the research question. Critical constructivist grounded theory examines the "object" of study within context; that is, the context in which data are collected and analyzed, and the context in which historical and contemporary power plays out.

Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews

Grounded theory is often used in qualitative research studies, though its innovative users have begun to develop mixed-method designs involving both qualitative and quantitative methods (Birks & Mills, 2015). This study fits within the category of qualitative research, exploring the stories and understandings of participants as a window into the complexity of lived experiences. Possibilities for data gathering in grounded theory are broad and expanding, though this study has adopted the well tested approach of semi-structured interviews. As stated above, the methodological tenets of grounded theory hold that researchers, participants, and research questions interact in a dynamic and creative process out of which data emerge.

At the outset, a general interview outline was developed together with a list of potential participants. The interview guide was included in recruitment communications. Once the interview outline was shared, dialogue with participants was largely driven by the topics that they opted to address with regards to their practice. The role of the researcher in the interview process was to pose questions to elicit details and contextualizing information related to stories related by participant. The overarching objective was to create a space for participants to share what they thought was important to emphasize about their experiences working toward social and ecological justice. Appendix B provides a list of questions that, if not arising naturally, guided follow-up questions to be asked in the course of the interviews.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

At the outset of the planning process for this research, a key question was how to generate useful insights on what it means to engage in social and ecological justice work. Another key consideration was to ground these insights in the experiences of people working on justice issues as a daily practice. When the idea arose to interview individuals working in community-based organizations focused on a wide range of social and ecological justice issues, it seemed like a rich and valuable opportunity. A community-based organization is understood in this study as any organization working directly with community members toward a shared goal. Since this interpretation encompasses organizations that do not fit within the scope of the research question, further delimitation was needed. The community-based organizations selected for this research have a shared goal to respond to the needs of community members, and provide supports and resources directed at promoting health, security, safety, justice, and wellbeing. In

other words, the objective was to reach out to organizations throughout the community working directly on issues encompassed within the sphere of social and ecological justice. While a majority of organizations considered for the study had non-profit designation, some organizations were not incorporated under any formal body.

In order to develop a list of suitable organizations operating in Saskatoon, I conducted a series of online searches and inquired with colleagues and friends to generate additional suggestions. Once a list was compiled, I began contacting organizations via email and telephone. As a general strategy, I directed communications to the director or coordinator of the organization. However, in some instances, when I could identify individuals whose position was dedicated to community learning, I reached out to them directly. In a few instances, I was able to make connections with key actors through referrals from colleagues or friends. As discussed in the opening section of this dissertation, I conducted interviews with thirteen participants, each working toward diverse justice-based objectives within the community. In one of the interviews, two participants were interviewed together based on their request to do so. The length of the interviews ranged from one to two hours. All but one of the interviews was conducted in-person, the remaining interview was conducted by telephone. Fifteen interviews were conducted in total. A second interview was conducted in three instances where the available time wasn't sufficient for participants to share everything they wanted to discuss. In these three instances, the participants were willing and eager to meet for a second interview to discuss important topics that were not address in the first interview. The opportunity to hold a second interview with the three participants allowed for a time of reflection between the interviews. This may have led to more considered responses to the second interview questions. In the second meetings, participants began the interviews with a clearer sense of the study focus and how their experiences and knowledge could make a contribution to the findings.

The thirteen participants who contributed to the study are, Tennille, Jayda, Jamie, Sarah, Emma, Tara, Mary, Jason, Megan, Linda, Julie, Natalie, and Lois (pseudonyms are used to protect anonymity). The majority of participants who volunteered to be part of the study were female (twelve of the thirteen). The ages of participants fell within the range of twenty-five to fifty-five, though most were in their twenties or thirties. Two participants identified themselves as Indigenous during the interviews. The remaining participants did not specify their heritage, but could be said to "pass" as white. Three participants identified as non-heterosexual, while the

other participants did not make reference to their sexual orientation. As a daily practice, the participants engaged in the study are actively working towards child and youth safety, nutrition, and education; environmental and outdoor education; settlement experiences and the needs of immigrants; inclusion of individuals with special needs; health and safety of those living with poverty and addictions; and, challenging racism, homo/transphobia, and colonialism. The above list is intended to capture the scope of objectives engaged by participants and not to allude to the particular organizations that are represented. The list of organization activities is intentionally vague in order to protect anonymity.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in grounded theory is reflexive, beginning with a fairly open and fluid analytical process, and moving towards a more focused, defined structure (Birks & Mills, 2015). Early stages of analysis involved the concurrent practices of memoing and initial (or open) coding. The objective of memoing, according to Birks and Mills (2015), is to create a record of the researcher's thinking throughout the development of the research. Memos may be thought of as a form of journaling aimed at capturing observations made at various points in the research, providing background and context for respondent contributions, and helping to elucidate decisions taken during the research process. The aim of the initial coding is to record all salient findings from the data, and is not limited by concerns of scope or organization of codes. This stage in the coding process seeks to establish a comprehensive picture of what is revealed in the data. The initial coding process enables the researcher to engage the field data without the intention of identifying patterns or clusters. At this stage, each idea presented by participants is considered independently, while in the later stages, ideas are considered in relation to one another as the possible emergence of patterns is more closely scrutinized.

Intermediate coding is the process of beginning to organize initial or open codes into categories. This involves a practice of purposive sampling and constant comparison, which are directed towards developing a clear and coherent connection between codes and categories (Birks & Mills, 2015). The objective of intermediate coding is to develop categories that include codes that fit together to reveal prominent, recurring themes in the data. Purposive sampling and constant comparison are employed to test and refine categories so that they more accurately reflect the broader meanings and implications of the particular collection of codes that they encompass. The stages of analysis in grounded theory are dynamic, and can shift forward or

backward depending on whether a more targeted approach is being pursued or a broader perspective is sought (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010).

The final stages of analysis involve refining categories and testing for theoretical saturation (Birks & Mills, 2015). Once all data are coded and a range of intermediate codes (or categories) are developed, a set of final categories is determined through purposive sampling and constant comparison. This requires tracing back through the steps of the research process to identify and highlight insights and meanings revealed in relation to the research question. Theoretical saturation is achieved when all salient findings are encompassed within the categories. One of the central objectives in building towards theoretical saturation is to develop a clear picture of what the data reveal about the subject explored in the study. This is done to enable a reading of the data conjointly with the analysis of the literature to address the study's guiding questions. The field data and analysis chapter details the categories established from examination of the data, and provides context and narrative for the salient themes. Building from the data analysis, the discussion chapter undertakes a more focused look at foundational ideas useful to guide theorizing on integrated social and ecological justice learning and action. This more focused and select reading of the data is done with both a broad picture of participants' stories in mind and a broad reading of cross-disciplinary social and ecological justice literature. Seeking connections and potential mutual strengthening and cross fertilization between these two sources, the study aims to identify productive foundations for learning and action.

Critical constructivist grounded theory is a suitable fit for the research process undertaken in this study. The roots of grounded theory, formalized in the sixties by Glaser and Strauss (1967), orient research design around observed and experienced reality, and the myriad possibilities for generating useful knowledge about that reality. This is contrasted with research designed around pre-configured structures, theories, and procedures that produce findings framed and interpreted within existing disciplinary landscapes. Led by Charmaz (2019), Bryant (2017), and others, more recent developments in grounded theory integrate epistemological tenets of constructivism and critical theory into the original framework. These additional tenets align well with the foundational understandings I draw on as I respond to the underlying questions guiding this study. Specifically, as Charmaz (2017) argues, knowledge emerges through complex processes involving networks of contributors, and is grounded in historical and political contexts. These foundations are woven throughout the stages of this research. The grounded theory

methodology also provides a guide for working through complex and heterogeneous data to create a picture of what is revealed by participants. As discussed below, some of the core themes emerging through this research process include learning processes associated with social and ecological justice work, societal perceptions and values that bear upon social and ecological justice advocacy, resistance to social and ecological justice learning and action; and, limitations in social and ecological justice education and training in public institutions. A more extensive discussion of the field data and data analysis are provided below.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Field Data

As outlined above, the core aim of this study is to explore what is meant by social and ecological justice learning and action and to engage these meanings in relation to daily experiences of people working on justice issues in the community. Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirteen individuals working on a range of social and ecological justice issues in twelve community-based organizations. The organizations participating in the study work toward improving child and youth safety, nutrition, and education; environmental and outdoor education; settlement experiences and needs for new Canadians; inclusion of individuals with special needs; health and safety of those living with poverty and addictions; and challenging racism, homo/transphobia, and colonialism.

Working from critical constructivist grounded theory, the data analysis in this study follows the analytical process first introduced by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, and subsequently adapted by Charmaz and others to incorporate constructivist perspectives (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2017). As detailed above, the data analysis undertaken in the study involved memoing, initial (or open) coding, intermediate coding (through constant comparison and purposive sampling), and developing categories and testing for saturation. The systematic, reflexive analysis was designed to draw out important connections and mutually helpful insights through concomitant engagement with relevant literature and the field data that was primarily collected via interviews with selected key informants/social actors.

The themes derived through the stages of data analysis include: learning processes associated with social and ecological justice work; societal perceptions and values that bear upon social and ecological justice advocacy; resistance to social and ecological justice learning and action; and limitations in social and ecological justice education and training in public institutions.

Learning Processes Associated with Social and Ecological Justice Work

As Kevin Kumashiro (2000; 2009) has argued, the learning process that often accompanies social and ecological justice work is not simply about acquiring new information and ideas; it is far more complex and involves deep tensions and divisions related to identities, values, fears, and histories. For individuals interested in promoting social and ecological justice learning, there is also the interplay between one's own process of learning about social and ecological justice and questions related how best to facilitate the learning processes of others.

Many study participants discussed the complexity of both their learning journey in relation to social and/or ecological justice, and their vision and practice in relation to fostering learning in others. Participants' discussion of the learning process—both their own learning, and how they see learning in others—provided valuable insight into their experiences and understandings. Another significant characteristic of the way participants spoke about social and ecological justice learning was in the differentiation between learning aimed at those positioned within minoritized social group categories and those positioned within dominant groups (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). For the former, learning was expressed in terms of empowerment and self-advocacy. Participants suggested that in such instances, their goal in the promotion of learning was to assist individuals in navigating the nuanced expressions of oppression, including experiences of discrimination, dismissal, and disdain. For educational efforts focused on people associated with more dominant groups, participants often discussed learning as corrective or transformative, promoting understandings more consistent with social and ecological justice ends.

Reflective of these threads in the data, four sub-themes are created to further organize the information provided by participants. The sub-themes include, participants' own learning around social and ecological justice; participants' objectives and strategies to advance learning in others; learning envisioned as self-advocacy and empowerment in the face of oppression; and, learning envisioned as challenging established perceptions and values among individuals and groups that occupy dominant positions. As with any qualitative analysis, data in this set of discussions often overlap and intersect. As participants endeavoured to articulate the roles that learning played in their work, they shifted between discussion of their experiences and how they interpreted and understood those experiences to give meaning to their stories through commentary and analysis.

Participants' Own Learning Around Social and Ecological Justice

When asked generally about their work, participants often spoke about the realizations and understandings they had gained through working toward personal and organizational goals. In a particularly emotional moment, Tennille expressed a deep sense of sadness regarding what she has come to see as a divide between a fundamental goal of mutual dignity and the way she sees people treated by public institutions tasked with the protection and care of the most vulnerable members of the community. The concept of mutual dignity has come to be a guiding tenet of Tennille's professional practice identity; and, at the same time, the absence of mutual

dignity signifies for Tennille what is often going wrong in a wealthy society in which people experience homelessness, food insecurity, and inadequate medical care. Coming to terms with this reality, Tennille stated "It's the world in which we live. Marginalized populations are counted as worthless." Tennille's understanding of this problem, reinforced through her experience, has led her to believe that "It is so difficult to change people's perceptions, to ignite compassion in people. You can talk ideology, you can talk political platforms, but to actually have people have their hearts be opened, and have them understand is difficult." For Tennille, the types of learning experiences that have the potential to ignite compassion and lead to a practice of mutual dignity are equated with an artistic experience in which the emotions are directly engaged and learners are invited to make a personal connection with the subject being taught.

In Tennille's assessment of what is going wrong, she has come to see that many people in society are prone to defining the other as a single attribute such as "addict" or "delinquent." A result of this narrow characterization, one can then externalize the suffering of the other and "write them off"—even withhold services that could be life-saving. Tennille's comment about the tendency to perceive others through a narrow set of characteristics is consistent with Jayda's discussion of her learning process in her justice work. When presented with a situation where it would be easy to characterize another through a deficit attribute and "write them off," Jayda has nurtured a practice of stopping and asking what the individual is expressing as a need. In Jayda's words:

We do a focus on addressing the youth's needs as opposed to disciplining the behaviour. So, the behaviour is a reaction to the unmet need. And so, if we break down the layers of where the frustration is coming from, often we address the behaviour by addressing the need. And then that kind of brings us into when we are doing that, the youth feel safer. And so, they have this place of safety that they can come to. And they no longer need to show the outburst in order to come and say hey "you know I'm hungry, I haven't got a place to go tonight." And instead of blowing up and using that energy, and wasting it on outburst, they can use their energy on addressing and meeting their needs a little bit more efficiently. (Jayda)

As with Tennille, Jayda has witnessed many instances in which individuals are dismissed and turned away in part because they are perceived narrowly in relation to a deficit. Several other participants (Julie, Tara, Linda, Jason, Mary, and Megan) expressed similar understandings that they have come to see as foundational to their work within the community.

Jayda's vision for her practice is grounded in a deep concern for the real and immediate needs of the individuals she works with in the community. For Jayda, understanding the needs of

individuals requires looking into the lived, often multi-generational context in which the needs are situated. For Jayda, behaviours that are deemed deficits or deficient or dysfunctional are often a result of a range of forms of trauma that carry physiological and psychological implications that impact an individuals' ability to meet societal expectations. For Jayda, to create a place of safety and belonging requires the acceptance of behaviors that are often interpreted as a deficient, and an understanding that such behaviors are rooted in unmet fundamental needs, rather than in some flaw in character. Jayda explained:

So, you know every day is different here, every day we have a different youth coming in, and different needs base, and different things. And the reason why we keep it such a home atmosphere is unfortunately a ton of our kids are couch surfing; and moving, walking the street all night. They come here and they are exhausted, they don't have that core energy, that affectionate loving energy. So, we keep it a home space environment here, and a really casual environment here. (Jayda)

Often the set of needs of individuals served by Jayda's organization falls beyond the scope of the organizational resources that they have available, therefore requiring Jayda to reach out to additional services in the community.

Tennille, along with several other participants, described a similar underlying goal when devising strategies for serving members of the community: "You have to find that thing that the person needs, then you have to try to meet that need, then take care of the healthcare needs." Similar to Jayda, Tennille cited basic necessities such as food, shelter, and safety as foundational, issues as well as, the ability to be seen as struggling with profound and complex needs rather than as someone who is fundamentally flawed.

In line with Jayda and Tennille, Jason and Mary emphasized the importance of undertaking a careful and deliberate examination of assumptions one has about another and, in particular, how such assumptions shape what one sees as possible for the life of the other. Jason and Mary stressed the importance of not allowing preconceived ideas and judgements to dictate how individuals are perceived, and emphasized that justice work required viewing each individual as complex (often working through profound challenges) and having agency in determining their course of action. As Jason stated,

It's not for us to impose what our vision is for their lives, it's for them to choose. Our responsibility is to provide them with accurate, reliable and timely information to make the best-informed choices they can in their lives. (Jason)

Many of the participants discussed the necessity of attending to individuals and their needs, and the far-reaching consequences of a tendency in the society to interpret individuals and their lived contexts through narrow and negative perceptions or lenses. This fundamental insight was situated within an awareness of the profound impacts of the tendency to judge and dismiss individuals based on a superficial reading of their lives.

In the course of her interview, Julie shared related and similarly impactful lessons she had learned about working toward social and ecological justice. In dialogue with some of her colleagues, Julie was able to delve deeply into questions about what is going wrong within the community and what needs to change. For Julie, this deep engagement is informed by an understanding of anti-racist/anti-oppressive theories. In much of her work, however, Julie feels that she is only able to achieve surface-level discussions about social and ecological justice with various stakeholders associated with her work. Julie has had to become an expert in determining the point at which a line of questioning was making the other individual(s) uncomfortable, resistant, and/or disengaged. In Julie's words, she lamented that "not even touching the surface on what we should do had broken people ... I'm not even in the deep part." A tension that Julie identified in her work is the frequency of what she perceives as surface-level interactions she experiences with many stakeholders that limit proposed actions leading to change. This is contrasted with the deep interactions she has had in her various roles in activism that delve into and consider solutions at a fundamental level.

Several other participants expressed similar understandings they had developed through their work. Natalie reflected on an awareness she has come to from her own experiences:

Consistently we hear that [our organization] is one of the first places that people heard about all kinds of issues. I would say that issues around colonialism and race are one of the biggest ones, but there's other stuff. Everything from economics (like progressive economics) to again conflict stuff. ... But there are queer and trans issues, like even just appropriate language is stuff quite shockingly even pretty young participants just didn't get any of in school. And therefore, just have no understanding of a lot of their peers. That's stuff that has been pretty eye-opening for people. (Natalie)

For Natalie, it is heartening to see meaningful learning happening around social and ecological justice; however, she is also struck by the realization that individuals do not have previous exposure to the ideas and questions she believes are essential for engaging social and ecological justice.

