Teacher Education for Social Change: Transforming a Content Methods Course Block

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This article analyzes data from a qualitative practitioner-research case study in which four university faculty members attempted to disrupt the hegemonic domestication of candidates enrolled in an undergraduate teacher education program. During the semester prior to their student teaching, 16 candidates at a large public university in the southeastern U.S. enrolled in four content methods courses. Taught by the authors of this article, the curriculum of these courses emphasized social justice dimensions of teaching rather than just focusing on skills and strategies. Drawing from the multiple data sources, the authors highlight the possibilities and limitations of teacher education for social change and argue that greater resources are needed for teacher education to effect true social change.

"The field of teacher education has not taken seriously its role to prepare teachers as activists and advocates of social justice." (Irvine, 2004)

If P-12 public schools are to serve more than a domesticating function or paternalistic view toward students that reproduces status quo inequities (Freire, 1985, 1998), teacher educators in university settings must disrupt the hegemonic domestication of candidates enrolled in teacher education programs. That is, teacher educators must heed Irvine's (2004) call to prepare teacher education candidates (hereafter referred to simply as "candidates") to be activists and social justice advocates. This qualitative practitioner-research case study examines how four university faculty members attempted to "flip" the classroom during the candidates' methods block (one semester in which a single cohort of candidates takes all content methods courses together). As instructors of these courses, the authors sought to place equity and justice at the center of the curriculum rather than in the margins.

The context for this study was a large state university in the southeastern United States. The institution, located in a suburb of a large city, has one of the state's highest numbers of teacher education graduates. The focus of this article is the Elementary Teacher Education Program, which is housed in the College of Education.

The community surrounding the campus is largely conservative, socially and politically. In the 1960s and 1970s, this community experienced a population boom, due to White flight from the nearby Black-majority city. Around this time, fearing increased crime, local government officials voted against legislation that would connect a passenger rail system to the city and since then

have actively resisted all rail projects. Later, the local school district, pressured by parents and community members who were upset that science textbooks contained information about evolution without also discussing creationism, placed stickers in every high school biology textbook stating that "evolution is a theory, not a fact," an action later ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge. The local county sheriff's office became the first one in the state authorized by the Department of Homeland Security to participate in ICE's 287(g) program, which has been used to identify more than 180,000 "illegal immigrants" for deportation nationwide since 2006. As of late September 2010, the program had been used to identify 14,692 undocumented immigrants in the state, prompting three other counties to sign agreements with ICE.

This brief description of the community in which we work is to make clear that our context is not an idyllic bastion of progressivism. We struggle with the same kinds of discourses of heteronormativity[1] and "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks, 2009, p. 15) that our candidates bring as educators.

In what follows, we situate our study within social justice teacher education, outline the methodology we used in conducting the study, share our results, and conclude with implications for teacher education focused on social justice. We make the argument that a concerted effort to make cross-course connections is a necessary step toward developing elementary teachers committed to progressive social change. We also argue that teacher education programs must go even further in creating institutional structures that put social justice at the center, rather than in the margins, of the entire teacher education program.

A Framework of Social Justice Teacher Education

The term "social justice," when applied to teacher education, has been appropriated in so many ways that the term has become diluted, often synonymous with offering a multicultural education course or placing candidates in schools with students of color (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009). While different educators and scholars take up different positions on social justice education, such as redistributing resources, developing student agency, or recognizing and affirming all social groups, especially those that have been marginalized, and ensuring their success (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Zeichner, 2009), we argue, following Bell (2007), that each perspective is necessary for education that is socially just:

> Social justice is both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. . . . [S]ocial justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, and the broader world in which we live. . . . [T]he goal of social justice education is to enable people to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems, and to develop a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviors in themselves and in their institutions and communities of which they are a part. (pp. 3-4)

In addition to understanding social justice education as important for all members and groups in a society, we also appreciate the importance of the local-global relationship and how local issues are situated in a global sociopolitical and economic context. For teachers interested in social justice education, these connections are crucial for understanding systemic forms of oppression. Geertz (1983) argued this point when he said that attempts to get at local knowledge involve "a continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously" (p. 69). We want our students to immerse themselves in local school and community contexts and to connect their learning to broader systems of power, privilege, and oppression.

