What is Justice?
Constructing Critical Consciousness in a High School Ethics Course

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Social Justice Action across Multiple Sites
Roundtable Session—Critical Educators for Social Justice SIG
Presented April 9, 2016

2016 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting:
Public Scholarship to Educate Diverse Democracies
Washington, D.C.
Abstract
Philosophy should not exist as an elite discourse reserved for a privileged few, but instead represents an opportunity for all to critically examine and ponder some of life’s most complex and important issues—if it is taught in socially conscious and culturally relevant ways, and more inclusively offered to students from all backgrounds and academic paths. This paper details a year-long case study of a small ethics class held as a non-credit, voluntary option for students in a Midwestern career-technical high school. Findings suggest that these students were not only enthusiastic about and academically capable of exploring philosophical topics, but, importantly, were able to construct new ways of seeing their everyday experiences through a philosophical lens.
**Purposes**

In 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established the importance of philosophy as fundamental to its mission of nurturing a more peaceful world (2009).

By developing the intellectual tools to analyze and understand key concepts such as justice, dignity and freedom, by building capacities for independent thought and judgment, by enhancing the critical skills to understand and question the world and its challenges, and by fostering reflection on values and principles, philosophy is a “school of freedom.” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 95)

Such sentiments reveal a global respect for the subject of philosophy, which makes it even more perplexing that public school systems—particularly in the English-speaking world—fail to offer philosophy as a prominent part of the curriculum for at least their secondary students (de Macedo, 2011; Hand & Winstanley, 2008; Kuçuradi, 2000). A very small percentage of high schools—usually private or more elite public schools—offer it as an elective course, and even fewer as a required part of students’ study, despite decades of work toward this goal (Hand & Winstanley, 2008; Link, 1976; M. Lipman, 1993; Lone & Green, 2013; Lukey, 2012; Morgan & Perry, 1958-1959; Tozzi, 2009).

Nonetheless, it comes as no surprise that philosophy has been slow to enter our standard pre-college curriculum when educational policies are increasingly being based on business-oriented aims of efficiency, high-stakes competition, and standardization, rather than a democratic model of intellectual enlightenment and empowerment. A subject such as philosophy may be seen as an impractical sidetrack to the popular policy aims of “measured”
achievement and preparation for specialized occupation—despite the actuality that philosophy can contribute substantially to both. “Philosophy is a study of problems which are ultimate, abstract and very general. These problems are concerned with the nature of existence, knowledge, morality, reason and human purpose” (Teichmann & Evans, 1999, p. 1). These problems exist in all we do, whether on standardized tests or other school assignments, or in the day-to-day world of work and relationships.

The study of these topics’ holistic effect on students would also be difficult to quantify objectively, however current educational reform increasingly requires just that. Without comprehensive, large-scale experimental study of the “effectiveness” of existing philosophy courses, it will be hard to get them introduced into mainstream high school curricula. Additionally, the current push for universal achievement standards and overly standardized content create a climate where esteem for open-ended inquiry, where there are no “right” answers, is automatically and by definition deemed impracticable. Through this narrow focus, policy makers effectively create educational reform that may actually move students further and further away from understanding the greater problems of the world, problems which cannot be so neatly detached from their very untidy, subjective and genuine contexts.

Philosophy should not exist as an elite discourse reserved for a privileged few, but instead represents an opportunity for all to critically examine and ponder some of life’s most complex and important issues—if it is taught in socially conscious and culturally relevant ways. Linking the mindful teaching of high school philosophy to critical pedagogical theory around educating for social justice, this paper will introduce high school philosophy, giving specific attention to both the pragmatic rationale for these courses, such as their democratic, cognitive, and autonomy-building experiences; and to the more transcendent, such as the rights of children.
and young adults to construct their own unique consciousness, to experience emancipatory, culturally just forms of enlightenment, and to exercise their free will in balance with the confines of an existing world. I will then detail a year-long case study of an ethics class held as a non-credit, voluntary option for students in a Midwestern career-technical high school, which was undertaken to test how these ideas play out in practice. Findings suggest that these students were not only enthusiastic about and academically capable of exploring philosophical topics, but, importantly, were able to construct new ways of seeing their everyday experiences through a philosophical lens.

**Scholarly Significance**

While there is much literature promoting pre-college philosophy, little specifically conveys it as a mode to enact social justice. Further, this literature has mostly been contained within the field of philosophy, and it has received practically no attention in the field of educational research. This research on the topic is an attempt to fill these gaps.