The above discussion of learning related by study participants highlights the reality of a deficit approach prevalent in society directed at vulnerable individuals who have profound and complex needs. The participants point to the importance of a deep interrogation of how assumptions of value and deficit are applied to members of the community, and how these assumptions impact the way individuals are interpreted and received within the various institutions and structures that provide (or deny) services. Building from this understanding, participants also discussed how they see their efforts working toward initiating the deeper interrogation of assumptions that is needed.

Participants' Objectives and Strategies for Advancing Learning in Others

In several instances, participants described learning related to social and ecological justice as amounting to a shift in consciousness. Natalie described this shift as a critical examination of commonplace assumptions and values that is required, in her words, "because we live in a pretty white-supremacist, patriarchal, heteronormative culture." Natalie made this observation while engaging with questions of bias and balance in her work. She indicated that she values the idea of balance; however, the notion must be contemplated in relation to the repetition of certain perspectives over others within the dominant discourse of the society. Natalie saw her work as biased, but it was important that the bias be made explicit, and that the underlying values of the bias were defensible: for example, human rights, reconciliation, equality, health, compassion, etc. Natalie discussed the challenges and tensions around facilitating learning aimed at eliciting a shift in consciousness. Key to understanding the challenges was recognizing that the ideas and values consistent with social and ecological justice are often in conflict with previously held ideas and values that are connected to and associated with friends, family, and colleagues. In fact, part of Natalie's strategy for facilitating learning involves preparing for resistance and anger that can potentially arise when justice-based ideas and values come up against dominant perspectives.

Julie related a similar experience in her work to promote what she sees as fundamental tenets of social and ecological justice. Julie characterized her work as facilitating a range of "uncomfortable conversations" in which, by degrees, she pushes the thought processes of the people she works with on a daily basis. Julie described the learning process as one of working through various forms of tension. One of the key forms of tension, as discussed above, is to recognize that each individual she collaborates with carries previously established knowledge

and values that guide meaning-making and decisions that have a bearing on the work of the organization. Julie also discussed the challenge of colleagues and other stakeholders being afraid to ask questions, for fear of seeming ignorant and/or disrespectful. While possibly coming from a “good place,” Julie saw this reticence as an obstacle to meaningful learning and change. One of the core strategies Julie employed to promote social and ecological justice learning was to invite people she works with to embrace “uncomfortable conversations” and be willing to acknowledge that the learning and training they have received may be missing representation of non-dominant perspectives. This strategy also challenges the proposition of being neutral while working within the community, asserting that without engaging uncomfortable questions about common practices, progress toward social and ecological justice is inherently limited.

Several participants emphasized the importance of creating the conditions for establishing an emotional connection to desired learning outcomes. Tara expressed her belief in the value of sharing the stories of those who are misunderstood, and who experience prejudice and discrimination within the community:

We see that quite a bit, and it’s unfortunate, talking about for example the media, and how it portrays certain groups, and telling the whole story, and one of the things I think would be wonderful is to have more [underrepresented individuals] to share their experiences; and for people to really recognize and understand their story, their strength and resilience, and what they have contributed to Saskatoon. (Tara) [Group identifier removed to protect participant anonymity]

Tara added, however, that often when inviting individuals to share their stories, there is an unwanted toll exacted on the speaker, who experiences the vulnerability associated with telling one's personal story to an audience of strangers. Natalie similarly emphasized the value and potential of sharing personal stories as a foundation for meaningful learning. Engaging guest speakers and organizing similar events were seen as ways to create opportunities for making deeper and more meaningful connections. In addition to emphasizing the value of hearing stories from individuals who have faced discrimination in the community, Natalie also encouraged those who do not face discrimination to share their understandings and experiences around oppression, including their own limited understanding and personal apprehensions.

Tennille characterized the type of learning process that nurtures emotional connection as a form of art, rather than a program of lectures. Expressing a similar sentiment, Jamie asserted that “It has to touch your heart, personal talks do that, spoken word is art too.” Further elaborating her position, Jamie outlined the value in inviting learners to,

make an emotional connection with a human being who they feel a connection with. Little things like that stick with people, where you're like 'oh remember Bill though,' where all of a sudden you can't paint everybody with the same brush, because you have one personified example of something you know, and something you have connected to. (Jamie)

For Jamie, learning experiences in which an emotional connection is made function as "little seeds planted for the possibility to question." That is, the planting of seeds leading to questioning deficit messages that dismiss and denigrate individuals who do not fit within dominant social group imaginaries. Tennille and Jamie seemed to agree that learning related to social and ecological justice must be strategic, since messages that reinforce and/or obscure oppression and ecological degradation circulate widely and freely within the society. Several participants argued that meaningful learning requires a sustained practice of critical assessment of discourses and structures that often go unchecked in the course of daily life.

Emma described a core goal of her practice as nurturing a sense of connection and care to both people and place:

Personally, I guess, just a sense of connection to something. Like it could be to the land or someone else, or a particular experience. We just want to hopefully inspire something in people so that they care, and want to be connected to us, and stay in touch. (Emma)

Emma shared her belief that it was through experiential learning in a given place that a connection and caring could be fostered. For Emma, once that connection is made, deeper questions can be broached about what care means within current political, economic, and ideological circumstances. The objective of providing learning opportunities in which individuals become emotionally invested in social and ecological justice issues was prevalent in the ways that study participants described their practice. The learning objectives that were discussed by participants often included a transformative element that shifted learners from a state of indifference, denial, or resistance, to one of compassion and taking on personal responsibility. This, however, was often expressed as an ideal, with an understanding that such transformation takes time and effort, and that a great deal of the work pursued daily involves incremental changes through complex and uncomfortable conversations, or through the planting of seeds that challenge commonplace narratives that depict people in deficit terms.

As study participants described how they are working to challenge the prevalence of deficit narratives, they also indicated how this work is resisted. The significance of eliciting a personal connection in the learning process is emphasized, and drawing on the lived experiences

of individuals experiencing discrimination and other consequences of oppression is seen as a valuable resource for promoting the desired (un)learning.

Learning Envisioned as Self-Advocacy and Empowerment in the Face of Oppression

As participants contemplated questions that were asked in the course of the interviews, they often grounded their answers in lived experiences, whether it was experiences they had themselves or experiences that had been shared with them or that they had observed. The lived experiences discussed by participants largely fell either within the category of individuals being subjected to prejudice, discrimination, or violence based on their social group, or individuals or groups of individuals perpetuating ideas and practices that reinforce oppression. As participants described their work with individuals who experience oppression on a regular basis, their goals and strategies were aimed at empowerment to help people to understand such experiences and to more effectively self-advocate in favour of practical solutions.

Jayda emphasized circumstances in which youth are labelled as delinquent and are therefore placed in a separate category of achievement potential:

When they are growing up in elementary and primary schools, where they are being taught that they are bad, or misbehaving, or that they can't learn, or they are stupid because they are not comprehending the information, because of all the other social dynamics that they are coming from. (Jayda)

Jayda's first priority stemming from this observation and understanding was to create the conditions for youth to feel a sense of belonging, and then to be part of something that is bigger than themselves. In particular, Jayda concentrates on empowering youth to feel that they are making a contribution to something that has meaning to them. In Jayda's perspective, one of the outcomes of oppression is that when youth are labelled as delinquent, they are denied a vital aspect of personal development. To Jayda, empowerment begins with connection and belonging, and grows into actions that are seen as making a contribution, and finally this process leads to a form of mastery.

Working with families who were navigating employment, education, and other services, Tara similarly saw a core aspect of her work as developing a resiliency within the families to the forms of prejudice and discrimination that community members face regularly. One of the strategies Tara employed was to engage in an exercise in which individuals from diverse social groups name and discuss stereotypes that are prevalent in the dominant discourse. These

discussions also addressed ways such stereotypes play out in either overt or subtle forms of discrimination and violence.

We talk about stereotypes. One of the things we say is ‘what do people think of you when they see you?’ And, of course, one of the things that always comes up is for our Muslims, ‘they think I’m a terrorist:’ talking about how you approach that. And sometimes I feel that it’s an area where you have to provide tools for newcomers, and for settlers. How do you approach those situations and still maintain your sense of security and safety? Because if someone was to assume that you’re that, you also want to protect yourself. Especially with what’s going on in the media, it’s creating a lot more fear. (Tara)

Tara has come to understand that the support she seeks to provide must also deal with and take account of the stereotypes and prejudices that are part of daily life in the community.

Understanding that the true nature of the problem runs deeply within the society, Tara concentrates her efforts on preparing individuals to self-advocate and to address the material, emotional, and psychological impacts of discrimination:

Part of it is letting people know their rights. But the knowledge is not enough. I know what my rights are, but do I have the confidence, do I have the support to be able to stand up? And am I in a position to stand up, knowing what the consequence might be? Because even if it is addressed, the process isn’t as quick as it should be, and you still might be in a very toxic environment. (Tara)

Through experience, Tara has developed an awareness that even when social justice or human rights issues are raised, the victim of the abuse is still in a vulnerable position. This adds to the complexity and challenge of what it means to empower individuals in the face of oppression. Other participants shared similar accounts of the need to anticipate and understand prejudice and discrimination, and also to foster confidence and efficacy in individuals who were standing up for themselves and their rights. Tennille similarly emphasized the importance of self-advocacy as a means of supporting individuals she serves in her work. For Tennille, a focus on self-advocacy entails guiding individuals as they interact with and access services from various public institutions. Tennille’s experience has led her to anticipate that knowledge of how to self-advocate is necessary for some individuals seeking services who may otherwise become discouraged.

Study participants emphasized the importance of fostering self-advocacy capacity in themselves and in others with whom they interact. The efforts of study participants were often focused on fostering resiliency and empowerment in those who experience prejudice and discrimination though participants are keenly aware that the problem resides in the deeply

embedded beliefs, values, and assumptions that oppress minoritized groups. It was apparent that study participants concentrate on fostering resilience because this is a means through which they can make a positive impact.

Learning Envisioned as Challenging Established Perceptions and Values Among Individuals and Groups That Occupy Dominant Positions

A majority of the participants discussed the difficulty of shifting perceptions and values that impact the justice initiatives they are working to promote. A significant element of the work that study participants reported on this front involved facilitating conversations aimed at questioning assumptions that underlie problematic perceptions and values. This section focuses on the ways that study participants approached learning situations aimed at challenging assumptions.

Jason indicated that a significant aspect of his daily practice involved challenging and modifying deficit narratives held by various stakeholders in order to create more space and opportunities for the individuals that they support:

It can be, sometimes you have to very strategically choose your words because you don't want to offend the person.... You do have to sometimes delicately choose your words. And sometimes you may have to revisit the conversations another time, because often people that are very set in their thoughts and ways about their beliefs, they don't want to be told that they're not right. (Jason)

Jason emphasized the delicate and emotionally charged nature of the communication process, and the care required to facilitate dialogue on what is happening and needs to happen to support members of the community.

For Julie, the first step toward challenging problematic perceptions and values involved an evaluation of the messages through which the organization engages the community. This, for Julie, offers a tangible basis for beginning a dialogue on whose voices and experiences are represented, and how this relates to the vision of the organization:

From the moment you walk in, people have one-tenth of a second to decide if this is a safe space. And what are we going to do in that time? And I think that navigation in saying, not everyone walks in and assumes this is safety was probably the hardest thing to navigate with a lot of the essentially white older males. (Julie)

Julie is referring to the navigation of an evaluation of whose culture and experience is reflected in the physical organization of the space, and what impact that might have on individuals who enter. Julie drew on this discussion of how spaces are constructed to open a broader conversation

within the organization about how, similar to spaces, policies and procedures often are not representative of diverse cultural and experiential realities.

Megan discussed her strategy for addressing discussion on problematic perceptions and values. She emphasized the ways that justice-oriented initiatives have beneficial effects for the entire society, including for those who may resist the implementation of such initiatives. For Megan, the characterization of a particular program as a form of charity reinforces the division between those who access the program and those who do not, and it also risks being seen less as a valued social investment and more as a form of generosity. Megan emphasized that a great deal of research exists that demonstrates the broader positive dividends of programs that fulfill a need at a strategic moment in an individual's life. Although Megan draws on such research whenever possible to make this case, she feels a constant resistance to the reporting of such findings, and that many individuals are predisposed to think of the work as charitable rather than as cost-effective and value-adding.

Summary of Learning Processes Associated with Social and Ecological Justice Work

Analysis of the field data clearly reveals that the notion of learning plays a central role in the community work done by study participants. Participants expressed their desire to constantly grow their knowledge and understanding so that they might better confront problems and find practical, meaningful solutions that have a positive impact both for those with whom they work and for the broader community. Several participants emphasized that supporting a broader program of learning would require a significant shift in commonplace assumptions about how society operates and the roles that education ought to play. Participants also emphasized their role in supporting individuals who experience both overt and subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination as they interact with individuals and institutions in their daily lives. This support was perceived by participants as necessary but not substantively leading to the forms of change that are needed. It was apparent that participants imagined a multifaceted approach to advocacy involving strategies to manage individual, daily forms of oppression and strategies to interrogate the commonplace assumptions that are linked with oppression.

Societal Perceptions and Values the Bear Upon Social and Ecological Justice Advocacy

The discussion of social oppression in the introductory chapter emphasized that values, customs, discourses, and power play out in complex ways that are integrated throughout all aspects of our collective past, present, and future. Throughout this study, discussion of social and

ecological justice is situated within a particular context that has implications for the information emerging in the field data. In social and ecological justice literature, the reality of resistance to justice objectives is widely recognized and theorized (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The problem of resistance to learning and action arose in many conversations with participants and emerged as a core theme in the data analysis. However, there also were numerous instances in which participants characterized societal perceptions and values not as resistance per se, but simply as the reality of the social context that must be navigated daily in their work. This theme is distinguished from descriptions of overt forms of resistance because it reflects the nuanced perspectives of participants about what they see as obstacles in their work and how they characterize the nature of those obstacles. In some instances, it is clear that participants believe certain societal perceptions and/or values to be forms of resistance to changes needed in the society. Such instances are discussed in the subsequent section. This section focuses on instances in which participants describe what they see as commonplace perceptions and values that are simply part of the context and reality of the community and their work within it. In the discussion chapter, as the field data are reconsidered in relation to the literature, the connection between commonplace perceptions and values and resistance to social and ecological justice is revisited.

Presentation of field data related to this theme is further broken down into the following sub-themes: commonplace perceptions and values that are contrary to participants' visions for meaningful change; the assumption that people are treated equally in society regardless of social group membership; and, emphasis on individual, quantifiable organizational outcomes rather than on more holistic, long-term goals. These sub-themes reflect the various ways participants perceived and made sense of how their visions and goals were impacted by unquestioned assumptions about the forms of social and ecological justice advocacy needed in the community. Not surprisingly given the complexity and ambiguity of this topic, statements made by study participants were sometimes somewhat tentative and exploratory. It was evident that participants experienced the inertia of commonplace perceptions and values but struggled to find words with which to speak about this problem. Additionally, participants' understandings of these experiences are based on specific encounters and circumstances, which makes it more difficult to draw more general conclusions from these conversations.

Commonplace Perceptions and Values Counter to Participants' Vision for Change

In an example that clearly illustrates this theme, Natalie discussed an exercise with learners in which the goal was to develop progressive social policy while working from a fiscal deficit position:

So, they had to imagine that from different perspectives. Some in a small group were a progressive opposition with the conservative government, one group was a progressive government, one group was an anti-poverty NGO, one group was a grassroots organization, etc. Anyway, everybody's response to what they would do in this [fiscal] deficit situation was, all of the solutions were things like service cuts, and job cuts, and unpaid internships. I mean they were trying to reduce the cuts, trying make it not as bad on people, but they still, it was not really thinking outside the box. (Natalie)

Natalie continued, lamenting that “we’ve let that discourse [influence us] ... so that taxes are universally seen as bad things, and it’s like a no-brainer for most people, even progressive people” (Natalie). In Natalie’s experience, discourses around taxation, austerity, and smaller government have limited the way people across the political spectrum are able to think about the role of government and other institutions in society. Natalie’s point in sharing this story is that, in her view, messaging that conveys particular perceptions and values shape what individuals believe to be possible—even for those who wish to change things significantly for the better.

Tennille made a similar observation about the way taxes have come to be seen in our society:

And we live in this world where we fight to save money, tax breaks and tax cuts. We’re always just like, that’s built into us too. ... People don’t understand that in order to reap these beautiful benefits of a great education and healthcare system, we have to pay. You know what I mean, we have to pay taxes. (Tennille)

For Tennille, as for Natalie, assumptions around taxes and funding for social programs are an example of how, even for people involved in progressive community projects, positions on important social questions can be heavily influenced by dominant/hegemonic messaging/discourses.