Freire (2004; Freire & Macedo, 1987) argued that before we teach students to read the *word* (literacy or content matter), we must teach them to read the *world* (their socio-historical-political context): "It is impossible to access meaning simply through reading words. One must first read the world within which these words exist . . . any type of education that is coherently progressive has to discuss not only the text but life itself" (Freire, 1997, pp. 304, 320). Knowing their students allows social justice educators to find ways to contextualize learning based on students' interests, helping students find and seek out relevance and meaning. While teaching content matter and closing achievement gaps are important, the social justice teacher must go further and "not only teach his or her discipline well, but he or she must also challenge the learner to critically think through the social, political, and historic reality within which he or she is a presence" (Freire, 2004, p. 19).

By fostering the development of students' critical analysis of society, social justice (teacher) education "challenges us to recognize, engage, and critique (so as to transform) any existing undemocratic social practices and institutional structures that produce and sustain inequalities and oppressive social identities and relations" (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996, p. 2). The point is not simply to engage in a sociopolitical critique of the world; doing so is only a step toward *transforming injustice*. As Freire and Macedo (1987) argued, "reading the word is not preceded merely by reading the world, but by a certain form of *writing* or *rewriting* it, that is, of transforming it by means of conscious, practical work" (p. 35). We draw on this theoretical lens as well as an asset-based and funds-of-knowledge view of students and their families (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). In doing so, we promote education that is responsive and relevant to the experiences students bring to school (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and yet helps shift discourses from meritocracy to hegemony and systems of oppression and domination (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Thus, we perceive social justice education (SJE) and social justice teacher education (SJTE) as complex endeavors that are not reducible simply to a method or methods.

What We Can Learn from Existing SJTE Programs

At least in recent decades, many initial teacher education programs have attempted to improve the preparation of teachers for classrooms with students from diverse backgrounds, but such approaches have merely been "additive" (Banks & Banks, 1995) rather than transformative. There are, however, examples of more concerted efforts to place social justice and equity more at the core of teacher preparation. This section highlights several such examples.

First, studies have examined the role of SJTE among various constituencies, including: a single assignment (Hyland & Heuschkel, 2010; Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007; McCrary, 2010), a small group of candidates in a single course (Hoffman-Kipp, 2003), a single group of candidates in a Professional Development School ([PDS]; Farnsworth, 2010), all candidates in a single course (Clark, 2010; Frederick, Cave, & Perencevich, 2010; Mills & Ballantyne, 2010), individual SJTE professors' courses (Sleeter, Torres, & Laughlin, 2004), multiple instructors' teaching and reflecting on different sections of the same course (Athanases & Larrabee, 2003; Schmidt, Chang, Silva, Lockhart, & Anagnostopoulos, 2012), or a combination of participants (Katsarou, Picower, & Stovall, 2010). Such studies are useful in identifying and describing context-based promises and obstacles from which other faculty members committed to SJTE may learn.

Other studies were conducted at the programmatic, rather than course, level. Morva McDonald (2005; 2008) conducted a comparative case-study of two social justice-based elementary teacher education programs: the Teachers for Tomorrow's Schools Program at Mills College and the Teacher Education Intern Program at San Jose State University. She found that, while there were differences, the two programs demonstrated a commitment to SJTE in their mission statements, course syllabi, accreditation reports, and student handbooks. Teaching practices and assignments were grouped into four categories: attending to individual students, attending to students identified by specific educational needs, attending to students identified by their affiliations with an oppressed group, and attending to the sociopolitical conditions of schooling. What was striking was that most assignments emphasized justice as attending to the needs of individual students. While there were assignments in each of the other three categories, McDonald found that attending to the sociopolitical conditions of schooling had very few assignments and that, unlike assignments in the other areas, they did not connect to candidates' field experiences. Despite these two programs' having an explicit emphasis on SJTE, their curriculum and pedagogy emphasized what Gorski (2009) categorized as conservative and liberal approaches rather than critical.