**Theoretical Framework**

Critical pedagogy, like any pedagogy, is not only about teaching techniques, but encompasses all the ways teachers and students interact and learn with one another. It exists as part of the latent curriculum, or the way subjects are taught and schools are run, and the consequent relationships of power, agency and voice these produce. As Breslin states, “If the final purpose of education is not to open and train the mind to think for itself, then what is its purpose? . . . If education is not the liberation of the mind and the uplifting of the human spirit, it is not really education” (Breslin, 1982). Philosophy does not just teach content and ideas, it trains and strengthens the mind in the actual act of thinking, which can then be applied to any
content or ideas one encounters, both in formal education and, perhaps more importantly, in the wider world of one’s experience (Breslin, 1982; Davis, 2013; Orchant, 2009; Suissa, 2008). Philosophy as a subject has often been seen as too abstract, irrelevant, or even arrogant, but I would suggest that this is only when it is taught using those traditionalist pedagogies that over the years have evolved to feign a certain omniscience and expertise, and to exclude real people and their experiences from the conversation. However, Socrates was not condemned to death for maintaining the status quo. When I refer to philosophy in this paper, I am automatically referring to that which is taught using a culturally relevant, consciousness-raising approach wherein the workings of philosophy itself are also critiqued.

Through its varied lenses and sub-fields, philosophy has the broad capacity to instruct students how to think critically, reason well, use balanced judgment, and exercise sound logic (Alston, 2001; Cannon & Weinstein, 1993; Finocchiaro, 1993; James, 1993; Lindop, 1993; Maynes, 2013; Mays, 1993; Winstanley, 2008); how to apply value theories to issues of ethical or moral concern, or the nature of art and beauty (Colter & Ulatowski, 2013; Conroy, 2008; Gettings, 2013; Heise, 2005; Nebel, Davis, Van Elswyk, & Holguin, 2013; Pring, 2008; Ralston, 2008); and how to engage in dialogue and perspective-taking, learn reflexivity, and participate democratically in community inquiry, debate and contemplation of ideas that affect oneself and humanity (Benjamin, 1993; Berman, 1997; DeCesare, 2012; Fisher, 2008; Hess, 2004; Schneider, 1993; Sharp, 1993). Most authors proclaim the teaching of philosophy as universally applicable, and the kind of critical literacy it supports as a necessary component of any formal education, particularly within a society that professes to idealize humans’ rights to life, liberty and happiness (Breslin, 1982; Hess, 2004; Jopling, 2000; P. Lipman, 2009; Rashba, 2013; Suissa, 2008). Many supporters argue specifically for the rights of our youngest citizens to
receive this same respect and opportunity (Burroughs, 2013a; Letwin, 1993; Taft-Morales, 2002).

At the root of this support for inherent human rights at any age lie what Bandman and others refer to, in so many words, as children’s and adolescents’ rights to “freedom, care, and enlightenment” (Bandman, 1999). This and similar appeals that education should address a more substantial requirement than solely creating “patriotic, industrious, and responsible citizens” (McLaren, 2009, p. 62) are not confined to scholarly work on pre-college philosophy, but are part of a long tradition among progressive educators. Critical theorists maintain that the withholding of consciousness-raising education perpetuates imbalances of power that favor those in positions of control by preventing the majority of students from questioning the dominant narrative (Freire, 1970/1993), an observation supported in how “routinized, basic skills and highly regulated and assimilationist practices—delivered without critique—produce docile subjectivities” (P. Lipman, 2009, p. 369; McLaren, 2003; 2009).

The widespread practice of placing students on tracks ranging from college-bound to “high-needs” also results in the reproduction of socioeconomic imbalances by exponentially increasing what begins as only a slight difference in advantage or ability between students (Gladwell, 2008).

Ability tracking and vocational education tracks continue to introduce… differentiations… whereby students identified as having high abilities are provided more exercises in critical thinking, deliberation, and other aspects of learning to dissent, while low ability students are more likely to receive direct and passive instruction geared toward rote memorization of basic facts or manual skills. (Stitzlein, 2014, p. 97)
When philosophy classes are only offered in elite or private schools, or to college-tracked students, this essentially amounts to a deliberate exclusion of less “accomplished” students from opportunities to increase their critical capacities. If made available to all students, philosophical understanding and accompanying critical consciousness may introduce a disruption to chronic imbalances of power and the policies that maintain them, having the potential for substantial educational and societal change.