Julie described another aspect of what she considers the "reality" of the context in which she works. Using the term deficit to refer to a devalued characterization of an individual or group or their situation, Julie stated that "the deficit model sells" (Julie). Although critical of the ways deficit narratives operate in and influences society, Julie had developed a strategic understanding of the types of narratives that commonly (and acceptably) accompany social and ecological justice work:

If you are writing proposals, and you're saying you're going to cure cancer. The model of showcasing the landscape to be very negative and that you are doing this [to make] big change sells. It gets you the money in a non-profit sector to do it.
(Julie)

Julie recognized the problematic aspects of depicting individuals and groups as manifesting deficits in order to compete for funding for programming that could have a positive effect. For Julie, the established practice of leveraging deficit stories to secure funding reinforces an imagined division between those who provide the services and those who access them. For Julie, it is a division that involves a "subject" who funds and delivers services, and an "object" who receives them. This division also sets up the relational dynamic of the saviour and saved. Julie explained this further,

At the end of the day, some days are hard, and some days you're not having the greatest experiences. Some people just need to believe that they're saviors, and they're making better outcomes. I think it's absolutely true, but the way we talk about it reinforces that haves and have-nots. (Julie)

For Julie, the realities of these circumstances she has experienced and reflected upon reinforce what she sees as a hierarchy of who has value that becomes embedded in the discourses of justice work and is present within the society as a whole.

Sarah shared another problematic challenge. Like Julie, Sarah discussed perceptions and values that shape ideas of diversity in society. Sarah noted that diversity is commonly understood as a differentiation from an established norm that is assumed as the standard against which difference is defined and judged. Sarah stated that "people think that their own lives are normal, but so-and-so's lives aren't, and that's the problem. One of them" (Sarah). Sarah saw this problem as originating in a process through which certain lived realities "have been labelled as diverse and therefore othered" (Sarah). Sarah views othering as foundational to the physical and verbal violence and other forms of discrimination faced daily by individuals not identifying with the assumed standard. Sarah's aim has been to challenge the dichotomous construct between 'normal' and 'diverse,' and to promote a perspective that diverse lived realities are the standard with the community.

Emma and Julie both discussed what they observed as a hesitation or reluctance to inquire more deeply into problems supposedly addressed by their organizations—a reluctance to connect the dots to adjacent and underlying issues. Both participants spoke of a form of politics at work in decision making, shaping the ways in which problems and solutions could be

discussed. Emma focused her commentary on the way problems were imagined as isolated entities, which could be resolved through linear courses of action. Emma explained that while some of her colleagues wish to explore a broader range of problems and solutions, there is an unspoken tension that arises when new questions are asked. According to Julie, she has seen a tendency to be comfortable with only certain questions and with addressing only certain problems. Although individuals in leadership positions may be well-meaning and committed to solving problems, they are still reluctant to engage problems at a deeper level, especially one that requires a critical look inward and into the practices of the organization. For Julie, as for Emma, this reluctance to dig more deeply into problems and to acknowledge broader patterns runs counter to what she believes is needed for meaningful change. Both Julie and Emma characterized the problem in terms of a lack of exposure to and understanding of critical inquiry, and a level of uncertainty brought on by the current political climate. These examples reflect efforts by study participants to identify and name patterns of perceptions and values that work against their goals of finding real and lasting solutions for community issues.

The Assumption That People are Treated Equally in Society Regardless of Social Group

In a number of instances, participants challenged the assumption that people are generally treated fairly and equally regardless of the social groups with which they identify or are identified. For several participants, the perceptions and values that underlie this assumption create a barrier to the kind of movement they see as needed in the community. Linda discussed the notion of a feeling of belonging as a complex phenomenon, asserting that working toward inclusion requires a careful attention to the ways difference plays out within lived contexts. Julie questioned what it means for spaces to feel safe and welcoming, and how difference plays a role in determining which spaces are seen as safe and comfortable. Tara relayed accounts from individuals she worked with about a feeling of being treated differently in everyday situations, and seemingly not being able to make meaningful connections with members of the dominant group. Jason and Mary discussed what they saw as a common perception that certain individuals who do not identify as part of the majority/dominant group do not offer meaningful contributions. They are therefore not seen as equal members of the community.

Each of the abovementioned respondents challenged the assumption that social group categories are inconsequential and do not have a bearing on the way individuals navigate spaces and institutions encountered in their everyday lives. These participants discussed this assumption

as embedded within society and how it obstructs awareness of the way social groups are ascribed different levels of value and accorded different levels of privilege.

Tennille described the way individuals are perceived and treated when accessing services in terms of how they “present” to those responsible for administering those services. The notion of how one “presents” in social settings is relevant to a diverse range of circumstances, from arriving at the emergency room, to applying for a bank loan, to being seated at a restaurant. Drawing on her experiences in her work, Tennille asserted that the way individuals present is influenced by a lifetime of experiences in which gatekeepers of institutions have treated them as devalued members of the community. Tennille elaborated,

It’s because they’ve been devalued everywhere they’ve gone. So, of course, if you don’t understand that, then you try to enter a room, and you say answer my question. I’m trying to do something for you, answer me. You’re not going to get anywhere. And it’s going to seem like they don’t want care. It’s easy for you to justify, “well they don’t want to be here anyways. It’s their choice, it’s not mine.” But it’s because you don’t know how to talk to somebody you know has been devalued. (Tennille)

In this statement, it is clear that Tennille is critical of an approach to providing services that is blind to the way oppression affects the way individuals perceive those services and, as a corollary, blind to the way individuals internalize messages about their value and belonging in relation to those spaces. For Tennille, in order to practice receiving individuals with dignity, service providers must have an understanding of the way oppression shapes everyday interactions that have a significant impact on peoples' lives. In fact, Tennille argued that such an understanding is a requirement if there is to be any meaningful response to the pressing needs within the community.

Linda, Jason, and Mary each discussed the idea that belonging and value tended to be associated with the ability to contribute to society in predetermined ways. Similar to Tennille's commentary on how one presents in a range of social contexts, Linda asserted that one's perceived ability to perform in relation to particular standards factors into how one is ascribed value. Jason emphasized what he has seen as a tendency to dismiss and disregard individuals who, for a wide range of reasons, do not participate according to these standards. Furthermore, they may be seen as lacking agency with respect to decisions that affect their lives. Linda, Jason, and Mary identify the potential damage of assumptions that people are generally treated and valued equally in society. These participants emphasize that such an assumption obscures and

normalizes practices where individuals are assigned a value and worth based on their station in society. Jason outlined his view of how this assignment of value plays out:

I often think that individuals that we support are not valued like the rest of society. They are perceived as being a social deficit to the rest of us. And that's obviously wildly inappropriate, but then you obviously limit their progress very quickly. And that they're kind of forgotten. They end up existing in these social gaps we talk about all the time. It's like, oh they're in the gap. They are being lost in the crack, or however you want to articulate it. That's what happens. (Jason)

In this statement, Jason described a reality that is quite different from the assumption that people are more or less treated fairly and equally within the society.

In discussing the goals and strategies of her organization, Julie touched on the question of which spaces feel safe and comfortable to individuals in the community and why. Julie concentrated on the question of feeling safe and welcome in spaces by discussing the way spaces throughout the city may be experienced differently by individuals identifying with different social groups, and how this must be taken into consideration when planning activities:

Being realistic, although suburbia is really great to give discounts, you're not hitting the real lived-experience of youth with travel or transportation issues: youth not wanting to leave downtown or their area of safety, because if you are wearing a hood in suburbia, you're stared down at. (Julie)

For Julie, the assumption that spaces are neutral and that everyone navigates those spaces on more-or-less equal grounds is inaccurate. Moreover, this assumption creates barriers to providing effective services that are responsive to individual needs. In the minds of these participants, the assumption or assertion that social-group membership does not play a significant role in the way people experience public spaces and institutions is both false and harmful. This understanding guides the participants in their efforts to promote awareness and change.

Emphasis on Quantifiable Outcomes Rather Than Holistic Long-Term Goals

A number of participants commented on a tension they see between an institutional approach to supporting individuals that is guided by set policies and measurable outcomes, and an approach that is guided by the complex, interconnected, and changeable needs of individuals. The policy and targeted outcomes are linked with grant, donation, or other targeted funding sources that carry particular assumptions about the outcomes that the money should produce. However, the vision inspiring and guiding participants in their work is based on a different objective. Jayda emphasized that prior to trying to work toward the measurable objectives of the organization, the focus must be on the health and wellbeing of the youth. For

Jayda, to prioritize measurable objectives over meeting the highly personal and variable needs and challenges faced by individuals can be both harmful and ineffective. Such an approach can be harmful because energy and resources may be directed foremost at individuals who are able to meet formalized organizational targets; those who are unable to meet such targets because of personal challenges may be ignored or dismissed. Jayda perceived this as being ineffective because even when individuals can meet targets, if underlying challenges are not addressed, any gains may be quickly lost.

Similar to Jayda, Megan emphasized the value of taking a more holistic, flexible, and multifaceted approach to working towards the goals of her organization. However, Megan focused her discussion on the distinction between engaging a holistic, systematic, and long-term strategy, and a reality of constantly struggling to piece together resources as a stop-gap measure to mitigate the impacts of underlying problems. Megan spoke enthusiastically about the potential of the work she does with the organization but also spoke about the limitations associated with funders (as well as the public as a whole) being principally interested in data on how many individuals have been served, and how these data can be used to represent the good work being done within the community. While Megan spoke proudly of the work her organization does in the community, she recognized that by emphasizing the number of individuals served, the work will always be reactive, as opposed to working toward more holistic goals designed to reduce the need for the resources provided. Megan and Jayda associate a lack of understanding about the complex, integrated nature of challenges faced by individuals in the community with the emphasis on supports that focus on narrow outcomes, which can hinder organizations from responding to needs in ways that would be more effective. Jayda added that, in some instances, individuals responsible for providing supports adopt this kind of rigid approach, which can result in particularly vulnerable individuals being turned away.

Summary of Societal Perceptions and Values.

The above section discusses perceptions and values that the participants identified as bearing on their work within the community. Although examples included in this section are not explicitly characterized by participants as resistance to advocacy work, they are viewed as obstacles to realizing personal and organizational goals for the community. The obstacles are described by participants as connected to how individuals experience discrimination and

prejudice in everyday circumstances. This was a constant source of sadness and frustration for many of the participants.

Resistance to Social and Ecological Justice Learning and Action

Building on insights shared in the previous section, several participants explicitly described resistance they experienced and witnessed in their work. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) propose that it is a specific kind of choice whether to engage social and ecological justice questions that shift one's understanding and beliefs, or to engage questions that protect one's existing worldview (p. 130). Another way to think of this is that the approach driving some individuals' engagement with social and ecological justice results in obscuring and maintaining unequal systems of power that privilege some and oppress others. As the Sensoy and DiAngelo point out, forms of resistance against social and ecological justice initiatives often do not explicitly state the intention of maintaining unequal power, but employ various techniques of logical and moral argument to protect the status quo. As Antonio Gramsci (1971) discussed through his conception of hegemony, such arguments are established within societies to sway populations to the perspectives and interests of those with political and economic power. Therefore, it can be a challenge to both clearly identify and describe the nature of this resistance, and to find ways to counter its impact.

Field data on resistance to engaging with social and ecological justice learning and action are organized into three subthemes: Overt and subtle forms of resistance to advocacy; characterizing social and ecological justice as “imbalanced,” “special treatment,” and “too much too soon;” and, reluctance to challenging one's own assumptions and hesitancy to challenge the assumptions of others. For participants, navigating resistance to their work was a daily challenge. A significant factor in this challenge is that forms of resistance are often subtle and unarticulated, making navigation a game of interpreting what is underneath outward positions that impede progress. The sub-themes reflect various efforts by the participants to characterize the resistance they face in order to gain understanding, and to strategize ways to overcome the resistance.

Overt and Subtle Forms of Resistance to Advocacy

A common theme that emerged in the interviews was a tension felt by participants that their efforts in working towards social and ecological justice were in some instances perceived as unwelcome and/or disruptive, and were consequently met with stated or unspoken resistance. For

Julie, the tension one experiences when advancing social and ecological justice is an unfortunate reality that can have both personal and professional implications:

There should be danger pay in the job. Because it isn't a safe place to feel permanency to be wanted and valued when you're bringing up these conversations. It's weird, you wouldn't think it would get such bad pushback, but it absolutely does. (Julie)

The conversations to which Julie refers involve a critical engagement with complex topics such as racism, colonization, and homophobia. Julie clarified that she does not initiate such conversations out of choice, but does so as a necessity and with an understanding of the tension that inevitably arises: "I don't do it as something I want to do, because it's an awful conversation, I like to have nice conversations, and that one isn't the greatest." Julie, like other participants, was driven to participate in such tense discussions despite the potential personal or professional consequences because she understands that navigating resistance is a part of working toward meaningful change.

Within Julie's sphere of personal and professional relationships she spoke of instances in which friends or colleagues stated that their career prospects had been impacted as a result of challenging dominant assumptions. Natalie similarly relayed accounts from friends and colleagues who believed their decision to engage critical questions and risk the inevitable tension had limited their opportunities for professional advancement. Although Julie and Natalie spoke in general terms about the professional implications of engaging critical questions, they both shared stories of individuals they know working in k-12 teaching who believed their professional opportunities had been negatively impacted. In these instances related to k-12 teaching, Natalie identified the resistance as coming from parents who brought pressure upon the school administration to sanction the teacher. This story illustrates and informs Natalie's understanding of how resistance can operate as a collective response to efforts promoting social and ecological justice. Julie's discussion of teachers who promote justice "at the cost of their own ability to move forward in education" similarly focused on the collective reactions of parents and the broader community, and the influence this had on school administrators. In Natalie's assessment, it is rare to find spaces in which it is possible to openly examine complex and controversial topics because of collective pressure to avoid examining commonplace perceptions and values.

Resistance as Narratives of “Neutrality,” “Special Treatment,” and “Too Much Too Soon.”

Reflecting on her organization's efforts to reach out to the community to promote social and ecological justice learning, Natalie discussed an anxiety felt by stakeholders that they would not appear neutral or unbiased:

They would sort of say no, or suggest that it was not balanced somehow to have us come in, when what we were talking about was the UN development goals or global poverty, which I would have thought were not super controversial topics.
(Natalie)

It was apparent that organizational stakeholders both favoured the appearance of being "balanced" and were concerned about potential repercussions of seeming to be somehow biased. This was perplexing to Natalie given that the organization sought to address topics, such as confronting poverty, for which neutrality or “balance” seem inappropriate. In these instances, Natalie perceived resistance in the form of the pressures the organization and other stakeholders felt from the surrounding community. The narrative of neutrality seemed to function as a gauge for which topics were safe to explore in public fora. This, for Natalie, reinforced her perception of an unspoken fear of repercussions if one publicly addressed certain questions related to social and ecological justice.

Lois discussed a similar fear she observed of raising certain critical questions about relationships between the environmental crises and dominant economic discourses. Referring to environmental topics such as climate change and carbon pricing, Lois stated, “Honestly, it would be terrifying presenting it to a bunch of adults who have already decided that’s what they understand, that they don’t believe it.” Lois stated that she has come to understand that empirical research and persuasive expert opinion is not necessarily sufficient to counter popular beliefs that serve to elicit fear of proposed solutions to environmental problems. In this case, neutrality is equated with avoiding questions that might highlight the repercussions of current economic policies and practices, and point to alternative paths to economic wellbeing and stability. Lois suggested that messaging coming from government and other influencers of public perception shape what is considered neutral and therefore what is assumed to be balanced or imbalanced within popular discourse.

As Natalie discussed forms of resistance to social and ecological justice work, she reflected on the strong reactions of some community members when they perceive that a minoritized group is possibly getting special treatment. Natalie saw the invoking of this

argument as both a way to disguise the true nature of the resistance and a way to deflect and deny personal responsibility for taking action in favour of change. The example Natalie shared to illustrate her point was an instance of an individual refusing to participate in a campaign designed to draw attention to the violence and ongoing impact of residential schools. The organizational employee who refused to participate in the campaign stated a reluctance to support actions that provide special treatment to certain groups or interests. To Natalie's dismay, the organization for which the individual worked accepted the reasoning for the refusal to participate, and leadership praised the staff for allowing the incident to pass with minimal conflict stemming from the "difference of opinion."