UCLA's Center X Teacher Education Program (TEP) serves as an example of a systematic, well-planned, and collaborative SJTE program involving over 20 faculty and over 350 students as of 2003 (Cooper, 2006). With a mission to "level the playing field" for low-income students of color in Los Angeles schools (Montaño, et al., 2008, p. 1), faculty divided themselves into four committees to plan and develop the program: Student Development, Curriculum, Faculty Development, and Community. Faculty then used collaborative inquiry to develop cases that addressed their programmatic concerns. TEP committee members, as well as outside university researchers, used a range of data collection measures to document and analyze the ongoing collaborative inquiry process. They conducted faculty professional development geared toward facilitating difficult conversations about race, class, and social justice topics in the classroom; investigated ways to help candidates from a range of backgrounds and experience levels become critical and committed social justice educators; revamped a Community Project required of all candidates so it would be more aligned to state curriculum as well as emphasizing candidates' use of asset over deficit perspectives; and brainstormed ways to engage with the K-12 school community around equity issues. While difficulties arose during the three-day faculty development retreat and following sessions, it was the first time the faculty had come together as a group to inquire into increasing their own knowledge of diversity and social justice so they

could facilitate difficult discussions with their candidates on similar issues (Montaño et al., 2008).

There are certainly other examples of teacher education faculty, collaborations among faculty, and entire programs based on SJTE (e.g., Evergreen State, see McDonald & Zeichner, 2009), and we don't mean to exclude any others or to pretend this is an exhaustive list. However, looking at the nature of existing approaches can inform others interested in a more radical transformation of teacher education for social change and critical praxis. In spite of this great body of work, however, as Zeichner (2009) argued, such efforts do little to effect the systemic, structural changes required to produce social justice educators capable of transforming their classrooms and communities toward greater justice: "Most of this work on social justice teacher education in the U.S. thus far seems to focus on the actions of individual teacher educators in their college and university classrooms and has not included . . . proposals for structural changes in teaching as an occupation and teacher education." (p. 148). Similarly, McDonald and Zeichner (2009), citing Darling-Hammond (2006), asserted that "[r]ecent research has indicated that the impact of teacher education programs on prospective teachers is much more powerful when there is a unified vision of teaching and learning than when attention to a goal exists only in some program components (p. 605).

This study is significant as it offers an example of the possibilities that arise from a collaboratively-planned programmatic change toward SJTE, especially considering the geographical and sociopolitical context of the program is in a suburban community located within the deep south of the U.S. While this study marks our first effort toward such a program, we hope it will offer other social justice teacher educators some useful insights in designing similar programs.

Methodology

Context
In the elementary teacher education program where this study took place, candidates take 45 credit hours of general education courses and 81 hours in their major field of study (in this case, elementary and early childhood education). In their senior year, one semester before student teaching, candidates are required to complete an elementary "methods block," in which they must successfully complete four content methods courses (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies), in conjunction with a weekly field experience. Teacher education candidates take the methods block as a cohort (maximum of 25 students), two methods courses one day during the week and two courses on another day. In this large teacher education program, there are approximately 10 methods block cohorts in the fall semester and five cohorts in the spring semester. It is important to note that candidates are with their methods instructors, face-to-face, for 10 weeks of the 15-week semester. During the last five weeks of the semester, candidates are fully immersed in their "diverse" field placements (i.e., working with students from diverse racial backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds, language backgrounds, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds).

We are four out of more than 15 elementary methods block instructors, and we represent the four core content areas. At the start of the project, two of us were in our second year of a tenure-track

position, one was in the third year of a tenure-track position, and one was in the sixth year. We are a diverse faculty: heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, White, Black, and Asian, American citizens and internationals, novices and veterans of social justice teaching. Before we even began to conceptualize this new program, we discovered as colleagues that we were each exploring some aspect of social justice pedagogy within our specializations and independently grappling with integrating social justice into our teaching. We found it troubling that social justice is far from being at the core of the teacher education program. While diversity is institutionalized as an important mission, more is required than simply including a course or two on multicultural issues. Two foundational courses in our teacher education program, "Education of Exceptional Students" and "Exploring Sociocultural Perspectives on Diversity in Educational Contexts," directly address multicultural issues and disability, whereas in other courses, instructors are free to choose whether or not to make social justice a core foundation of the courses. This is clear when candidates arrive in our courses during their senior-year methods block, often confessing that they learned about diversity in only two courses during their entire program of study. A dominant belief shared by candidates and instructors in this program is that the methods block courses, in particular, are to be about technical "methods," "strategies," or "tools," rather than interconnected to larger multicultural and sociopolitical issues. We find it problematic that undergraduates who choose to be education majors may complete an entire four-year degree program with few, if any, courses that challenge meritocracy and interrogate power and privilege. As Freire (2004) argued, "Radical pedagogy must never make concessions to the trickeries of neoliberal 'pragmatism,' which reduces the educational practice to the technical-scientific education of learners, *training* rather than *educating*" (p. 19; emphasis in the original). Our goal in this collective endeavor was to challenge the dominant training paradigm of our teacher education program by facilitating the development of candidates capable of enacting education for liberation rather than mere training.