**The Course**

I implemented the study described here in order to probe the legitimacy of these concepts around philosophy and critical pedagogy. The idea for the course evolved over the summer of 2014, when a school principal and former UC graduate student contacted the Action Research Center at our university offering some options for graduate students to conduct their work at the school. In this school, juniors and seniors coming from about 14 high schools spend half their day outside on the farm working hands-on in Equine Science, Veterinary Science, or Landscape Science, and the other half in their general coursework, which that year would be conducted almost entirely through an online program with local teachers as facilitators. The principal was particularly interested in the prospect of students accessing new avenues for project-based learning and other practical, leadership-building opportunities. We met and discussed my ideas about holding a philosophy class for the students, and decided to focus on practical ethics as a starting point, with other philosophical topics being covered later in the year if time allowed.

We discussed ways to frame the study since I am not a licensed teacher in that state and could not teach an actual for-credit class, and decided it would be an optional activity for the students, who do not have a lot of electives or extra-curricular activities to choose from at the specialized campus. The resulting class was offered in addition to students’ other coursework, or
in place of certain classes required by the school but not the district, such as a fourth year of science or the psychology/sociology sequence. Nearly all 24 students who initially showed interest chose the “in addition” option, although any students who stuck with the ethics class and kept up their other classwork for the first term would be permitted to drop the other class. For the first meeting, 21 of the 24 showed, and we decided to divide into two groups that would meet back-to-back. Because the principal and I originally predicted only around 10 students would be interested, I wanted to stick to my original vision of a small seminar-style class.

Curriculum and assignments for this student-driven, discussion-based course included textbook study (“A Practical Guide to Ethics: Living and Leading with Integrity” by Rita Manning and Scott R. Stroud); ethical case studies; ethical thought experiments; creation of posters explaining Western and global ethical theories which hung around the room; written personal journaling and reflections; and a final group project studying an ethical issue that also resulted in a field trip. Noteworthy pedagogical aspects included the small, seminar-style class size and setting; the option to leave the course at any time; assignments, but no grades; democratic decision-making that drove the direction of the projects and topics (or “voice and choice,” as the school calls it); mindfulness activities; foregrounding relationships and trust within the group; and an emphasis on matters of social justice. (See Appendix A for the official course objectives).

Modes of Inquiry

As a critical inquiry, I purposely chose methods that would avoid the positivistic norms previously described, utilizing a qualitative case study methodology (Dick, 2014) within a larger, ongoing practitioner and educational action research project to study my pedagogical practices in all courses I teach (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Written data was coded using deductive
framework method (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000) in which themes that emerge inductively from the first few pieces of data are then used to code the remaining artifacts.

It is important to note that I was not previously acquainted with the school or students, and was invited to conduct my research through the school-university partnership. As both researcher and instructor of the high school ethics course, I took advantage of a unique stance that provided me greater insight into the experiences of all involved, fully conscious of and embracing the influences of relationships and other positionalities on the study, which falls in line with the “covenantal” ethical model to which I subscribe as a practitioner action researcher (Brydon-Miller, 2009). Augmenting the traditional, “contractual” research ethics utilized in required institutional review board approvals and consenting processes, action research embodies a “covenantal” research ethics in order to acknowledge this relational factor, which suggests “a solemn and personally compelling commitment to act in the good of others” (Brydon-Miller, 2009, p. 255; Hilsen, 2006). Zeni (2009) writes about negotiating the dual roles of researcher and insider, positing that “the bonds of caring, responsibility, and social commitment that engage action researchers with other stakeholders may be the most appropriate basis of ethical decision-making” (p. 257).

Data Sources

Students in the study were enrolled in the public career-technical high school (approximately 150 total junior-senior enrollment) as seniors in either the equine or veterinary science programs during the 2014-2015 school year, and were offered the option of taking the ethics course in addition to their other coursework, without school credit. IRB review was sought and the study was given exempt status because it was not considered generalizable, among other rationale our IRB uses in these determinations. I did, however, include a written consenting...
process, and independently used an ethical tool called Structured Ethical Reflection, which compels me to establish a set of ethical values from the beginning of the research and continually question and assess how I am upholding these values throughout the study, from developing partnerships and constructing the research questions through to member checking and going public (Brydon-Miller, Rector Aranda, & Stevens, 2015). A total of 20 students signed up to take the course, of which 17 students (with parental consent) assented to participate in the study.