Julie similarly identified resistance in the form of the narrative that certain groups shouldn't get special treatment. Julie discussed this narrative as being applied in a number of ways. The first way this narrative is applied is to justify the general anger and vitriol that tends to be directed at campaigns aiming to address discrimination and inequality in all forms. Julie characterized this use of the narrative as based on a fundamental lack of knowledge and understanding about the history and current realities of multiple forms of oppression, and a fear held by members of the dominant group that their role in society will be somehow diminished. Julie described related instances in which the narrative is utilized, but is not driven by anger and disdain. Julie characterized this usage as inadequate and misguided, but coming from a place of a well-meaning desire to help. Julie discussed this form of resistance in general, but made specific reference to resistance to programming designed toward reconciliation:

Because unfortunately although we have a very strong nation-to-nation relationship in Canada, and a due diligence in our constitution and rights and freedoms, people would see this—and no matter how much the conversation went—as special plus treatment. And always was returned to me as, “what about the LGBT?” “What about the Caribbean?” An equality vibe in its grossest form. And really have to get into that equity conversation about there are groups and populations that need more energy. And this is never to say that this is an exclusion, it's just a focus right now. So, there's internal attitudes and conversations, and honestly people using the reference of “all,” like “I would want *all* kids,” and that right there gives you a good indication that they're not ready to go down this road of reconciliation. (Julie)

In this statement, Julie explains how she sees resistance coming even from individuals who are well-meaning and who wish to see themselves as allies. The third instance in which Julie addressed the narrative of not giving special treatment was linked to perceptions around funding and resource allocation. In Julie's experience, initiatives seen to be designed to support

individuals from particular social groups are interpreted as special projects that are tied to specialized funding. That is, the initiatives are not embedded within the core function of the organization and therefore require specialized funding to be included in the organization's programming. Such initiatives are relegated to the periphery rather than featured as part of the core mandate due to an aversion to appearing to be giving any kind of special treatment.

In discussing forms of resistance, Sarah spoke passionately about a lack of recognition of the urgency and responsibility of addressing prejudice and discrimination in a meaningful way. Sarah emphasized the exhaustion she feels from the constant struggle to be heard in good faith and to energize movement toward meaningful responses to oppression. Sarah described a common form of resistance she runs up against as a stated lack of comfort and readiness on the part of stakeholders to address prejudice and discrimination in a substantive way. She stated:

One that I've heard a lot is, that infuriates me is, "we're just at the beginning stages of learning," or, "we're just at the beginning of this." And it's like, well why do you get to decide that? I don't have any sympathy left for that excuse, especially when it's said year after year after year, "we're just starting this work," or "we're just at the beginning stages," or making excuses for other people not stepping up. (Sarah)

Sarah also raised the question of who is granted authority to make decisions about how prejudice and discrimination ought to be addressed within government organizations, school systems, and/or private companies. In particular, Sarah questioned a practice of privileging the interests of individuals who do not feel comfortable examining and addressing prejudice and discrimination over the interests of those who experience these harms on a daily basis. Recognition of the privileging of comfort for those who do not have lived experience of oppression over those who have been subjected to and continue to suffer discrimination and violence has a strong effect on Sarah:

It also hurts personally when you go into meetings, and people say well, we're not there yet. Well, why? I think it's out of fear, like I think it's just this fear of being seen as being too radical, fear of pushing the conversation. I think it's completely fear-based. If we're not willing to do anything, it's because we are afraid as human beings. (Sarah).

Sarah's strong emotional response stems from what she sees as a rationalization of withholding action that could have a meaningful impact on the discrimination and violence experienced by many (particularly youth) within the community.

Quite common among experiences relayed by participants was an effort to surface and challenge the narratives of resistance that they encountered in their work. Although participants each described the various kinds of resistance they witnessed in their own ways, they each discussed encountering fear of challenging the status quo and having to face the tensions that arose when they named and opposed oppressions. For these community workers, dealing with this fear—in themselves as well as in others—was seen as a fundamental challenge embedded in everything they did.

Resistance as Fear of Challenging One's Own Beliefs and the Beliefs of Others

Julie continued her discussion of forms of resistance she has experienced in her work by describing what she sees as a fear in both colleagues and other community stakeholders of being perceived as ignorant or offensive, and also of infringing upon another's right to their own point of view. As Julie endeavoured to bring a more direct examination of oppression into her work, she was frequently struck by the ways such fears became a barrier to initiatives she viewed as likely productive. Julie shared instances in which colleagues would avoid or deflect conversations that examined whether certain policies and practices within the organization (or society as a whole) worked against oppression or reinforced it. Julie understood this avoidance and deflection as grounded in fear related to not wanting to appear uninformed or insensitive, and fear of engaging in critical reflection about practices that might cast the individual or organization in a bad light. The avoidance of critical evaluation directly contradicted Julie's belief in the importance of examining positionality and voice in designing organizational structures and programming. According to Julie, conversations around positionality and lived-experience, particularly as they related to oppression, were heavily mediated by fear. Julie believed that these fears limited the ways that policies and practices could be evaluated, and therefore hindered efforts that might result in meaningful outcomes. Julie stated that the fear is so pervasive and influential that conversations about what it might look like to consider race, gender identity, class, or sexual orientation in programming were seemingly untenable. It was a fear of engaging in dialogue that acknowledges difference and the realities of prejudice, discrimination, and violence. In Julie's assessment, comfort was sought and found in framing interpersonal interactions in ways that avoided direct acknowledgement and consideration of social group differences and hierarchies.

Emma described a similar perception stemming from attempts by some members of her organization to expand the scope of the work undertaken by the organization to include the interconnections between colonial and environmental injustices. Emma relayed how discussions arising from this push centred around concerns about the vision and identity of the organization. Emma interpreted the resistance that emerged as a fear that by broadening the scope of their work and seeming to take a particular political stance, they risked alienating some of the membership and some organizational partners. Emma interpreted this response as a means of protecting the status quo in the organization and avoiding the complex and potentially tense engagement with social justice issues that would also raise associated issues of personal responsibility. Emma explained that they encountered difficulty exploring how the organization might achieve a more direct engagement with a number of social justice issues because such discussions inevitably came up against fears of moving beyond less contentious questions and critiques.

Natalie shared that in response to such fears, she made it a priority to include discussions about fear as a deliberate and conscious part of her work. Natalie explained that she raised the topic of resistance to questioning one's own beliefs and fear of challenging the beliefs of others in order to empower herself and members of her organization to broach difficult conversations and work toward more productive outcomes. Natalie outlined her thought process in preparing to engage in dialogue that was likely to challenge embedded beliefs and assumptions:

It's part of the cultural frame we are in, and I'm pretty conscious of that in our program, but just in general, how do we prepare people in our program with... ideas, but also prepare them for the environment that they're going into where those ideas are not always going to be welcome? And they will be challenged. And I feel like we would do a disservice to people if we just create our safe space where we can talk about whatever you want, and you can just share ideas and don't talk about what's going on out there. (Natalie)

Natalie provided some additional insights into how she approaches this dialogue, making note that such fears and resistance can also arise among family and other close personal associates:

The idea is to talk about the ideas and not about individuals, and recognize that also a lot of people are taught these ideas, and that we can be part of having people unlearn it too. Anyways, even that in a place like Saskatchewan or Alberta, that's just something we have to be conscious of that we're not just preparing people to enter that environment, but actually in their homes those ideas may be unsafe, or unwelcome, or in their relationships. (Natalie)

It was clear to Natalie as well as to other study participants that it was not enough to understand oppression and ecological degradation and come up with practical, effective solutions; the work also involved engaging with the fear that accompanies an honest and open examination of what is going wrong, how it has come to be, who benefits, and what must be done.

Summary of Resistance to Social and Ecological Justice Learning and Action

A common theme woven through all of the interviews involved participants' efforts to make sense of and articulate the various forms of resistance they encounter regularly in their work. Each participant described this resistance in their own way, but all emphasized the complex and emotionally-charged way such resistance plays out. Participants described the emotional dimension of the resistance in terms of fear, defensiveness, and anger. All of the participants acknowledged this resistance as a reality that is both an important aspect of the context in which they work and an unavoidable fact given the type of social change they are working towards. However, they also struggled with the disconnect between a vision and plan to combat and mitigate social oppression and ecological degradation—which they hold to be a fundamental good—and the responses of fear, defensiveness, and anger that play such a central role in their work. For participants, this gap and contradiction in a society that likes to describe itself as fair, rational, and just, shapes how they understand the underlying factors that contribute to oppression and ecological degradation. Participants identified the often-unspoken fear, deflection, and denial that coloured their day-to-day work to move beyond comfortable questions and examinations, and to ask questions that get closer to the heart of the problems. Many of the participants expressed their wish that public institutions would move beyond comfortable topics to engage with more meaningful questions that have profound implications for people's lives.

Limitations in Social and Ecological Justice Education and Training in Public Institutions

A majority of participants talked about a gap between what they believed to be fundamental understandings and principles underlying their social and ecological justice work, and the understandings and principles guiding education and training in mainstream social institutions. The focus of the field data collection centred mainly on organizations involved primarily with the social institutions of education, healthcare, and social services; however, the breadth of literature in this area addresses questions of social and ecological justice education in relation to all major social institutions. In most instances, participants acknowledged some forms of positive initiatives undertaken within their organizations. However, the praise typically

included a caveat indicating that the initiatives do not go far enough, or that effective education and training must increase in reach and intensity to make a difference. Indeed, a majority of participants stated that limited understandings of core social and/or ecological justice precepts and principles constituted an important obstacle to their work.

Participants' comments on this topic are divided into two sub-themes: perceived limitations in social and ecological justice understanding within the general public; and, issues encountered when working with institutions to advance social and ecological justice. Conversations with participants revealed that they had come to realize that a significant aspect of what is going wrong is a lack of exposure to and engagement with core social and environmental/ecological justice issues. While participants relayed how they had to navigate perceptions and values that are counter to their vision for social and ecological justice, there was a strong sentiment that this was mostly a result of a lack of education and training, rather than an inherent antipathy to the fundamentals of social and ecological justice. That being said, participants were distinctly aware that the type of education and training needed would imply a substantive shift in the forms of questioning supported in institutions responsible for education and training.

Limitations in Social and Ecological Justice Understanding Within the General Public

Participants raised as one of the more formidable challenges to their work a lack of exposure to fundamental principles and forms of inquiry essential to social and ecological justice learning and action. Several participants emphasized an inability in many instances to engage in informed discussions about how to understand and challenge oppressions and to respond adequately to ecological degradation. For Natalie, a telltale indication that an individual has not been exposed to fundamental aspects of social and ecological justice is when an idea or concept appears to “blow the individual’s mind.” She explained:

So that’s another one where almost everything we teach is brand new for people, and kind of blows people’s minds. The idea that there are processes, that there is stuff written down, and that there is theory about how change happens is new to them, and they’re excited about it. But it’s not taught. ... I think I’d be surprised if most of them heard a lot of that from the school system, because it seems to be new to them. ... Anytime when it seems to be kind of mind blowing for people, I’m like that’s really missing somehow along the way. (Natalie)

As Natalie indicated, the idea of conceptualizing social and ecological justice and studying how to work towards it is foreign to many if not most people. This was particularly evident to Natalie

as she reflected on how even the minority who have been inspired to work towards social and ecological justice had not been provided the basic tools needed to advance their vision for change. Natalie makes specific reference to schooling but emphasized the systemic character of the condition that included links between various centres of power and influence.

In alignment with Natalie's observations, Julie stated that anti-racist/anti-oppressive understandings, that are essential to her conception of social and ecological justice, were largely absent both in the population as a whole as well as within her own organization. Julie stated that her coworkers are "really great people to work with, but none of them have ever taken an anti-oppressive, anti-racist look at why we are doing it, by any means" (Julie). For Julie, one implication of this lack of understanding was a limitation on the ways that policies and practices of the organization could be evaluated, and on how the organization designed programming to meet the needs of the community. Julie explained that an anti-racist/anti-oppressive lens seeks to reveal and analyze the contexts in which problems come to be, and how problems are perpetuated through investments in stabilizing the status quo. In contrast, Julie regularly witnessed what she described as a "watered down" analysis, that pointed to simplified and simplistic solutions to problems that were addressed in isolation. For Julie, this watering down of analysis meant both neglect of the historical, systemic foundations of oppression, and unwillingness to engage with topics that were seen as too negative or confrontational.

Expressing a similar viewpoint, Tennille and Jamie both stated that children are not taught to question assumptions about who has value in society, and how this value is ascribed. Speaking specifically to the way poverty, homelessness, and addiction are treated in society, these participants emphasized how people in such circumstances are typically disparaged and deemed worthless. In the minds of Tennille and Jamie, this understanding and discourse of poverty, homelessness, and addiction gets absorbed by individuals in the formative years of their lives. Jamie emphasized the absence of meaningful engagement with the complex lived-realities and traumas that often lead to these outcomes, as well as the absence of a more holistic understanding of individuals who are frequently denied respect and dignity. Jamie shared her view that it "comes back to education. ... Like actually teaching compassion in school. Teaching addiction in the school. The physical aspect of addiction as well as the social [in order] to unalienate" (Jamie). Tennille explained that individuals who have never experienced such lived realities, often have limited capacity for understanding and empathy, and developing this

capacity is not seen as a value in education and other institutions. Tennille expressed her dismay and sadness when witnessing people, particularly children and youth, reproducing behaviors and narratives of dismissal of those suffering from poverty, homelessness, and addiction. Tennille cited this lack of understanding and empathy as a foundational cause of the insufficient allocation of resources required to meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of society.

Sarah emphasized the potential damage of children and youth not seeing themselves or their lived realities in the messaging and representations of schooling and other influential institutions:

If there are students that are left out of that, they don't see themselves represented within the curriculum, they don't see themselves represented when their teacher says, "okay boys and girls line up," they're not represented within that statement. Then where do they fit in their entire school? And school frames such a large part of our lives. And so, if we have students who don't see themselves there, then why would they ever thrive? (Sarah)

Sarah asserted that many students' experiences are not validated or given voice within schools, and their concerns and struggles are not recognized. In her work, Sarah has witnessed the effect of this lack of representation: students feel isolated and alienated and are not able to reach their potential. Sarah explained how policies and practices are often based on assumptions about how people look, act, relate, and identify. It is commonplace that such policies and practices are established and maintained without awareness and ignoring possible consequences. While a great deal of Sarah's experience has centred around schooling, she extends this understanding to multiple institutions that are part of the community. A core strategy Sarah has developed to call attention to this lack of representation and valuing is to articulate in detail what policies and practice might look like that recognized non-dominant experiences and concerns. Sarah indicated that when teachers and other professionals see what it looks like to recognize and value the lives and experiences of students who do not fit within supposed norms, they often begin to see the consequences of the everyday practices they had been reproducing.

In addition to the limitations in knowledge and understanding around social and ecological justice described by the above participants, other participants touched on similar forms of limitations that impact their work. Jason, Mary, and Linda pointed to a lack of understanding about the capacities and agency of individuals living with special needs, and about their rights in determining the course of their lives. Megan described a limited capacity to see patterns and connections between nutrition and health, and broader goals for society. Emma

highlighted a lack of understanding of how social and ecological problems are interconnected, and how these relate to other priorities of social and economic development. Tara indicated that many people are susceptible to stereotyping, quickly attributing characteristics to an entire group based on a few isolated experiences. Consistent across their working experiences was a perceived a lack of attention to and concern for what they considered to be core knowledge and understandings of the problems they were working on. For the participants, this lack of attention and prioritization was and is at the heart of why it is difficult to make substantive and lasting change.

Working with Institutions to Advance Social and Ecological Justice

To advance the goals of their organizations, a number of participants regularly liaised with local agencies providing health and education to support specific outcomes and promote understanding and awareness. While participants shared both positive and negative experiences, they all identified a tendency to address issues at a surface level and the need to convince potential collaborators that the issues in question warranted additional time and attention. Sarah indicated that she frequently visited schools and attended teacher professional development events. Reflecting on these experiences, Sarah shared her hope that teachers and other professionals she engaged would internalize the importance and value of the community work, and build it into their professional practice. Sarah stated,

And it's not just your students, it's about you. What are you doing as a parent, or as an adult with your children or nieces and nephews tonight when you go home and see them? Are you going to be talking about this, or are you just going to leave it at work with your students and you are checking off a box because you talked about diversity today, for the first time, and the only time you will all year? So, it's like, how can we normalize these things to make it accessible to people so that it's not just me and my coworkers doing this work, so it starts to become bigger than that, that there's a ripple effect? Because other people can do this education too. It's not as though I'm the only keeper of this knowledge. So, we need other people joining in on it. It is really great when we come in and present and have a teacher say, "you know what, I think I can do this for my health class next year." Great! Not only does that take workload off of me, but it shows that this teacher is confident in this as well. That's always a really big win. (Sarah)

Sarah's comment reflects her optimism and her perception of the need for teachers and other professionals to recognize the importance of, and take up the responsibility for, examining oppression as part of their role as professionals.

Julie similarly commented on her experience working with school divisions presenting on topics related to Indigenous Peoples and Reconciliation in Canada. While Julie was encouraged by the learning she saw occurring in schools, she also perceived gaps in terms for the types of topics that were being addressed:

Teachers are teaching an historical perspective of Indigenous People; so, kids can tell me what Treaty they are in, what Treaty relationship they are in, what teepees are, what historically we did. But they have a total disconnect about current reality. (Julie)

Reflecting on her experiences, Julie described a disconnect she saw between an enthusiasm for engaging an historical approach to learning about Indigenous Peoples and Reconciliation, and an approach that also addressed current realities and tensions. For Julie, understanding the nature and origins of this disconnect was important given that it serves to deflect from critical re-evaluation of narratives and assumptions built into Canadian society and identities. Such critical engagement and re-evaluation were foundational to Julie's perception of social justice learning and action.