In the fall of 2011, we developed a special themed methods block, the "social justice cohort," and advertised our newly developed option to upcoming seniors using flyers and direct classroom engagement. The response rate was low, partly because the time slots and field placement locations offered were ill-suited for some candidates. While not officially named and recognized as a themed methods block cohort with a social justice focus, the teaching philosophies of the methods instructors within this cohort were underpinned by their ideas of teaching for social change (i.e., social justice). The intended curriculum was made explicit because it would impact the types of conversations and learning that began and developed in each of our classroom spaces. Scott taught language arts methods through the vehicle of critical literacies, deconstructing a range of print and multimedia texts to interrogate how they position the reader, whose perspective is included and whose is left out, and whose interests are served by such a perspective. Neporcha taught science methods in which candidates were challenged to reflect upon the marginalization of diverse student groups in science education, past and recent science achievement gaps (locally, nationally, and globally), and strategies for making science meaningful (and authentic) for all students. Sohyun taught social studies methods in which candidates read, critiqued, discussed, debated, reflected on, and co-constructed core concepts and ideas of democratic citizenship education including democracy, good citizen, patriotism, immigration, globalization, race, and global citizenship. Patti taught mathematics methods through a lens of equity, power, and privilege, engaging students not only in ways to address the

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards, but also to examine how math is connected to the sociocultural experiences of the learner.

We each chose a range of texts for our courses, some more theoretical and research-based and others that were practitioner-oriented. While in math and science it proved a little more challenging to find good social justice texts, there were numerous options for literacy and social studies. We used Rethinking Schools' publications, materials from the Zinn Education Project (http://zinnedproject.org), Nancy Schiedewind and Ellen Davidson's (2006) *Open Minds to Equality*, and resources addressing privilege such as Peggy McIntosh's (2008) work and the "Privilege Walk" exercise (see http://www.whatsrace.org/images/privwalk-long.pdf). We invited guest speakers to discuss issues in schools, such as hidden disabilities, LGBTQ issues, and teaching immigrant students. We invited candidates to read lots of vignettes and personal accounts of teachers' experiences implementing social justice teaching practices. We involved candidates as much as we could in daily class activities, group projects, and the like so that they could co-construct their own knowledge from a collaborative inquiry perspective. Most of all, we actively sought to identify our candidates' assets and resources so we could build from there. Gender issues and body image issues proved to be a gateway from candidates' worlds to other and more global forms of oppression seen from a systemic (rather than individualistic) perspective. To maintain community, during the 10-week methods block, we (instructors and candidates) held numerous informal and formal dialogues to share ideas, challenges, struggles, and successes, and reflect on our experiences.

Participants
Research participants were all members of this cohort of 16 undergraduate teacher education candidates. At the beginning of the semester, candidates were given an anonymous questionnaire in which we asked them to report demographic characteristics, such as: gender identity, age, racial/ethnic group, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, physical/mental ability, and the type of community in which they grew up (rural, urban, etc.). The majority of the candidates self-identified as female (N=16), heterosexual (N=16), European-American/White (N=13), between 22 and 33 years of age (N=12), with no previous teaching experience (N=16). There were three candidates who self-identified as ethnic minorities (one African American/Black, one Asian/Pacific Islander, and one combination African American/Black and Asian/Pacific Islander). Although we did not define each of the three social classes, two candidates self-identified as working class; thirteen candidates self-identified as middle class, and one candidate self-identified as upper class.