Data included school-wide initial interest polls; my personal journaling, note-taking, and observations; an early, open-ended student journal assignment about why they were taking the course; and an anonymous end-of-course open response questionnaire where students answered questions about their experiences in the course (via a Google survey) (see Appendix B). After preliminary coding of these sources, students were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews to examine some of the emerging themes in greater depth. As the school year had already ended and students had graduated, it was more difficult to set up interviews than I anticipated, therefore I was only able to interview one student from the nine. While this is somewhat of a limitation, as I would have preferred to conduct more interviews, the voice of this particular student did seem to accurately reflect and confirm the general ideas articulated by the rest of the students in other data sources as well as in my interactions with them.

**Findings**

Student responses fell into four broad themes across all student-based data sources, which were consistent with my own journaling and observations. These were: *motivation and engagement; perspective taking; deeper thinking;* and *transferability to other settings.*
Motivation and Engagement

Students took this class by choice and for personal enrichment, since they would receive no grades or credit for it. Students who did drop the course did so because they weren’t able to keep up with their required classes. Since their other subjects were web-based, any time they got behind schedule, teachers did not allow them to come to ethics class.

Those who stayed the entire year and were able to attend consistently gave several reasons for their initial interest and for why they stayed. The most common reasons given were that these classes were “more interesting than regular classes;” they were curious or wanted to “try something new;” and they were intrigued by my recruitment presentation that made philosophy sound more interesting than they had previously believed it to be. To explain, in my presentation I described the different fields of philosophy and how they relate to their everyday experiences, which de-mystified it for them and allowed them to feel this was something they could learn and would enjoy learning.

Once they had been with me a few weeks, they said the classes were “something to look forward to” and a “nice break.” Students appreciated that they could choose to leave at any time, and had the freedom to think and speak for themselves in the discussion-based context. They enjoyed being able to interact with their teacher as relative equals in a safe and trusting space. As the interviewed student later explained:

Like, a lot of school is just “here’s what you have to learn now learn it.” But yours was more like, “here’s what you have to ask yourself, and think about it,” it was more—it was like, thought-invoking. It made you want to learn about things instead of just telling you to learn about them … you want to be there, so you come. (JS interview, l. 3–6, 97)
This exemplifies an empowering element in critical pedagogy wherein the instructor occupies the learning space with students instead of traditional hierarchical models that position teachers as presiding over students.

Another reason several students said they enjoyed the class was because they were, as one put it, interested in “why people do what they do and why we think. I have always enjoyed learning how thought processes work so philosophy is a class that I’ve wanted to take for a long time” (ZS journal, l. 2–3). This speaks not only to the fact that “average” students will take advantage of a course like this, but overlaps with and leads into the next large theme, perspective taking.

**Perspective Taking**

Perspective taking was an important takeaway for the students given the course’s critical framework and the goal of democratic competencies in social justice education. I think this theme is especially important because it showed up in students’ responses time and again even though there were no specific questions about this topic in the prompts, questionnaire or interview. Students drew this conclusion on their own, and it appeared to be the most memorable, important and profound for them of all their experiences. Students discussed learning respect for and acceptance of others, and how to talk through different viewpoints in order to work “towards a meeting point” (JS interview, l. 69; KP journal; RP journal), finding “new ways to look at the world and understand people’s logic behind their views” (JS journal, l. 5–7). In the anonymous questionnaire, one student wrote: “When I think of Ethics/Philosophy, I think of how different each persons [sic] beliefs and morals are from other peoples [sic] and how interesting that makes interacting with people.” Another wrote about being more conscious of
“how people treat other people and different types of thinking.” The student I interviewed demonstrated the importance of this learning in his current pursuits:

I’m a marine now, and in boot camp I could think of it, think of what was happening from people’s sides and stuff, like the sides of the drill instructors, the sides of the recruits … It just makes you imagine every side, like I can think of, try to think of it from the sides of ISIS and everything. And, you, I have a respect for all people now, like, I’m just gonna be an electrician, I’m never going to see war, but, even if I did, it wouldn’t be like a, I would do my job and everything, but, I wouldn’t be hateful towards the other people. They’re doing their job, I’m doing my job. (JS interview, l. 15–16, 21–25)

In sum, students thought learning in this course helped them understand different viewpoints and why they are different, a key building block to democratic living and the respect and empathy that is so important for enacting social justice.