Similar to Sarah, Tennille's work in the community regularly involved interacting with various health services in order to establish supports for those with whom she works. Tennille expressed immense respect for the individuals she worked with, but also acknowledged that there was a tendency in the health professions to perceive certain individuals as beyond help. That is, regardless of the services provided, some individuals will continue to make choices that only worsen their afflictions. Tennille explained that once this conclusion is arrived at, individuals who are suffering are seen by professionals as a burden, rather than a part of their professional responsibility. Tennille attributed this perception—that some individuals do not want to be helped or cannot be helped—to preconceived notions that are grounded in racism and classism:

But that again all comes from a place early on. We all land in this place of racism and prejudice from over here, that's how things are. So changing that behaviour and that thought and that way of speaking about each other early is important. Teaching compassion for other people in whatever difficulties. (Tennille)

Tennille shared that when working with healthcare services she constantly encountered this disposition toward clients she believed were most in need of compassion and understanding. As a result, Tennille interpreted an aspect of her practice as working against effects of racism and prejudice that lead to individuals being disregarded and at times turned away rather than being cared for. Tennille described both subtle ways this dismissal occurs as well as more direct ways

that care is withheld or denied, creating life-threatening circumstances for individuals. While Tennille understood that there is only so much that healthcare professionals can control and provide, in her assessment, there was a systemic pattern of judgement that influenced decisions made about client care. Tennille believed that increased attention and understanding to the topics of racism, poverty, and addiction would have had a significant effect on her ability to collaborate with various healthcare services, and on the quality of care provided to vulnerable patients in general.

Jayda described a similar struggle she experienced while working with various decision makers in local school division to establish accommodations for students trying to complete their education under very difficult circumstances. In line with Tennille's observations, Jayda cited poverty, homelessness, and addiction, as well as, experiences of trauma and violence as factors impacting the way some learners engage with the education system. While Jayda believed that there were efficacious alternative programs in place to respond to the conditions mentioned, when these students were navigating the mainstream system they were often dismissed as unteachable, disinterested in their education, and harmful to their peers. While Jayda understood that such views were based in part on behaviours sometimes exhibited by these students, she also witnessed the same students working diligently in alternative learning environments, demonstrating respect, and striving toward future goals. In Jayda's view, students who struggled with poverty, homelessness, and addiction were bound to either fall short of meeting school system expectations or to break the rules and regulations. The solution commonly offered was the removal of the student and referral to an alternative program. Although Jayda saw the benefit of connecting students with alternative programs, she also understood the implications of failing in school and/or being expelled. Similar to Tennille, Jayda had come to understand that the institution of schooling carries preconceived notions about students' lives and their ability to fit within the structure and culture of the system. When students do not reflect the preconceived picture, the tendency is to locate the problem in the student's choices and character (or their caregivers' choices and character) and therefore to see it as outside or beyond the responsibility of the school to provide the supports needed to facilitate the student's education.

Summary of Limitations in Education and Training in Public Institutions

A consistent viewpoint expressed by participants was that public institutions responsible for education and training did not sufficiently engage with fundamental principles and

understandings that are essential for social and ecological justice. Participants described barriers they experienced with regard to discussing underlying factors that gave rise to the problems they were working to address. In particular, the community workers interviewed for this study wished to address systemic policies, practices, and discourses that often go unquestioned yet contribute significantly to the perpetuation of social and ecological problems. In their experience, a baseline understanding of key issues was often absent, requiring an introductory learning stage that included an onerous process of unlearning problematic assumptions and beliefs. Although the study participants derived satisfaction from contributing to learning about the foundations of social and ecological justice, and have had first-hand experience of the power of such learning, they were saddened and frustrated by the wide and persistent gap between what they believed to be possible and necessary, and what public institutions responsible for learning and training chose to address as part of their mandate.

Linking Field Data Analysis to Further Analysis and Discussion

Guided by constructivist grounded theory, the analysis of field data engaged a process of primary, secondary, and tertiary coding to develop a thematic, narrative-style presentation of the findings. This form of presentation is intended to enable both the researcher and reader to gain a broad picture of what is revealed in the data. From the rich and impactful stories shared by participants, there emerged a range of relevant topics that warrant further analysis and discussion. The ways that these stories from the field can inform theory and practice are far-reaching and range from the specific to the general. The discussion of field data, therefore, must be approached strategically, focusing on strong, illuminating threads that are woven through and across the testimony provided by respondents. In the following discussion chapter, emphasis is placed on looking further into the theoretical implications of various elements of these narratives as well as the implications of the shared, cross-cutting, observations and perspectives. Specific components are selected for further discussion based on their relationship with arguments identified in the literature review. In the following chapter, three of these foundational threads are discussed in greater depth with the aim of exploring their potential for advancing theory on integrated social and ecological justice learning and action. The three foundational ideas addressed in the discussion chapter are: the normalization of dominance; resistance masquerading as neutrality; and, witnessing as a foundation for learning and action.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Emergent Insights for Social and Ecological Justice Learning

The discussion chapter is organized around three learning foundations: the normalization of dominance, resistance masquerading as neutrality, and witnessing as a foundation for learning and action. These learning foundations are derived from a rereading of the literature review and the data analysis in search of elements that intersect across the theory and practices shared by participants. The literature review chapter explored a range of theoretical considerations related to social and ecological justice to identify common features that exist across diverse areas of inquiry. The data analysis chapter presented key insights provided by participants, organized into themes to provide a broad picture of what is revealed in the field data. The rereading of the literature review and data analysis chapters was done to explore the implications of the participants' comments in relation to relevant theoretical framings. The discussion chapter explores how the blending of the theory and insights shared by participants can be applied to educational design centring around social and ecological justice.

The objective of the learning foundations is to generate understandings and capacities in learners that contribute to a deep and meaningful engagement with a multitude of social and ecological justice issues. Striving to solve for pattern (Berry, 2005), the learning foundations are intended to facilitate inquiry into individual justice issues, but also to promote broader understandings of how diverse justice issues are related. The learning foundations emphasize learning processes rather than learning outcomes. This emphasis is consistent with the goal of identifying common elements across diverse fields of inquiry and developing pedagogies intended to facilitate learning within multiple social and ecological justice domains. The objective of exploring emergent possibilities for pedagogical development is in line with the objectives of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2017). The learning foundations are presented in a way that is intended to respond to diverse and shifting contexts, placing an emphasis on process and inquiry as key aspects of social and ecological justice learning. The discussion, as with all other components of the study, is shaped by my own learning journey in social and ecological justice, and by my experiences as an educator striving to promote justice-based outcomes.

A key insight arising from the study is that social and ecological justice learning is embedded within a matrix of complexities, involving identities, values, fears, hierarchies, representations, experiences, and power. Kumashiro (2000) emphasizes that individuals are continuously creating and re-creating frameworks used to make meaning of themselves and their

surroundings. The meaning that is derived is imbued with value, which has a significant impact on individuals' dispositions toward themselves and those around them. For Kumashiro (2000), learning involves a painstaking, reflexive task of uncovering and scrutinizing ways meaning and value are derived and bear upon the conclusions and decisions made about an individual's life and actions. Kumashiro conceptualizes learning as a process that is constantly developing and adapting to the realities and challenges of the contexts in which problems are addressed. An underlying assertion stemming from the analysis in this study is that social and ecological justice learning must be responsive and adaptable to the complexities inherent in the contexts in which problems are addressed. Therefore, for those who are involved in this work, understanding the processes of learning is essential to inform decisions about how to design strategies toward achieving desired outcomes. The learning foundations are presented below with this complexity and adaptability in mind, emphasizing the role of process in promoting social and ecological justice.

The Normalization of Dominance

One of Kumashiro's (2000, 2009) core arguments is that it is not merely a lack of knowledge or understanding that enables oppression and ecological degradation to persist; rather, there are underlying assumptions that influence how individuals and groups conceive of and represent the nature and characteristics of problems. For example, individuals will default to previously embedded assumptions to make meaning about how race and racism operate in their social context, and what (if anything) ought to be done to transform it. Such assumptions shape how individuals make meaning about the way society functions and how this relates to their idea of justice. While this notion is seemingly straightforward—that individuals default to assumptions when making meaning about social issues—the process of inquiring into the nature and function of these assumptions is complex. For Kumashiro and others (e.g., Butler, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Leonardo, 2009), there is potential in observing and investigating commonalities in the ways individuals and groups make determinations about what is going wrong in society and what ought to be done to work towards solutions. The objective of investigating such commonalities is to develop strategies for learning that surface and confront assumptions that serve to perpetuate oppression and ecological degradation (Greenwood, 2003).

Leonardo (2009) argues that to develop a more complete picture of racism, analysis must address what the dominant group individually and collectively gains from the perpetuation of

racism within society. For Leonardo, this requires an interrogation of whiteness as an identity marker, and an acknowledgement of the entitlements and investments that accompany it. To conduct such an interrogation, Leonardo (2009) proposes examining “the codes of white culture, worldview of the white imaginary, and assumptions of the invisible marker that depends on the racial other for its identity” (p. 9). In Leonardo's theorizing, whiteness is a deeply embedded aspect of identity that influences the ways individuals who identify as white make meaning of the world around them. Correspondingly, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) argue that inquiry into each form of oppression must include an interrogation of the dominant identity, and how being positioned as the dominant group may involve an investment in the privileges associated with the dominant positionality. For Kumashiro (2000), the learning objective then becomes identifying and naming patterns in the ways dominant group identities may shape how individuals make meaning of social and ecological problems.

Participants consistently discussed how the normalization of dominance influenced the way problems are defined and engaged within the interpersonal and institutional spaces with which they interacted. It became clear in the interviews that each participant grappled with this challenge as a key aspect of their work. Participants discussed the implications of the normalization of dominance in a number of ways. At the individual level, several participants discussed observing those in dominant positions—based on social-group membership and/or institutional hierarchies—treat those perceived to be in positions of lower status. For example, Tennille described such behaviour in terms of individuals of lower status being “counted as worthless,” and therefore undeserving of the care and compassion that would be offered to others in similar circumstances. The ways racism and classism are interwoven with discourses of poverty, homelessness, chronic pain, and addiction inform Tennille’s perspective. Tennille decried a tendency of those in dominant groups to reduce lower-status individuals to deficit identifiers, which Tennille equates with a denial of basic dignity. Jason similarly described a tendency of the dominant group to reduce individuals to a deficit identifier. Jason questioned what he interpreted as the practice of able-bodied individuals or institutions assuming authority over others based on assumptions about the others' (dis)abilities. Jason described the application of normalized dominance in terms of speaking for and determining parameters governing the lives of individuals who are assumed incapable of understanding their own aspirations, capabilities, and limitations. Jayda added that by being reduced to a deficit identifier, and

assumed incapable of having authority over one's own life, individuals come to be seen as stuck in a perpetual state of crisis and/or failure—a state of their own making.

Statements made by participants about the impact of normalized dominance on their work are consistent with theorists who inquire into how normalized dominance functions and is perpetuated in society (e.g., Butler, 1990; Fanon, 1963; Ladson-Billings, 2009, etc.). Tennille's comments about the way she perceives individuals being reduced to narrow deficit identifiers and denied basic dignity parallels Fanon's (1963) theorizing on the construction of the colonized Other. Fanon argues that the colonizer creates a fabricated characterization of and discourse about the colonized that becomes the lens through which the colonizer interprets and interacts with the colonized. Parallel to Tennille's assertion, Fanon emphasizes how this fabrication serves the colonizer as a means to justify denying the colonized basic dignity and rights. For Fanon, this process creates a pretext for the colonizer to assume authority over the colonized, and to claim that the colonized Others are stuck in a state of crisis of their own making.

Butler (1990) also emphasizes the importance of examining how the Other is constructed in the mind of the dominant group. For Butler, key to understanding this construction is an awareness of how the deficit characteristics attached to the minoritized group are set in opposition to favoured characteristics ascribed by the dominant group to itself. Because the identity of the dominant positionality is embedded in the binary relationship of dominant and deficit, it creates a vested interest in the maintenance of the construct (LaRocque, 2010). These theoretical framings from Fanon (1963) and Butler (1990) recommend a deep examination of the way normalized dominance operates in society, and provides insight into why certain avenues of pursuing social and ecological justice are resisted (Kumashiro, 2000).

A critique of the dominance of humans over non-human life has long been a centerpiece of scholarship dedicated to environmental protection and the health of ecosystems (Nolet, 2016; Palmer, 1998). More recent research has begun to account for the way dominance over land and non-human life is correlated with white dominance over People of Color (Bullard, 1990), male dominance over women (Warren, 2000), and colonizer dominance over Indigenous Peoples (Calderon, 2014; Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). Following this trend, Pulido (2015) proposes that all spaces, whether perceived as natural or constructed, are connected to historical and continued policies and practices tied to oppression. Pulido points out that when inquiring into the history of laws and policies related to property, land-use, and conservation, it is clear

that racial and class oppression have played a significant role. Pulido centres her inquiry on a social-spatial nexus from which to examine the mechanisms of racial oppression alongside those of environmental destruction. Pulido connects discussion of the structural mechanisms of environmental racism (e.g., industrial waste and landfill placement, political influence, and unequal distribution of capital and property) with social dimensions of racism such as discourse, representation, and identity more typically examined in critical race theory. In Pulido's analysis, everyday spaces that are often assumed to be neutral become a focal point for exploring the complex components that link the social and ecological. Pulido's proposed exploration concentrates on the impacts of unequal power and unevenly distributed capital manifested over time, which contribute to the material and discursive foundations of oppression and ecological degradation.

Pulido's (2000; 2015) approach to environmental racism parallels that of researchers working in land education (Calderon, 2014; Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). Land education similarly examines how everyday spaces often assumed to be ahistorical and apolitical are shaped by colonialism (Calderon, 2014). Land education addresses how colonialism has contributed to race- and class-based oppression, but it also examines the epistemological and ontological orientations to land that have been established by Western colonial influences. Such examination contrasts Western and Indigenous beliefs about the types of relationships humans ought to have with the land—interpreted holistically as earth, water, air, food, shelter, and animal and plant life (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). In land education, an acknowledgment of the historical colonial ties to human dominance over land is key to assessing what is going wrong from a social and ecological standpoint. Both Pulido (2015) and proponents of land education (Calderon, 2014; Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014) foreground an historical analysis of social-spatial contexts in which structural and discursive processes of domination over peoples and land provide new avenues for inquiry.

Julie discussed her vision for her work in the community in a way that parallels this approach to analysis. For Julie, historical and contemporary forms of oppression that are imprinted on place and reflected in discourses and structures are a constant backdrop against which she interprets challenges in her work. Julie described a form of socio-spatial analysis similar to that of Pulido (2015) in which she assesses problematic events occurring in the present as a consequence of multiple forms of oppression enacted over time. Julie equated this form of

inquiry to a deep examination of justice issues, and suggested that the absence of such inquiry leads to rudimentary or surface-level understandings that are linked to ineffective or counterproductive approaches to justice work. Julie explained that the socio-spatial contexts she experiences daily are embedded in and influenced by multiple forms of oppression she sees as undermining the efficacy of her work. Julie believed that one of the consequences of the forms of oppression is a general predisposition of detachment from a connection and responsibility to other individuals and to the land.

Jayda foregrounded the notion of intergenerational trauma as way to understand the historical effect of multiple forms of oppression she sees impacting the lives of individuals she serves in her work. Jayda addressed the intergenerational trauma through a discussion of how the effects of oppression can be internalized and passed down, and can manifest in behaviours interpreted by the broader society as delinquent or anti-social. For Jayda, an awareness of how discursive and structural mechanisms of oppression become embedded within the identities of individuals and carry emotional and psychological scars is critical to understanding the impacts of oppression. For Jayda, the absence of understanding the historical and intergenerational consequences of oppression contributes significantly to the way oppression is perpetuated.

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) argue that one of the ways diverse forms of oppression are interrelated is through “internalized dominance” (p. 49). Internalized dominance refers to an embedded set of assumptions and associated values that influence the identity of individuals within dominant groups, and mediate how such individuals see themselves and their positions in society. A defining feature of internalized dominance is that it largely operates outside of conscious self-reflection and self-interrogation. For example, the way one is positioned in terms of race and class—including the meanings and values associated with these positionings—are largely hidden, ignored, or otherwise obscured from self-reflection. Sensoy and DiAngelo examine the particular challenges internalized dominance presents to anti-oppressive learning. The authors argue that effective anti-oppressive education must employ strategies to enable learners who occupy dominant social positions to recognize how their positionalities influence the meanings and values they construct about society and their role within it.

Calderon (2014) addresses internalized dominance in a way that includes an examination of intersectional social-group hierarchies alongside inquiry into epistemological and cosmological relationships with land. Calderon develops her discussion around the concept

“colonial-blind,” which she introduces as a complement to “color-blind”—a term utilized in critical race theory (pp. 85-87). In Calderon’s discussion of colonial-blind, she analyzes the way a colonial logic has become embedded in the epistemological assumptions underlying social and political processes of settler colonial societies. Although Calderon focuses on colonialism, her discussion addresses the way multiple forms of oppression are embedded and enacted in everyday processes. Calderon (2014) states that “western knowledge organization and assumptions promote western notions of being (metaphysics), and promote westernization of knowledge and its institutionalization through means perceived as neutral” (p. 85). Calderon references Gloria Anzaldua’s concept of “selective reality” (p. 85) to describe the internalized nature of colonial oppression. Selective reality is “the narrow spectrum of reality that human beings choose to perceive and/or what their culture ‘selects’ for them to ‘see’” (Anzaldua cited in Calderon, 2014, p.86). For both Calderon and Anzaldua, selective reality is driven by the investment of the dominant group to avoid a true accounting of the nature and impacts of oppression. Calderon links her discussion of colonial internalized dominance to all other forms of oppression, and begins to lay the groundwork for analyzing dominance as it relates to both social hierarchies and humans’ relationship with land. Calderon’s discussion of colonial-blind discourses suggests an expansion of critical analysis of internalized dominance to include its role in contributing to ecological destruction.