Research Question and Data
This practitioner-research qualitative case study (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009) addressed the research question: In what ways, if any, did this collaboratively-planned methods block influence candidates' knowledge, beliefs, and practice regarding teaching for social justice? We collected two primary data sources: candidates' weekly reading responses posted in online discussion boards and one whole-class 60-minute semi-structured focus group interview conducted at the end of the methods block but before candidates started their five weeks of full-time field experience. We used the following questions to guide the focus group interview: (1) What is social justice? (2) What experiences in this methods block influenced your future teaching? In what ways? (3) What does social justice look like and sound like in schools?

(4) What would be different if you had gone through a social justice curriculum? (5) What if your class were all White and affluent?

Secondary data sources included candidate lesson plans, unit plans, and in-class discussions. Within their lesson plans and unit plans, participants were asked to make culturally relevant connections (i.e., to explain why this particular lesson was important and relevant to the elementary students in their field placements) and to describe strategies they would use in order to meet the academic needs of at least three different groups of students. In-class discussions required candidates to confront their dominant ideologies and become advocates for change. Weekly reading responses challenged participants' beliefs and perspectives as teachers and citizens; weekly reading responses also allowed participants to make connections between readings, their personal experiences, other university courses, and their experiences in the field placement classroom.

Data were analyzed individually by the four authors and then collectively through a shared folder on Google Drive. This was accomplished by first reading and re-reading data and by listening to the interview recording several times in an effort to become close to the data in an "intimate way" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 152). We had our graduate research assistant[2] transcribe the focus group interview, and we compared the transcript to the recording to make corrections and adjustments. As we each coded the data set, we individually recorded a rationale for our classifications and prepared a research memo in which we developed broad coding categories based on emerging patterns from the data. Then, we shared our analyses. Together we refined and merged our coding categories, from which we coded data further. From our collective analysis, we identified three themes that were grounded in the data: 1) developing candidate agency; 2) social justice as a mirror and a window; and 3) the values and limitations of social justice cross-course learning/integration. Trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) of the study was strengthened by analyzing multiple written and verbal data sources, engaging in ongoing critical discussions during the study, and triangulating data across sources to support emerging agreements in interpreting the data.

Results

Our one-semester approach to teaching all four methods courses from a social justice perspective gave us insights into the possibilities and limitations of such an approach. Here, we discuss the three themes we identified through our analysis of the data.

From Opening Eyes to Taking Action: Developing Agency as Social Justice Educators
One of the overarching themes across all of our data is the agency candidates developed in the process of becoming social justice educators. In previous semesters in our individual courses, we noted some shifts in candidates' feelings of self-efficacy and commitment to equity and justice. However, in this particular cohort our candidates showed much deeper and comprehensive agentic shifts than those before them. While it is important to note that not all candidates had the same "aha" moments or made the same break-throughs, there were three ways in which these candidates showed more profound, agentic identities: taking new perspectives, negotiating the realities of today's schools, and becoming agents for social change.

***Taking new perspectives*.** Despite already having taken two courses addressing diversity, as well as having taken courses that were "infused" with multicultural education (our institution's prior approach, an additive model), these teacher candidates indicated overwhelmingly that the social justice emphasis of their four methods courses gave them a new perspective on the world. For instance, they communicated this in their reflective discussion posts: "I have . . . a whole new lens through which I see the world. Now that my eyes have been opened, I cannot go back to the old ways of thinking or say that I am not aware." "So now it has turned my whole thought on my pedagogy and curriculum upside down."

Some candidates expressed anger or frustration at not being taught to think critically at an earlier age, for example, saying that it is "a shame that it took me to this level of college" to encounter critical pedagogies. Candidates showed growth in their understanding of injustice as well. Although some were initially resistant to the idea of privilege (e.g., "The 'White privileges' stated in this article do not apply to all White people"), candidates eventually recognized their complicity in maintaining oppression. As another student indicated: "I am frustrated there are so many privileges in my life I have grown up believing are just 'normal,' therefore making them acceptable. As an educator I must constantly be aware of the messages I send my students."

Others named specific ways in which their eyes were opened to injustices, saying things like: "Before a few weeks ago, I assumed that racial discrimination was primarily a thing of the past and something that I would not be confronted with on a regular basis." "When I first came into the class, I felt like I was aware of injustices in society. I had no idea just how prevalent injustices have always been and continue to be today." Some made broad statements, such as the following, indicating a shift overall: "I feel that with almost all of us, now every aspect of my life I am relating back to social justice."