**Deeper Thinking**

Perspective taking overlapped with much of their other thinking and learning in the course. Several students described how thinking about their own beliefs and actions was especially important in relating to those of others. As one student put it:

I wanted to understand why other people do what they do. Why, when I do something, other people don’t understand. It seems to me sometimes that I just don’t get, well, people. They confuse and confound me. And in many instances, I do the same to others…Maybe by taking this course I can better myself. At the very least, I can learn to explain myself. (KP journal, l. 3–11, 18–22)
Students wanted to understand their own reasoning, to learn about different ways of thinking, and to experience learning that they felt would help them answer their own questions and understand their experiences in the world—“something that is actually relevant and worth learning” (ZS journal, l. 9–10) as one put it. Students often related learning about ethics to learning about human nature and how to “think critically about the world around me” (KX journal, l. 6), demonstrating that they could take this thinking with them beyond our classroom.

**Transferability to Other Settings**

Students wrote and spoke about how what they learned in the course had been and would be useful to them in other parts of their lives, as well as why the subject was important for any high school student. This was evidenced in response to related questions about using and the uses of philosophy, as well as to unrelated questions. Students believed this learning would help them in their other classes (RP journal), in the future with college (JC journal, NM journal), or in their chosen career paths (KX journal). Numerous students talked about the ability to express viewpoints, and engage in “civilized” debate (KX journal). As one put it, “I always loved thought provoking questions that cause a discussion of what you think and why you think that…some of my best conversations with people are when I am having an argument with people” (NM, l. 3–6, 8–10). Most students said they took their discussions into the halls with peers and home to their families.

Students also believed ethical theory was useful regardless of one’s path. One anonymous student wrote “it is very important for teenagers to know about different ethics,” and another stated, “it teaches high school students valuable lessons, and should be a class that all high school students get the chance to take.” Still others held that “it relates to everyday experiences by the things we say and how we react to things” and it helped them “constantly think about
[others’] opinions out in the non-school world” (JS interview, l. 11). Real-world applicability is not typically attributed to philosophy, as previously stated. However, these students showed that when it is made relevant and related to their tangible experiences and important current events and issues, it becomes a useful way of thinking about and interacting with one’s world.

**Discussion**

These findings deepened my own understandings of what occurred in the course, and demonstrate several ways the course was engaging, empowering and taught the students respect for differences, all important parts of social justice education. My own interpretations follow.

First, a relatively large number of students took this course solely for personal enrichment, since they chose to take it in addition to their existing course load and would receive no credit for doing so. Those who initially signed on represented approximately one-fourth of all students who would have been allowed to take the course. This contradicts the assumption that only “serious students” bound for traditional universities or careers would be interested in or do well with philosophy.

Secondly, students were able to understand and apply the ethical theories taught during the course. This was facilitated by the discussion-based, critical pedagogical approach I employed wherein I related the concepts to their real-world knowledge and experiences, and they were able to freely explore ideas without concern about getting the “right” answers, as there were no traditional grades nor assessments. This challenges any preconception that these students might not possess the requisite foundational knowledge and ability to grasp abstract philosophical concepts, as well as the presumption that their learning can only be measured in traditional ways that might prevent some students from thriving in philosophy.
Finally, students were able to construct new ways of seeing the world through philosophical concepts and ethical theories that explicated common and pressing issues, from the personal to the global. This confirms the theoretical premise of my study that all students can benefit from philosophical training and should therefore be afforded access to it.

As witnessed in this study, philosophy can embody the goals of critical, liberatory pedagogy, supplying students with a concrete set of knowledge and skills that enable them to see the world through multiple perspectives, identify disconnects between conceptions of “the good” and their experienced reality, and analyze how things come to be the way they are (Burroughs, 2013b; DeCesare, 2012). We must offer these skills to all students who will one day go out into the world, rather than only those advantaged with attending elite schools or obtaining a higher education, if we are to address the immense voids of social justice within our nation and on a global scale. In doing so, we may endow our posterity with greater resilience and the ability to articulate coherent corrections to systems of oppression, enabling them to recreate the world as a place where all people are treated with respect and dignity.
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Appendix A: Course Objectives

**PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHICAL ETHICS**: Project Based Learning Seminar for 2014-15
Facilitator: Amy Rector Aranda, M.A., University of Cincinnati

Objectives

- Students will learn about philosophies of ethics in order to apply these philosophies to their own understandings and experiences in their personal lives and as members of local, national and global societies. They will be encouraged to critically examine these theories as well as their own thinking and perspectives.

- Students will use what they learn to choose a topic of interest around which they will plan a research project with the goal of enacting some sort of positive change or increased understanding of themselves and others.