In her article *The Culture of Privilege*, Abby Ferber (2012) proposes an analytical process in which resistance to critical whiteness studies is examined alongside resistance to critiques of gender- and religious-based privilege. Ferber’s premise is that there are common characteristics in the ways analyses of white privilege are denied and rejected, and the ways analysis of other forms of privilege are denied and rejected. Ferber (2012) draws on the concept of intersectionality to describe what she terms “oppression blindness” (p.63). Essentially, the concept of oppression blindness refers to diverse forms of oppression that are interrelated in terms of the form and function of resistance, and the ways multiple forms of resistance operate simultaneously. Ferber (2012) applies Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s framework for color-blind ideology to gender- and religious-based critiques of oppression. The framework includes discussion of “abstract liberalism,” “naturalization,” “cultural racism,” and “minimization of racism” (p. 66). Ferber concludes that through applying these ideological tenets to gender- and religious-based resistance, clear parallels can be seen revealing crucial insight into the nature of

resistance to understanding and awareness (see Kumashiro, 2000). Ferber's (2012) conclusion opens the door to a broader exploration of the role of normalized dominance in limiting awareness and understanding of the interrelationship among diverse social and ecological problems. Ferber does not go beyond the trio of race, gender, and religious oppression, nor does she touch on ways resistance to diverse forms of oppression may differ and diverge, however her discussion offers new and constructive avenues for analyzing resistance.

Godfrey and Torres (2016) employ the concept of intersectionality to theorize the relationship between social and ecological justice. In doing so, the authors expand the term "blind" to refer to the tendency to avoid or resist a substantive accounting of the impacts of human exploitation of (or dominance over) ecological systems. For Godfrey and Torres, the meaning of the term intersectionality as it relates to both the social and ecological begins with the body. For the authors, the body is the object of oppression, the casualty of environmental contamination, and the driver of unsustainable consumption. Godfrey and Torres state that, "whether we recognize it or not, we are all simultaneously social and ecological beings" (p. 4). Bodies are immersed in discourses of social categories linked to histories of unequal power and oppression; and, bodies are part of living systems that have inherent limits on the amount of disruption the systems can withstand. For the authors, key to theorizing this intersectionality is an analysis of how a blindness to the way bodies are the objects of oppression is related to a blindness of the way bodies are inextricably tied to ecological systems, including their limits. This blindness can be equated with Calderon's (2014) reference to selective reality. The "narrow spectrum" described by Anzaldua includes both social and ecological dimensions (Anzaldua cited in Calderon, 2014).

Several participants expressed their perspectives on the way dominance becomes normalized through an intersectional blindness that is part of everyday social life. Julie believed that a careful process of interrogating dominant beliefs and values related to oppression and ecological degradation is needed to begin a meaningful dialogue about what is going wrong and how to create change. Jayda described social and ecological justice work in terms of interrogating the multiple forms of oppression that impact people and the land over time, creating intergenerational traumas that are often ignored by dominant groups and institutional structures. Natalie suggested that dominance becomes normalized through the way notions of bias, impartiality, and fairness are framed and taken-for-granted in society. Natalie has been told

that her work in social and ecological justice amounts to “brainwashing.” Conversely, Natalie sees her work as striving toward sound, accurate inquiry, taking into consideration competing perspectives and arriving at informed, defensible conclusions. While Natalie is cognizant of limitations of objectivity in her work (namely, that personal biases can never be completely avoided), she interprets claims of brainwashing as indicative of engrained assumptions about what it means to engage in justice work. In Natalie’s experience, commonplace ideas of neutrality, balance, and objectivity tend to correspond to an interest in avoiding questions of dominance and its associated consequences. Natalie reflected on the irony of being accused of bias and brainwashing while working to bring to light understandings that are systematically omitted and ignored. This reflection aids Natalie in understanding how dominance becomes internalized.

It is clear that the idea of a normalized dominance is a common thread woven through both the theoretical writings consulted and the observations shared by participants. The characteristics of normalized dominance are unique to their contexts, but there are underlying properties that overlap and may be explored as part of a broader pattern. The goal then becomes to recognize and name patterns in the ways normalized dominance is formed, and how it influences everyday experiences. This interrogation focuses attention on embedded personal and material investments associated with continuing oppression and ecological degradation. From a learning and capacity-building standpoint, the objective is to better understand oppression and ecological degradation through an emphasis on uncovering and deconstructing normalized dominance and its impacts on society. This practice involves questioning one’s own (as well as others’) entitlements, investments, and benefits linked to maintaining the status quo. The development of this capacity enhances the ability to make new connections among the complex factors that underlie oppression and ecological degradation, therefore creating new and integrated possibilities for working towards change.

Resistance Masquerading as Neutrality

The exploration of ways dominance becomes normalized within society leads to a more focused inquiry into the role of resistance in social and ecological justice work. The topic of resistance is discussed both in the literature and by participants as a productive basis for exploring the links between the social and ecological in justice theorizing. Participants described both direct instances of resistance and indirect instances that impact their ability to implement the types of justice-based initiatives they believe are needed to create change. The forms of

resistance described by participants are applicable across diverse issues related to social and ecological justice. It is in response to these cross-disciplinary forms of resistance that Furman and Greenwood (2004) propose their critical pedagogy of place. The authors argue for a pedagogy directed at "interrupt[ing] the status quo," to critique "structures built upon the so-called neutrality of objective reality and acknowledge that the systems we have in place represent and, subsequently, reproduce the dominant culture and values of society" (Bogotch cited in Furman & Greenwood, 2004, p. 51). This statement parallels participants' discussions of the need to understand and challenge the embedded nature of resistance, which is often not perceived as resistance by the broader public, but as a neutral or commonplace practice.

Sarah described resistance in terms of individuals in positions of influence acknowledging problems but insisting that interventions must be gradual and implemented when members of the dominant group are "ready" to accept them. In Sarah's assessment, the comfort of those who were blind to and benefit from oppression was held over the safety and wellbeing of those who experienced prejudice and violence as a daily reality. This circumstance was particularly heartbreaking for Sarah as she witnessed daily the consequences of the unacknowledged and unchallenged prejudice that exists in public spaces such as schools.

Tara problematized a generalized societal assumption that personal struggles such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness are products of character flaws and are inevitable aspects of the social structure. Since these conditions were perceived to be inevitable and created by those who were struggling, the types of projects Tara facilitated were interpreted as a form of charity work, focusing on individual recipients of services and not the broader social implications. Conversely, Tara's vision for her work was to identify and address the underlying conditions linked to these and other associated struggles in order to nurture a healthier more prosperous society for everyone. Tara discussed her viewpoint as being guided by the practice of empathy and an understanding of the interrelated factors associated with individual and societal wellbeing. Tara believed that because her work was widely interpreted as individual charity and not as a social good that provided dividends for the population as a whole, the support for programs was limited and limiting.

Emma discussed resistance in terms of the denial of responsibility to act in response to issues perceived to be outside the scope and mandate of her organization. For Emma, those who argued for this omission did so based on a lack of personal connection to the issues in question.

That is, issues seen to affect individuals or groups distanced from those making the decisions were perceived to be beyond the mandate (and responsibility) of the group. Emma characterized the reluctance to consider additional issues as part of the group's mission as a form of resistance, but one that could be deflected and denied. Emma experienced the inertia of the resistance as she proposed new directions for advocacy but could not confront it directly because it was hidden behind narratives about the traditions and status quo of the organization.

Lois indicated that within her organization a priority was placed on the maintenance of amicable relations with funders that provided resources and support for her organization. Lois explained that preserving such relationships required a delicate balance between the messages disseminated by the organization and the feelings of influential members within the institutions with which she worked. Lois shared that there was a mutual acknowledgement and acceptance that there may be differences of opinions and values between her organization and its supporters; however, there was an unspoken line which, if crossed, would potentially elicit a retaliatory response from those in positions of power. While Lois did not speculate about how the work of her organization might differ if not for this influence, she emphasized the degree to which decisions made within the organization took into consideration how they would be perceived from without. Several other participants commented on the influence of funders and funding processes on how their organizations approached their advocacy work and how they presented themselves to the broader public. To the extent that funders and funding processes served to limit the types of projects and content of messaging promoted by the organizations, the role of funding may be seen as part of how resistance was hidden behind a veneer of neutrality.

Greenwood (2003) and Kumashiro (2000) argue for the need to cultivate a capacity to critically analyze taken-for-granted ways social and ecological problems are comprehended, discussed, and acted upon by individuals and groups. Informing this capacity is an awareness and understanding of how resistance to meaningful intervention can be hidden behind narratives of neutrality. From a pedagogical perspective, this suggests prioritizing the development of this form of critical analysis as an end in and of itself. To Sarah, this analysis would entail interrogating why youth were suffering from prejudice and violence while they waited for those in power, who reproduced what they saw as neutral, to be “ready” to intervene. For Tara, the focus of critical analysis would centre on the complex factors, both individual and societal, that contribute to challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. Correspondingly,

programs designed to mitigate the consequences of these challenges would be approached from a holistic standpoint. For Lois and Emma, critical analysis would involve examining the way the interests of those in positions of influence—whether that be within community organizations or those who have a stake in such organizations—can shape and potentially limit the forms of social and ecological justice work undertaken. For these participants, it is clear that power plays a central role in determining how problems are understood and how solutions are envisioned. It is apparent that the capacity to recognize and confront resistance, particularly when it masquerades as neutrality, is valuable when undertaking social and ecological justice work. Drawing from both a cross-section of relevant literature and participants' statements, the capacity to confront resistance is one that can empower social and ecological justice advocacy.

Witnessing as a Foundation for Learning and Action

Megan Boler (1999) developed the concept of “witnessing” as she inquired into learning experiences that lead to what she sees as meaningful understandings of social justice. Boler’s theorizing provides a basis for discussing a core perspective shared by several participants, and offers a potential pivot point for linking learning across diverse social and ecological justice domains. Witnessing explores the ways individuals receive, internalize, and respond to representations of prejudice, discrimination, and violence. For Boler, the way learners respond to representations of injustice is a critical point of inquiry for developing justice-based pedagogies. Boler states that “collective witnessing is always understood in relation to others, and in relation to personal and cultural histories and material conditions” (p. 178). Boler further explains that the process of making meaning of the other (in particular, the suffering of the other) necessarily involves a reevaluation of one's sense of self and the cultural and historical factors that contribute to the context of suffering. Bolar has come to recognize that learners who do not have direct experiences with particular forms of oppression are comforted by approaches to inquiry that do not elicit feelings of guilt or responsibility. This recognition has emerged through extensive teaching and researching around an array of justice issues. Boler contrasts the notion of witnessing with “spectating,” stating that “spectating permits a gaping distance between self and other” (p. 184). In Boler's theorizing, the contrast between these two types of learning experiences becomes reflected in the way justice-based pedagogies are conceived of and designed. Therefore, Boler emphasizes the importance of attending to the learning process as much as learning content.

Boler (1999) argues that justice-based pedagogies ought to emphasize inquiry that challenges learners to better understand how the discourses and histories of oppression are connected to the learners' own experiences and identities. The reason for this is not to ensure appropriate blame be laid and guilt be felt, but that meaningful learning most often happens through a process of being moved; and, by making a personal connection, learners are enabled to think about what they can do in their daily lives to counter systemic oppression, rather than reinforce it. Dian Million's (2009) promotion of felt theory similarly emphasizes the value of centring emotion as a vital source of knowledge and learning. Million argues that "felt knowledge" is often dismissed and discredited, and that this response to the expression of emotion is an obstacle to transformative change (p. 54). To facilitate learning that values the felt knowledges of discrimination and violence, Boler recommends that learners reflect on the instances in which they are made aware of the prejudice and violence experienced by others and how they react to such information. Boler recognizes that learners are positioned within the multiple forms of oppression that exist and experience oppression in complex ways. Therefore, the forms of connection and responsibility Boler hopes to elicit are not predetermined or defined, but explored in relation to the ideals of mutual care and responsibility.

For Boler (1999), witnessing necessitates an intersectional accounting of the discursive, material, and historical conditions that bear upon daily experiences. It also interrogates the role of unequal power in shaping societal structures in constructing those conditions. In this way, the goal of witnessing as a learning foundation has the potential to generate new and productive understandings related to a range of social and ecological justice issues. As with the learning foundations discussed above, the action of witnessing is perceived as a capacity that can be nurtured, and can contribute to deeper, interconnected understandings of oppression and ecological degradation.

Several participants discussed what they believed to be a tendency of the general public to externalize the struggles and suffering of others. To these participants, individuals externalized this suffering by perceiving the conditions of suffering as outside of their agency and responsibility, often blaming the sufferer rather than examining the conditions that have led to the suffering. Comments from Jayda, Tennille, Julie, and Jamie concurred with Boler's (1999) articulation of the contrast between spectating and witnessing. All four participants discussed this contrast as a product of embedded, systemic oppression; and they all suggested that learning

in the form of witnessing was an important foundation for transformative change. In response to the externalization of the other's suffering, Jamie argued that making a personal connection removes the ability to insulate one's self from facing the suffering of others. Jamie suggested that engaging learning that allows or even encourages the learner to be insulated from critical self-reflection can serve to reproduce ideologies and policies that are linked to the suffering. This was reinforced by Emma's emphasis on fostering a connection with people and place, developing a relationship between the self and other, whether that other is human or non-human. Sarah shared that one of the most fulfilling outcomes of her work was when she was able to guide teachers to a realization that their actions (previously seen as neutral) played a role in the discomfort, isolation, and discrimination of students. While this realization was heartening for Sarah, it also highlighted the degree to which teachers (as well as other professionals) did not see the conditions of oppression as part to their responsibility or within their ability to effect change.

These participants described a learning process in which the learners are challenged to see themselves as interconnected with the underlying conditions of oppression and ecological degradation. The participants perceived this as both difficult and empowering for learners. It is difficult because learners must confront their own embeddedness in and connection with the problems they see in the world, and empowering because through seeing the self as interwoven with the conditions of oppression and ecological degradation, learners can conceive of opportunities to take transformative action.

While Boler (1999) discusses witnessing in terms of intersectional social justice pedagogies, this notion can be applied to theorizing related to both social and ecological justice learning. Boler emphasizes the interrogation of the discursive, material, and historical conditions that are associated with oppression in order for learners to understand and become connected to the suffering caused by such conditions. This inquiry process is open to (even arguably necessitates) an interrogation of the ecological conditions that also contribute to the suffering experienced by both human and non-human life (Calderon, 2014; Canty, 2017; Pulido, 2015).

The capacity of witnessing, then, involves the ability of learners to see themselves as embedded within the discourses and structures related to both oppression and ecological degradation. For Boler (1999), this capacity requires a "willing[ness] to inhabit a more ambiguous and flexible sense of self" (p. 176). The ambiguity and flexibility Boler refers to involve learners' view of their ethical standing as beyond the reductive binary of innocence

versus guilt, allowing for more complex understandings of the relationship of the self to the conditions of oppression. Boler develops this idea through a discussion of “defensive anger, fear of change, and fears of losing [learners’] personal and collective identities” (p. 176). From a pedagogical standpoint, inquiry and self-reflection become focused on these possible responses to justice-based learning. Boler introduces the term "pedagogy of discomfort" to represent the learners' experiences of witnessing as they accept and acknowledge the relationship between the suffering of others and the conditions of their own lives (p. 176). Further describing a pedagogy of discomfort, Boler writes, it “begins by inviting educators and students to engage in critical inquiry regarding values and cherished beliefs, and to examine constructed self-images in relation to how one has learned to perceive others” (pp. 176–177).

The pedagogy described by Bolar (1999) is consistent with participants' views on the kinds of learning needed to counter peoples' tendency to externalize the suffering of others; and, to begin to see how the learners’ experiences and identities are related to established conditions that contribute to oppression and ecological degradation. The practice of witnessing blends together with the other learning foundations discussed in this chapter. The three learning foundations are interrelated components of a complete whole. Each of the learning foundations overlaps the others and provides key insights into the forms of inquiry required to advance social and ecological justice learning and action.

Discussion Summary: Solving for Pattern Revisited

As foregrounded in the introduction of this chapter, theories addressing social and ecological justice learning must take into consideration complex networks of identities, values, fears, hierarchies, representations, experiences, and power. Therefore, theorizing must be fluid, process-oriented, and adaptable to a diverse array of contexts. In this chapter, the theorizing is framed in terms of three learning foundations designed to build capacities that support learning around diverse social and ecological justice issues. The objective of this approach is to conceptualize learning as both centred on the examination of individual justice issues and generating broader understandings of the relationships and connections among other justice issues that also require attention. This pedagogical approach involves the exploration of how established aspects of inquiry related to one form of justice learning may be combined with established aspects of inquiry employed in investigating other issues. Such an approach to

learning is intended to both generate new approaches to inquiry and to develop a broader, more holistic understanding of oppression and ecological degradation.