***Negotiating the realities of today's schools*.** Initially our candidates expressed much fear about how education for social justice might fit within some of the realities of today's elementary classrooms. Many candidates feared "losing their job or offending parents" by teaching controversial material that might not be considered age-appropriate in P-5 classrooms. For some candidates, this fear showed up indirectly. For example: "My first thought was that these are second and third graders. Our [curriculum standards] for Civil Rights are found in fifth grade." or "I wondered if the children at the younger age are developmentally ready to process and articulate the emotional and independent thinking that would be required." However, later in the semester, some of the candidates who expressed earlier reluctance shifted their position, as illustrated by the following quote from a candidate's discussion post:

> At first I questioned what was appropriate for elementary-age children. I now believe that kids know more than we think. Something that caught my attention was the sentence [in one of the assigned readings], "Better to talk about premarital sex or homosexuality than be faced with a sixth grader who is pregnant or has committed suicide." The reason it hit home is because these are issues my children are dealing with. They have friends who are pregnant or have had pregnancy scares. They have friends that are homosexual, and even one that has tried to commit suicide because of it. We can't pretend that these issues don't exist; to do so would not be fair to our children.

Another concern was the mandated curriculum in schools, such as textbooks, standards, and high-stakes tests. However, candidates came to a new understanding that what matters most is teaching *children*, not a one-size-fits-all pedagogical approach: "I have learned it is important to teach kids to think critically about everything. To just meet the standards is not enough as a teacher." "[I don't want to] take the easy way out with my students. I need to go beyond our state standards and to teach global issues that force our students to think and act as global citizens." Candidates even turned their critical lens toward our college's teacher education program, which emphasizes "best" practices. For instance, one candidate commented in a discussion post: "Even the research-based best practices come from a limited perspective. I know that when I get to know the students, I will have to try to understand their perspective and hopefully respond in the best way for them . . . [rather than] pegging them as a type of student that needs this or that particular method of teaching."

What resonated most with candidates was the use of real teachers' stories demonstrating ways to address the many barriers or bottlenecks (Gorski et al., 2013) to critical teaching in public schools. For example, candidates stated: "I gained a lot of resources from the articles because in reading the experiences that the teachers had been through I was able to see what I can do if instances like that appear in my classroom." "I was actually really grateful that I had all those articles to read. It wasn't that I HAD to read them. I was grateful that I had them TO read."

Becoming agents for social change. As with most social justice teacher educators, we encountered concerns from our candidates. For instance, several candidates remarked in their discussion boards about how they perceived social justice education to require more work, including being student-centered, as one candidate's post suggests: "After reading the article on equality, I believe educators have their work cut out for them. We not only must teach the content areas effectively, but now we have to focus on creating a safe, equitable environment for all students." Others shared concerns about the "age-appropriateness" of teaching equity and justice issues to elementary students, such as this candidate in her reading response: "I wondered if the children at the younger age are developmentally ready to process and articulate the emotional and independent thinking that would be required [of SJE]." Additionally, candidates expressed reluctance to address difficult topics as new teachers, such as this candidate's discussion post: "it seems like teachers are often concerned about losing their job or offending the parents . . . [w]e are sometimes afraid to open that can of worms. It seems that society teaches us not to ruffle any feathers and to play it safe."

However, as the semester continued, candidates articulated burgeoning awareness that they have an ethical duty to act, even if it makes one feel uncomfortable:

- "I thought I was doing enough by being tolerant and accepting of those different than myself. Now, I see that tolerance does not move this society forward. I need to be active in creating an equitable world for others."
- "I need to step outside my comfort zone to teach complex issues present in our society so that I can help create a generation of thinkers and doers that will make the world a better place for us all."
- "[B]y not intervening we let the dominant voice and ideas of what is "normal" get louder and louder."