- Students will learn basic Western philosophies of ethics that inform most of the moral reasoning they will encounter in our own interactions and institutions:
  - Utilitarianism; Consequentialism
  - Kantian Ethics: Respect for others
  - Virtue Ethics
  - Ethics of Care
  - Social Contract Theory
  - Professional Codes of Ethics

- Students will be introduced to non-Western philosophies of ethics in order to understand how these are similar and different from Western norms, and to better understand events abroad and relationships between people from different cultures, as well as to deconstruct and critically examine the dominant norms at home and throughout the world:
  - Confucianism
  - Hinduism
  - Islamic Ethics
  - Feminist Ethics
  - Postcolonial Morality and Cultural Conflict

- Students will consider how ethics inform dimensions and principles of social justice.

- Students will apply ethical philosophies to relationships with family, friends, and in the world of work.
Students will consider topics of global importance and learn ethical theories about how these matters are or should be handled, and will be encouraged to examine their own perspectives:

- Global Citizenship
- Poverty and Global Economics
- Immigration
- Violence and War
- The Environment
- Current Events of Interest

If time allows, students will move from focusing on philosophy of ethics into other broad fields of philosophy and how dominant theories play out in our everyday experiences:

- Ontology—the nature of being and reality
- Epistemology—the nature of knowledge and truth
- Aesthetics—the nature of art and beauty
- Logic—formal systems of reasoning
Appendix B: End of Course Questionnaire

1. Having taken this course, what do you think of when you think of ethics/philosophy?
2. How useful do you think a course like this is for high school students?
3. What was it that most made you want to take this course, and to continue coming throughout the year?
4. Did you ever discuss things you were learning from this course with friends or family outside of class, and how did that go?
5. How do you feel this course relates to your everyday experiences?
6. How did the relationship with your PEERS help or hinder your learning in this class?
7. How did the relationship with your INSTRUCTOR help or hinder your learning in this class?
8. How was your experience in this course different or similar to other courses?
9. What ONE THING about this course do you wish all courses had?
10. Did you feel comfortable communicating with your instructor for this course? Please explain.
11. What IDEAS have been most important to you and your learning during this course?
12. What aspects of the course have been most supportive of your learning?
13. What aspects of the course have interrupted or hindered your learning?
What is Justice?

Constructing Critical Consciousness in a High School Ethics Course

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Abstract. Philosophy should not exist as an elite discourse reserved for a privileged few, but instead represents an opportunity for all to critically examine and ponder some of life’s most complex and important issues—if it is taught in socially conscious and culturally relevant ways, and more inclusively offered to students from all backgrounds and academic paths. This paper details a year-long case study of a small ethics class held as a non-credit, voluntary option for students in a Midwestern career-technical high school. Findings suggest that these students were not only enthusiastic about and academically capable of exploring philosophical topics, but, importantly, were able to construct new ways of seeing their everyday experiences through a philosophical lens.

Theoretical Framework

Critical theorists maintain that the withholding of consciousness-raising education perpetuates imbalances of power that favor those in positions of control by preventing the majority of students from questioning the dominant narrative (Freire, 1970). If made available to all students, philosophical understanding and accompanying critical consciousness may introduce a disruption to chronic imbalances of power and the policies that maintain them, having the potential for substantial educational and societal change.

Methodology

This is part of a practitioner action research inquiry using a qualitative case study methodology. From about 50 possible students, 20 chose to take the seminar, 17 of whom (with their parents) consented to be in the study. 9 attended the whole year and became the focal group. Data included: students’ initial interest polls; my own memoing; an open-ended student reflection; an anonymous end of course student survey; and a later interview with a representative student based on themes identified in the earlier data sources. Deductive framework method was employed for analysis (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000).

Discussion of Findings.

Imlications and Action. As witnessed in this study, philosophy can embody the goals of critical, liberatory pedagogy, supplying students with a concrete set of knowledge and skills that enable them to see the world through multiple perspectives, identify disconnects between conceptions of “the good” and their experienced reality, and analyze how things come to be the way they are (Burroughs, 2013a; DeCesare, 2012). We must offer these skills to all students who will one day go out into the world, rather than only those advantaged with attending elite schools or obtaining a higher education, if we are to address the immense voids of social justice within our nation and on a global scale. In doing so, we may endow our posterity with greater resilience and the ability to articulate coherent corrections to systems of oppression, enabling them to recreate the world as a place where all people are treated with respect and dignity.