This objective is reflected in Wendell Berry's (2005) conceptualization of "solving for pattern:" an approach to pursuing solutions through exploring the interconnections or patterns among problems and designing learning and action that addresses the parts and the whole simultaneously. Developing this conceptualization within a farming context, Berry advocates for a reciprocating connection in the pattern of the farm that is biological, not industrial, and that involves solutions to problems of fertility, soil husbandry, economics, sanitation—the whole complex of problems whose proper solutions add up to *health*: the health of the soil, of plants and animals, of farm and farmer, of farm family and farm community, all involved in the same interested, interlocking pattern—or pattern of patterns (p. 33).

From this understanding, Berry argues that "A good solution is good because it is in harmony with those larger patterns. ... A good solution acts within the larger pattern the way a healthy organ acts within the body" (pp. 33-34). This relates directly to the nature of social and ecological justice learning. The act of pursuing social and ecological justice learning involves becoming immersed in specific justice issues that are contextual and based in a particular places, histories and lived-experiences, and exploring those individual issues within broader patterns of issues that implicate other important places, histories, and lived-experiences. As an educational objective, solving for pattern promotes a flexible and adaptable pedagogy that empowers learners to shift between the parts and the whole and from one crucial justice issue to another.

The learning foundations discussed in this chapter are aimed at supporting learners in generating new understandings as they explore the interrelationships among social and ecological justice issues. The objective is to empower learners to interrogate embedded discursive and structural aspects of oppression and ecological degradation that operate in everyday situations. The proposed learning process begins with an acknowledgement that oppression and ecological degradation are always and already present and acting upon bodies and socio-spatial contexts (Pulido, 2015). Thus, social and ecological justice learning necessitates the development of an interconnected set of critical lenses applied to investigate the roots of oppression and ecological degradation. These critical lenses are woven together through critically analyzing normalized dominance, uncovering the neutrality of resistance, and deliberately working toward a practice of witnessing. The goal is to develop new understandings about what is occurring within local and global contexts and to promote thinking and behaving in ways that challenge and disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions about everyday life.

The introduction of these learning foundations is intended to elicit in learners a complex examination of the self that is entangled within the contexts and histories of oppression and ecological degradation. This focus on a critical examination of the self is emphasized by a range of theorists working in both social and ecological justice (e.g., Boler, 1999; Butler, 1990; Calderon, 2014; Kumashiro, 2000). Boler's (1999) is acutely aware of the inherent challenges of centring the self as the object of critical analysis. As a result, she has come to anticipate from learners a level of what she describes as "defensive anger, fear of change, and fears of losing [learners'] personal and collective identities" (p. 176). Kumashiro (2000) similarly discusses the tensions, disruptions, and discomforts that are associated with addressing one's self within a critical examination of the contexts and histories of oppression. Kumashiro views this as an essential part of the learning process; one in which learners come to see themselves as immersed in paradoxical relationships with conditions of oppression and ecological degradation. Kumashiro describes a reflexive process that results from contemplating the paradox of being both influenced by the structures and discourses of oppression and working to transform them. Kumashiro also promotes learning that disrupts learners' feelings of innocence and/or absolution as they make meaning of the multiple forms of oppression existing around them. Both Kumashiro (2000) and Boler (1999) stress the need for a deliberate exploration of roles of innocence and absolution as mediators of the learning process in relation to social and ecological justice.

The three learning foundations—the normalization of dominance, resistance masquerading as neutrality, and witnessing as a foundation for learning and action—challenge assumptions that depict everyday life as more or less equitable, just, and sustainable. These assumptions, according to Boler (1999) and Kumashiro (2000) (along with many others), are powerful mediators of what is taken up in learning programs, and how individuals engage (or disengage) in the learning processes. The participants in the study emphasized a need to transcend and transform such assumptions and begin to see, collectively, how each individual is entangled in complex histories influenced by discourses and structures that are oppressive and ecologically damaging. The value of the learning foundations is found in their ability to move between diverse forms of oppression and ecological degradation generating broader, more coherent understandings of how these forms are related. The learning foundations are aimed at developing the capacity to see beyond the reproduction of narratives and processes that obscure

inequality and justify prejudice and discrimination, as well as, reproduce practices that cause irreversible ecological damage. The learning foundations also aim to re-examining the role of the self in the reproduction of such narratives and processes.

The discussion of the learning foundations is not intended to be prescriptive, but rather to be a guide to inquiry on integrated social and ecological justice learning. This guide is enriched by the insights gained from participants' experiences working toward justice as a daily practice. It became evident in the data analysis and discussion that inquiry must seek to identify and name ways everyday social-spatial realities are intimately linked to the conditions of oppression and ecological degradation, and that learner identities are interwoven with these realities. Therefore, effective social and ecological justice learning must involve a disruption of the relationships between the self and the discourses and structures that contribute to oppression and ecological degradation. Such learning requires a willingness to critique the privileges and entitlements that have been bestowed onto some as a result of oppression and ecological degradation, and be open to the possibility of forgoing these privileges and entitlements as part of transformative change.

While the learning foundations make substantive connections to the literature, they do not cover the full range of themes identified in the literature review. One core theme that is absent from the learning foundations is a focus on land as an organizing basis for learning and action. The omission of land from the development of the learning foundations is due to an absence of the topic of land in participants' conceptualizations of their practices. This isn't to say that participants did not consider land as a core consideration in their vision for their work; simply that participants did not include the notion of land in the ways they described their day-to-day practices. Based on the review of literature, however, the role of land in social and ecological justice learning appears to be a promising theme for developing research and educational programming.

The learning foundations that emerged in the study offer a means to shift between and across diverse and complex social and ecological justice issues, while maintaining a consistent goal of generating new understandings of the interrelationships and patterns found across these issues. While there may be numerous possible approaches to achieve this end, it is my belief that developing understandings and capacities around the normalization of dominance, resistance masquerading as neutrality, and witnessing as a foundation for learning and action provides a

substantive and productive basis for advancing integrated social and ecological justice learning and action.

The final chapter of this dissertation presents a summary of the study and explores implications of the learning foundations for practice and future research. Kindergarten-twelve and post-secondary education are key focal points of the discussed implications for practice, due to their profound potential to influence the knowledge, understanding, and analytical capacity of the society as whole. However, the proposed learning processes may be practiced in any context where there is an interest in addressing social and ecological problems. The discussion of implications for future research is intended to invite researchers to consider what it might mean for their disciplines to adopt a pattern-based methodology that develops focused research questions, but also explores how such questions are related to broader patterns of inquiry seeking to understand and respond holistically to social and ecological problems. The final chapter will conclude with a reflection on what I believe to be the central contribution of the research and what it might mean for the development of teaching and learning.

Chapter Six: Implications and Final Thoughts

Dissertation Overview

The development of this study has been guided by two fundamental assertions: one, that integrated approaches to social and ecological justice are needed to respond to present crises facing the world; and two, that the development of learning and action must be grounded in experiential understandings derived from working directly toward solutions to oppression and ecological degradation. The vision for the research design has been to explore the connections and patterns drawn from a broad reading of literature on social and ecological justice together with understandings provided by participants who work towards social and ecological justice objectives as a daily practice. The following research question guided the inquiry process: *In what ways can experience-based knowledge of working towards social and ecological justice inform theorizing on integrated social and ecological justice learning and action?*

Through a qualitative research process, thirteen individuals were interviewed who have dedicated their professional lives to promote social and ecological justice in their communities. A critical approach to constructivist grounded theory was used in the gathering, analysis, and discussion of the field data. The research involved open-ended interviews with participants; verbatim transcription; memoing; primary, secondary, and tertiary coding using NVivo software; and, testing for thematic saturation. Key questions discussed in the semi-structured interviews included the following: What role does learning toward social and/or ecological justice play in your work within the community? What do you see as the problem (or problems) giving rise to the conditions you are working to improve in your daily practice? What kinds of strategies do you employ to achieve your goals of learning and action? And, what obstacles do you face as you seek to address and confront problems you observe in the community?

Following the systematic data analysis process outlined in grounded theory (see Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2017), the field data were organized into four core themes. The presentation of themes was designed to enable readers to contemplate key ideas shared by participants and begin to make connections with broader theoretical frames. In grounded theory, the data drives analysis and therefore the themes emerged through the systematic, multi-stage coding process. The goal was to identify and organize salient insights in the data that could then be explored together with relevant theories to provide new perspectives and understandings. This inductive methodological process was an optimal fit for this research project, as the goal was to

blend key ideas emerging from the field data together with diverse theoretical tenets drawn from various disciplines encompassed within social and ecological justice.

Participants shared their thoughts on many aspects of their daily work, including their understandings, aspirations, strategies, challenges, and defeats. A rich selection of participants' insights was presented in chapter four. The field data were organized into the following themes: learning processes associated with social and ecological justice work; societal perceptions and values that bear upon social and ecological justice advocacy; resistance to social and ecological justice learning and action; and limitations in social and ecological justice education and training in public institutions.

Another core objective of this research was to explore how the notion of social and ecological justice is being taken up in the literature (Chapter Two). This was done in two stages. The first stage explored literature that focuses explicitly on the relationships between the social and ecological in justice theorizing. The intersection of the social and ecological is increasingly seen by theorists as a critical entry point for investigating the complex problems facing the global population (Andrzejewski, Baltodano, & Symcox, 2009; Furman & Greenwood, 2004). Literature centring on this intersection is discussed in chapter two as fitting into two general approaches: additive and integrated—with the integrated approach further divided into two subsets. The additive approach addresses social justice issues such as racism or classism in tandem with ecological justice issues such as climate change or toxic waste contamination. Both categories are stressed in the literature as being vital to understanding the scope of contemporary problems, but they are interpreted as independent pieces that can be considered together to generate a more complete picture of what is going wrong (Goldstein & Selby, 2000).

Literature included in the integrated approach centres inquiry on the interrelationships among elements of social and ecological justice theorizing. Theorists undertaking this approach often endeavour to develop new ways of understanding social and ecological problems that are not possible by analyzing these elements independently. The first subset of the integrated approach contains literature that looks specifically at the correlations between the demographics of social inequality and the impacts of environmental contamination (Bullard, 1999). Theorists' objectives in this subset are to reveal the ways the consequences of contaminated water, air, and soil are more commonly experienced by those with less social, economic, and political power. Literature discussed in the second subset does not look specifically for correlations between

inequality and environmental contamination, but explores ways social and ecological aspects of lived experience are fundamentally interwoven. Theorists in this group argue that social and ecological problems cannot be effectively examined independently, and that solutions must involve a combination of socially- and ecologically-based interventions (Furman & Greenwood, 2004). The integrated approach seeks to collapse the duality between the social and ecological and emphasize an understanding that bodies, places, and histories are both fundamentally social and ecological in nature.

Stage two of the literature review involved a broad reading of literature that exists within the diverse fields of social justice and ecological justice. The aim of this stage was to identify commonalities in the varied theoretical perspectives that might point to productive avenues for theoretical integration. This broad reading of the literature concentrated on theorists writing in the areas of critical theory, critical race theory, feminist and queer theory, decolonization, anti-oppressive theory, environmental justice, environmental racism, climate justice, critical ecopedagogy, and land education. An analogy based on the way dynamic balance operates within living systems (Capra, 2005) was used to conceptualize the relationships among individual theoretical perspectives as being situated within complimentary theoretical networks. The analogy of dynamic balance depicts a relational process that shifts back and forth between individual parts of the network and the whole.

One common argument identified across numerous social and ecological justice domains is the need for a thorough interrogation of the construction, reproduction, and implications of dominant group identities (Butler, 1999; Calderon, 2014; Fanon, 1963; Kumashiro, 2009; Leonardo, 2009; Pulido, 2015). Such an interrogation seeks to uncover the formation of dominant group identities within diverse discursive, structural, and historical contexts. By identifying and comparing the ways differing forms of dominant identities are constructed and lead to specific consequences, a connection can be made across diverse approaches to inquiry that have a similar objective of revealing the nature and reproduction of dominance. In this way, diverse social and ecological justice literatures may be integrated through the identification of commonalities in the ways dominant identities are constructed (and may be deconstructed) within diverse contexts and involving diverse subjects.

Building on the analysis of field data, the discussion chapter further explored the intersections between comments provided by participants together with the key insights that

emerged in the literature review. The goal of the discussion chapter was to explore more extensively how participants' comments might be productively applied to theorizing on integrated social and ecological justice learning. This exploration was driven by participants' stories of what they perceived to be at the heart of the problems they encountered daily in the community. The aim was to wade into the complexity of insights shared by participants along with theoretical perspectives taken from a range of fields to identify threads that are woven through the diverse and dynamic conceptualizations. Through seeking to identify such threads, the goal was to then consider implications for designing learning and action. Although participants' comments did not relate to all relevant themes identified in the theory, a substantive connection between the data analysis and the literature review was apparent, leading to a productive basis for the development of pedagogy.

The three learning foundations that emerged in the discussion include: the normalization of dominance, resistance masquerading as neutrality, and witnessing as a foundation for learning and action. Each of the learning foundations was presented in the chapter in terms of building capacities that together create a basis for effectively investigating diverse social and ecological problems. The first learning foundation involved the capacity to reveal the ways dominance in its multiple forms becomes normalized within everyday experiences in society. Following the assertions of a cross-section of social and ecological justice theorists (e.g., Butler, 1999; Calderon, 2014; Fanon, 1963; Kahn, 2010), such a critique aims to excavate discursive, structural, and historical manifestations of unequal power that mediate socio-spatial realities (Pulido, 2015). The second learning foundation centred on the capacity to recognize when and how efforts to elucidate and transform oppression and ecological degradation are being resisted. This capacity seeks to uncover ways resistance is framed in narratives of neutrality that defer action and preserve in those who resist a sense of detachment and innocence. The third learning foundation discussed in the chapter aims to empower a practice of witnessing when encountering the consequences of oppression and ecological degradation (Boler, 1999). Witnessing involves a direct investigation of personal entanglements with the conditions and histories that contribute to oppression and ecological degradation. The practice of witnessing both challenges learners to come to terms with their own complicity and provides new avenues for taking ownership of how to work toward solutions.

The three learning foundations establish a program of inquiry that may be utilized to examine a wide range of social and ecological justice problems. The learning foundations provide a framework for learners to examine how the social and ecological problems they wish to confront are tied to power and dominance. The inquiry process is intended to develop the ability to identify areas in which unequal power has an influence on how problems are identified and defined and what (if any) action is taken in response. This ability can serve as a catalyst as learners investigate diverse social and ecological justice issues. Knowledge of how power and dominance are related to varied social and ecological problems provides an avenue for learners to see how the problems are interrelated. This approach to integrated social and ecological justice learning places significant emphasis on the ability of learners to interrogate the role power plays within social, political, and economic domains to influence how social and ecological problems are interpreted, discussed, and addressed.

Implications for Theory

This research contributes to a growing body of literature that is dedicated to understanding and responding to social and ecological crises facing the global community (Furman & Greenwood , 2004; Kahn, 2010). The features of this study that provide contributions to inquiry are: one, a qualitative representation of participants' knowledge derived from their work in the community to promote social and ecological justice outcomes; and two, a proposed approach to integrated social and ecological justice learning that centres on an interrogation of the ways the unequal power that is embedded in everyday life reproduces oppression and ecological degradation. The contribution of the first feature stems from the reality that social and ecological crises are interwoven with our collective lived experiences—both in our local communities and global networks. Therefore, questions of what is going wrong and what ought to be done must be in some way grounded in first-hand knowledge of problems and what it takes to effect change. This includes knowledge of the embedded structural and nuanced inter- and intrapersonal factors that have a bearing on efforts to implement strategies for change. The data analysis chapter provides a thorough accounting of the participants' insights regarding their vision for their practice and the challenges and frustrations that impact their work. Although only select excerpts from the data are taken up in-depth in the discussion chapter, the analysis provides a robust landscape for drawing connections to a wide range of theoretical framings. The participants' stories offer rich possibilities for theorizing learning foundations dedicated to social

and ecological justice and add to the body of empirical research conducted with community-based organizations.

The contribution of the second feature is found in the unique way the learning foundations approach the integration of social and ecological justice learning. Through seeking to better understand how power and dominance become embedded in our everyday lives and reproduce oppression and ecological degradation, it provides a productive basis for exploring how diverse social and ecological justice issues are interconnected. The overarching objective of this approach is to enhance knowledge of specific social and ecological issues, while generating new understandings about the relationships among seemingly independent problems. The intended outcome of this goal is to promote the implementation of solutions that seek to solve for pattern (Berry, 2005). That is, proposed solutions, in addition to striving to improve conditions around specific social and/or ecological justice issues, also seek to promote and support solutions to other interrelated issues. While literature on social and ecological justice is increasingly focused on the interrelationships among justice issues (Andrzejewski, Baltodano, & Symcox, 2009; Godfrey & Torres, 2016; McKinney & Fulkerson, 2015), much work is needed to articulate what integrated social and ecological justice learning ought to entail. This research provides a basis for thinking about how to develop pedagogies that simultaneously investigate specific social and/or ecological justice issues and generate understandings of the multiple forms of oppression and ecological degradation that exist throughout the world.