Catalytic validity is one form of trustworthiness of data (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007). Several candidates started using course concepts and experiences as a catalyst for action. They started envisioning themselves as social justice educators looking for jobs in six months. They dialogued online about which of the local elementary schools would be best suited for social justice work, noting particular schools where there was greater autonomy for teachers to design their own lessons and less micro-managing from the school administration. For instance, one candidate shared with the other cohort members in the online discussion board: "At [name of school] teachers are only required to state their essential questions and method of assessment along with a short description (like "spelling workbook" or "magnets") in the online calendar they plan things in." She went on to say that because of the school administration's lack of micro-managing, "It seems like it would be simple to incorporate social justice in a school that operates in this way." Additionally, some candidates could not wait until they were employed as teachers to take action. One candidate, in her weekly reading reflection, wrote: "I am going to share this article with my Collaborating Teacher this week and ask her if she thinks we can incorporate a lesson similar to the one Barbara (Michalove, 1999) did with her class."

One candidate went so far as to change her wedding plans as a result of her new perspective. She and her fiancé were hoping to have their honeymoon at a resort in the Caribbean, but after perusing one company's website, she noticed that it was "geared to White heterosexual couples." She also observed that the only people of color in the marketing materials were employees of the resorts, not patrons. Her newly formed critical media literacy led her to change her wedding plans: she made the decision "to not stay at a Sandals resort; we do not want to promote the stereotypes the company is promoting."

Since this was our first time collectively offering a cross-course focus on social justice, our main emphasis was on social justice pedagogies inside the classroom. We did not anticipate that candidates would also take their critical perspectives out into the community, but we were pleased that they did. Many authors (e.g. Ginsburg & Linday, 1995; Ritchie, 2012; Zeichner, 2009) have made the argument that social justice education requires that teachers work collectively with others—both in school and in the community—to effect social change.

Social Justice Educators Offer Students Both a Mirror and a Window
As candidates developed their own sense of agency for social change during the semester, they also began identifying pedagogical practices for social justice that were most meaningful to them. They saw their role as social justice educators as both a mirror, building curriculum around their particular students each year, and a window, not just reflecting the perspectives and experiences of the kids in the room but also bringing in other voices and perspectives, so students could become change agents for the common good.

Social justice education as a mirror. Candidates offered various conceptions of putting children at the center of the curriculum, including culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, making use of students' virtual school bags, funds of knowledge, children's assets, and the personal resources students bring to their learning. As candidates wrote in their online discussion posts: "My eyes have been opened continuously throughout this semester to the importance of utilizing the students' knowledge in your classroom." "Every student brings life experiences into the

classroom, good and bad. These experiences are all the students have to make connections with, so teachers need to work to encourage those connections." Although the dominant educational discourse maintains that teachers should teach what is in curriculum standards, and if children's prior experiences play a role, it is simply to make the formal curriculum more digestible (cf. Paris, 2012), these candidates see that ignoring children's realities negates opportunities for learning. To illustrate, one candidate stated in her written reflection on the readings: "Whether we choose to talk about it or gloss over it as if these social issues do not exist, it does not change the fact that they are still there in the children's minds constantly." Another candidate made a similar point in a reflection on one of the teachers' stories that was assigned in one of the courses: "I liked that immediately the student teacher, Dana, questioned his instruction's relevance to the lives of his students. If he just taught to the standard, then he knew that his students would not connect with the material, and they would not grow as individuals."

Social justice education as a window. "Being a teacher is an opportunity to open new doors for kids and teach them things that they may not hear about at home," one candidate expressed as she considered the conservative climate surrounding our university. The idea of including multiple perspectives, particularly those that may challenge dominant hegemonic narratives about the world, was challenging at first for our candidates. While one candidate in particular seemed to hold fast to the idea that children in an all-White, affluent school do not need multiple perspectives, the rest of the cohort did see the need for children to see a variety of points of view. For example, one candidate observed in her discussion post: "We should look at multiple perspectives of different groups that are not normally represented in school curricula. We should not only talk about racism but the other 'isms.' We need to see perspectives from all social groups." A different candidates made a similar point in discussing what she learned from the teachers whose stories we explored in one of the courses: "I liked that she kept questioning herself about the books, 'Whose story is this? Whose voice is heard? Whose voice isn't heard?'" Another candidate commented similarly concerning a teacher in an assigned video (Espinosa, 2005) whose Latina/o students did not connect their own oppression with the oppression of other people of color:

> Mrs. Espinosa explained that students have a hard time connecting individual stories to the struggle of an entire group. . . . I liked that she was constantly having the students explore and explain how one story was similar to all of the others, so that they could make this connection.