This dissertation explores one approach to blending practice-based knowledge derived from working towards social and ecological justice outcomes with varied theoretical perspectives drawn from diverse social and ecological justice literatures. The contribution of this research is not intended to be prescriptive or derived from a deductive analysis aimed at defining best practices for social and ecological justice pedagogy. Rather, the contribution is intended to enable readers to become immersed in the steps of the design and development of the learning foundations and draw their own conclusions about what may lead to meaningful learning outcomes. The validity and reliability of the research, therefore, is not based on the deductive accuracy of the data analysis, but rather the value and possibility stemming from identifying and analyzing common threads woven across the field data and literature (Charmaz, 2006). The sample of participants involved in this qualitative study is not representative of individuals who work to advance social and ecological justice outcomes. However, the field data does provide a

window into the underlying perspectives, beliefs, and values that guide the participants in their work. The learning foundations developed in this dissertation draw together persuasive insights shared by participants together with relevant theoretical framings to guide integrated social and ecological justice inquiry. This provides an opening to pursue theoretical projects that shift between and across disciplines, contexts, and histories. In contrast to proposing concrete, measurable outcomes related to social and ecological justice, the three learning foundations emphasize the development of new ways to approach problems and conceive of solutions that span disciplinary boundaries.

This process-based approach is intended to complement other pedagogical approaches to social and ecological justice that connect diverse disciplines. There are several productive avenues in which future research may extend from this study. Through engaging a wider sample of participants working toward social and ecological justice, and in different contexts and locations, a comparative analysis would enrich and refine the learning foundations. This would be particularly interesting as an international inquiry project. Another productive extension of this research would be to implement educational programming based on the proposed learning foundations, and investigate what impact (if any) it has on the development of integrated social and ecological justice learning outcomes. Finally, as new ideas and perspectives emerge from varied justice literatures, continued attention must be paid to emergent connections and patterns that can inform solutions that address both social and ecological aspects of lived experience.

Implications for Practice

The findings of the study inform the development of social and ecological justice pedagogies by proposing a strategic approach to integrating learning around diverse social and ecological justice topics. Centered on an interrogation of how power and dominance contribute to social and ecological problems, the approach seeks to identify commonalities in the ways forms of oppression and ecological degradation are reproduced. From an inquiry standpoint, this involves the exploration of an expanded landscape of histories, structures, and discourses to inform critical analysis. It also involves questioning how learners are positioned in relation to these histories, structures, and discourses. Through exploring such an expanded landscape of critical analysis, the goal is to generate broader, more holistic understandings of how multiple forms of oppression and ecological degradation are maintained and reproduced. The anticipated outcome of this approach is to enable learners to apply their capacities of critical analysis to a

broad range of daily experiences. The objective of enabling learners to interrogate the influences of power in the reproduction of oppression and ecological degradation is that it will provide opportunities for learners to devise and implement actions to challenge oppression and ecological degradation.

The proposed learning foundations have utility both for educators working in kindergarten-twelve and post-secondary settings and members of organizations who wish to incorporate social and ecological justice learning into their mandates. A strength of the approach is that it emphasizes the critical examination of everyday events as a basis for learning. The learners' experiences are a core component of the learning focus. The role of the educator is not to impart specialized knowledge to the students (though at times this will be required), but to encourage and facilitate critical inquiry. It is daunting to prepare to teach about diverse complex social and ecological justice topics. The learning foundations provide a starting point from which to collectively, as learning communities, build knowledge and understanding. Together, educators and learners construct and take ownership of the process and content of learning. Another strength of the approach is that educators and learners will inevitably question the role of their own organizations in the reproduction of oppression and ecological degradation. This is a challenging undertaking, but one that may be productive for initiating meaningful changes within organizations. To implement a learning program within a structure that will challenge that structure is consistent with the reflexive interrogation that is built into the learning foundations. Key to the proposed social and ecological justice learning is an examination of how unquestioned beliefs and practices of individuals and organizations contribute to oppression and ecological degradation.

A second outcome of expanding the landscape of critical analysis is to make connections with other individuals and groups similarly striving to develop learning and action for change. This represents another form of networking that involves uniting already established methods of responding to problems to enhance and empower the efficacy of those methods. In this way, the idea of networks is considered in a more concrete sense bringing together activists working on individual justice issues to facilitate cross-disciplinary, holistic networks of action. The vision behind bringing together individuals working on diverse social and ecological justice initiatives is to open possibilities for new means for advancing justice outcomes. This envisioned implication is based on the assumption that through emphasizing the interrelationships among

forms of oppression and ecological degradation, deeper understandings and alliances can be developed based on a common vision for change.

This research emphasizes the learning processes involved in social and ecological justice work. The common thread that connects the research to practice is a drive to dedicate time and energy to better understand and challenge oppression and ecological degradation. From this perspective, practice is interpreted as any actions taken by individuals or groups who seek to counter oppression or ecological degradation. Practice is intended to encompass all stages involved in taking action, from investigating and defining problems to implementing steps to transform them.

This research proposes one approach to integrated social and ecological justice learning. The approach is derived from a comparative analysis of research participants' comments and a broad reading of related theory. Limitations to the analysis undertaken in the study stem from the absence of a common experience shared by research participants and the lack of a comprehensive review of literatures associated with social and ecological justice. Given that the objective of the field data collection was to draw from experiences of individuals who work on a diverse range of justice-based initiatives, it could be anticipated that participants would provide a diverse range of insights related to their work. While a broad range of literatures was reviewed in the study, the scope of publications that are associated with social and ecological justice makes a comprehensive review untenable. In addition, my own experiences and biases influenced the way I drew connections between the field data and literature. These limitations suggest that there are additional possible recommendations for integrated social and ecological justice learning that may be found at the intersection of the field data and theory. The learning foundations developed in the discussion chapter describe one path to designing pedagogy for integrated social and ecological justice learning. However, this does not mean that there are not a multitude of effective ways to design pedagogies, and that any one design will be optimal for a particular set of learners in a time and place.

Another limitation of the proposed pedagogy is that different approaches to social and ecological justice learning may be more or less effective depending on the learners and the situations in which the learning is happening. In addition, the learning itself may be immediate and profound or incremental and subtle. In other words, it may be impractical to evaluate the efficacy of a particular pedagogical approach given that clear indicators of learning are difficult

to determine. This research does not content that the learning foundations are optimal for all learning contexts. Rather, it suggests that if implemented the learners' inquiry into the power dynamics of their everyday lives will be enhanced.

Concluding Reflections on the Research Process

This research is inspired by a drive to better understand the relationships among pressing social and ecological problems and promote learning that advances a holistic vision for change. The outcome of this work was in no way clear at the outset of the research process. The three learning foundations developed in the study—the normalization of dominance, resistance as neutrality, and witnessing as a foundation for learning and action—emerged as a possible basis for designing inquiry able to shift between and across differing forms of oppression and ecological degradation. By advancing learning around the proposed learning foundations, the aim is to develop learning processes that empower a capacity for inquiry that employs multiple forms of critical analysis simultaneously. The ultimate goal of this integrated inquiry process is to conceive of solutions that address multiple problems at once, following Berry's (2005) model of solving for pattern.

I completed this research as part of an interdisciplinary doctoral program. Investigating integrated social and ecological justice learning with an interdisciplinary advisory committee played a valuable role in the development of the research process. It was an advantage to be advised by scholars who work in multiple disciplines, but who are committed to social and ecological justice scholarship. There was an increased requirement to frame ideas clearly and to not rely on established disciplinary terminology. The feedback from the committee, in some instances, required added effort to decipher, this led to new and productive ways to think about the content. The added challenge of ensuring that there were clear understandings between myself and advisory committee members contributed to the refinement of ideas and clarity (hopefully) in the way the ideas were conveyed. Committee meetings with the interdisciplinary advisory committee were dynamic and stimulating, including in particular the dissertation defence. The unpredictability of the meetings was a bit daunting, however each meeting had its own creative emergences that helped to shape the focus of the research. It was a pleasure to work with the interdisciplinary advisory committee and to learn and grow from them.

As I reflect on the outcome of the study and its implications for theory and practice—while keeping an eye on events unfolding throughout the world—I am convinced of the need for effective integrated approaches to social and ecological justice learning that offer a unified, holistic vision for change. It is clear that the problems we face collectively are rooted in complex histories, discourses, and value systems that have been layered onto our lives and have shaped our experiences and worldviews. In order to begin to respond to social and ecological problems, we must thoroughly interrogate how our identities are embedded in the histories, discourses, and value systems that have led to the oppression and ecological degradation. This interrogation will look differently for each individual depending on how each is positioned within intersecting hierarchies of social, political, and economic power. The learning foundations that have emerged in this study support the commitment to engage in such an inquiry process and articulate a set of capacities that may empower learners in their work. The capacities follow an assumption that in order to reach the depth of inquiry needed, reflection must go beyond commonplace or comfortable forms of questioning (Boler, 1999; Kumashiro, 2009).

The learning foundations that have emerged in this study all seek to uncover what is beneath commonplace narratives about what is going wrong and what needs to change. Essential to the inquiry process is an awareness and understanding of the tensions and internal struggles associated with the critical assessment of such narratives; and, that imagining strategies for effective change requires taking a hard look at our lives and considering what shifts we might need to make in our thinking and acting. Also essential is an understanding that social and ecological justice is not a set of causes, but a way of engaging and interacting with everyday realities. It is a crucial awareness that all experiences are entangled within the overlapping histories, discourses, and value systems that contribute to oppression and ecological degradation. These histories, discourses, and value systems also culminate within place, and are influential in shaping our relationships with one another and with the land.

I see this research as solving for pattern in that it advocates for the development of the capacity to recognize and respond to the way multiple, overlapping forms oppression and ecological degradation are reflected in everyday moments—both in the seemingly mundane instances that largely go unquestioned and in the jarring events that cause people to stop and reevaluate what is occurring around them. The desired learning outcomes associate with this inquiry are intended to guide how learners treat others (or themselves), engage in dialogue about

social issues, make consumer decisions, evaluate political discourses, vote, get involved in advocacy, and of course develop pedagogy and research. In many ways, the move toward integrated social and ecological justice is already underway. My hope in completing this research is to, in some small way, contribute to a practice of thinking about, naming, and discussing this crucial movement toward integrated social and ecological justice work, and offer some clarity on what it might look like as a goal in each of our lives.

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Interdisciplinary Studies Program

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Community-Based Organizations' Role in Advancing Learning Toward Social and Ecological Justice

Researcher(s): Vince Anderson, PhD Candidate, Interdisciplinary Studies Program, U of S, (306) 381-5581, vince.anderson@usask.ca

Supervisors: Dr. Janet McVittie & Dr. Alex Wilson

Dr. McVittie's contact information:

Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, U of S, (306) 966-7582, janet.mcvittie@usask.ca

Dr. Wilson's contact information:

Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, U of S, (306) 966-7679, alex.wilson@usask.ca

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

- The objective of the research process is to explore the views, understandings, and experiences of community-based social and ecological justice advocates in terms of how learning plays a role in their work to create change. The study will engage individuals who are working within the community to make a positive change towards social and/or ecological justice.
- It is anticipated that the study will contribute to literature on social and ecological justice learning through generating additional empirical data together with advocates working on the ground in the community. It is also hoped that the study will contribute to participants' practice as they reflect on their understandings and experiences, and listening to the understandings and experiences of colleagues similarly working on justice initiatives within Saskatoon.

Procedures:

- The research process will entail conducting a semi-structured interview with participants scheduled in a time and place convenience for each participant. The semi-structured interviews will run between sixty and ninety minutes.
- The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed as part of the data set. Recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked location accessible solely by the

researcher for a period of five years as outlined by the U of S ethical guidelines, at which time it will be destroyed.

- Interviews will proceed in a way that values participants' agency in telling their stories. To this end, a semi-structured format will be employed, inviting participants to direct the interview process toward topics they deem important for addressing the research question.

Potential Risks:

- Every effort will be made to protect the identity of participants (see section on Confidentiality below), there are some limits to the anonymity that can be secured in the research process.

Potential Benefits:

- The contribution of participants in the study will serve a vital function of connecting theory and practice. Often theory around social and ecological justice learning is conceptualized in the context of formal education. However, a significant component of the field involves engaging communities in order to foster change on multiple levels. Participation in this research will support dialogue between social and ecological justice learning efforts undertaken in formal education settings and in community contexts. Benefit to participants may arise also through connecting with colleagues during the focus group to share stories and strategies used to foster social and ecological justice learning in Saskatoon. This may lead to continued communication and collaboration that would likely offer significant benefit to participants and the community.

Confidentiality:

- During the one-to-one interview phase of the study, confidentiality will be protected through selecting a location that ensures the dialogue will be private. Interview recordings, researcher notes, and transcripts will be stored on a password-protected device and locked in a secure location while not in the possession of the researcher. Electronic and physical files will be stored in a secure location for five years as mandated by the U of S Research Ethics Board, at which time they will be destroyed. In the dissemination of the research all identifying details and information will be removed and pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of participants.
- Electronic communication will be conducted through a password protected, dedicated email account. The email account and printouts will be stored in a secure location for the mandated duration and subsequently destroyed.

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary and you can participate in only those discussions you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from this research project for any reason at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. Should you withdraw, all data you have provided will be promptly deleted and/or destroyed.

- Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until drafts of the data analysis are presented to my doctoral committee members. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data”.

Follow up:

- To obtain results from the study, please contact me and I will provide copies of any products derived from the study.

Questions or Concerns:

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1;
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

SIGNED CONSENT

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
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Researcher's Signature Date

A copy of this consent form will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix B – Recruitment Materials: Letter of Engagement

Dear Organization Staff,

My name is Vince Anderson, I am a doctoral student in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program at the University of Saskatchewan. My area of study centres on developing learning as a means of working towards social and ecological justice. I am contacting you because your organization is active in designing and organizing programs and activities that address issues of social and/or ecological justice in a direct manner within the community. The research goal that I envision for this study aims to draw on the insight and experience of individuals working within community-based organizations in order to contribute to and enhance thinking and writing around social and ecological justice learning theory. The foundation for thinking about social and ecological justice learning often is based in the spaces and structures of schooling. This study anticipates that individuals working within the community to effect meaningful and substantive change have valuable insight to contribute to the area of social and ecological justice learning, and ought to be brought into the conversation on what it means to promote justice learning and how this goal may be realized.

My objective in contacting you is to identify one member of your organization who would be interested in participating in the study. The study will involve a one-on-one interview (roughly 60 min – 90 min) with the participant aimed at illuminating the vision and goal behind the work done at the organization; what the participant (and organization) feels is going wrong; what the participant feels needs to change; how the participant considers how the change might occur; how learning might serve as a foundation of that change; and, experiences arising from working within the community to create change. The study aims to interview one representative from each of ten different community-based social and ecological justice organizations. The goal is to gain a wide range of insights from participating individuals, generating a rich ground for analysis.

If a member of your organization is interested in being involved in the study, I will provide a more in-depth description of the study aim and process, and will include a copy of a consent form for your review.

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the U of S Research Ethics Board on (Date).

For additional questions or concerns regarding the study, please direct inquiries to:

Vince Anderson, Principle Investigator
vince.anderson@usask.ca
PhD Candidate (306) 381-5581

Dr. Alex Wilson, Supervisor

alex.wilson@usask.ca

Associate Professor

(306) 966-7679

Educational Foundations

Dr. Janet McVittie, Supervisor

janet.mcvittie@usask.ca

Assistant Professor

(306) 966-7582

Educational Foundations

Thanks so much for your consideration.

Kind Regards,

Vince Anderson

PhD Candidate

Interdisciplinary Studies Program

Appendix C – Semi-Structured Interview Guiding Questions

Semi-Structured One-to-One Interviews

Interview Questions:

1. How would you describe the vision of the organization you are working with?
 - a. What are the foundational goals guiding the organization's vision?
 - b. How do you see the goals responding to a problem impacting the community your organization serves?
2. What would you say are the underlying conditions that give rise to the problem?
 - a. Are there additional conditions that you see as contributing to the problem that guides your work?
 - b. What would you say drew you to respond to the particular problem?
 - c. What are some of the challenges and/or frustrations that you have encountered in working to respond to the problem?
3. Are there additional parties, structures, or systems that play a role in reinforcing and/or maintaining the conditions giving rise to the problem?
 - a. In what way(s) does power play a role in creating and maintaining the problem?
 - b. How does this power factor into your efforts to respond to the problem?
4. What role does learning play in your efforts to work toward change?
 - a. How does your thinking around learning inform the activities undertaken by your organization?
 - b. What have you found that works toward advancing learning?
 - c. Have you encountered obstacles and/or frustrations in your efforts to promote desired learning?
5. Are there any experiences that stand out for you in which learning played a key role in making a difference?