As candidates developed new, more agentic identities, they started to see the necessity of a sociopolitical analysis of issues, driven by multiple perspectives. In several of their lesson plans, candidates listed specific activities to address this. One group of candidates wrote a unit plan in which they would "give the students an opportunity to use systems thinking and analyze the bigger picture surrounding the issue of 'body image.'"

The Value and Limitations of Integration of Courses around Equity and Justice
From the midpoint of the semester onwards, we noticed candidates referring to readings, discussions, activities, or insights they had in one of their other methods courses and making connection across the four courses. However, while there were gains, our data also show

limitations and areas for improvement both in our work in the classroom and in structuring a comprehensive program devoted to teacher education for social justice.

Value of integration around social justice. Candidates frequently referred to their learning in the other methods courses. Some of these comments referred to the new critical perspective they, themselves gained. For example, one candidate noted in her reading response: "I think it is interesting that our [methods] classes are intertwined regarding critical stance and diversity." Another candidate remarked how in the four courses, "I am questioning many of my beliefs. I am shocked that I've never given much thought to the different wars. I've always supported what the government has decided. I believe this now to be an ignorant form of patriotism." Still another candidate mentioned how the classes supported each other: "One of the main points that I am learning from this experience is that what we learn in one class can certainly be applied to another." A fourth candidate made reference in her discussion post to pedagogical strategies she was learning:

> All of our [methods] classes are exposing us to the idea of multiple perspectives. In Math, we are asking children to solve problems in multiple ways, exploring other ways of thinking about the problem, rather than just one method. In Science, we've learned that students should keep their science notebooks in whatever way makes sense to them, through bulleted points, illustrations of experiments, in their own language, and any way as long as there is evidence of understanding. In Social Studies, we are learning about how history books are penned from usually one dominant perspective, and other perspectives need to be brought in through primary sources. In Reading, we see how literature is a vehicle for voicing other perspectives on any number of social issues.

Like this candidate, many synthesized their learning across courses in their own way. However, they also relied on each other to help see connections. For instance, one candidate's online query to classmates resulted in the following response in the discussion board:

> You question how to add social justice into math. I think it goes back to when we discussed talking about economic and social issues. (This category of issues included: prisons, racial profiling, death penalty, immigration, poverty, hunger, welfare, minimum/living wage, sweatshops, housing, gentrification, homeownership, war, defense budgets, military recruiting, public health: AIDS, asthma, health insurance, diabetes, smoking. Also discussed were educational issues, such as access, funding, testing, achievement gaps, and environmental issues, such as, pollution and, water resources.) There will be students in our classrooms that are dealing with these issues. By incorporating these issues into math problems we are opening all our students up to the realization that these are real issues.

Although these candidates did not have much prior experience with social justice pedagogies, they had four faculty members, critical texts with lots of teachers' stories, and each other as a support network (see Ritchie, 2012). They also recognized the need for support and mentoring in their early years as teachers, and some candidates already made plans to join a teacher inquiry

group around critical literacy the following year. As opportunities for local political action become available, we [faculty] are sharing these with the candidates. While these candidates' experience was not part of a comprehensive teacher education program with an exclusive emphasis on social justice, these four courses provided momentary disruption in the dominant paradigm and yielded promising results.

Limitations of integration around social justice. Notwithstanding the promises and possibilities we observed, our data suggest that candidates needed more time to develop into social justice educators. They require more time to develop confidence in disrupting normative educational practices in schools and the policies made outside the classroom that undergird them. Even though certain candidates demonstrated they are ready to hit the ground running, overall what we heard from them is that they need more: professional development, time to get used to the mandated curriculum, and support once they start teaching. Candidates shared comments like the following:

- "This just reveals that I still have a lot more work to do as a critical thinker."
- "I personally am still not 100% confident to teach all I feel is necessary, but this chapter (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008) has definitely begun to give me confidence and strive to research more ways of implementing multiple perspectives into my classroom one day."
- "I definitely want to go to as many workshops as I can. I want my students to take social action and to stand up for something that is important to them."

While they made significant shifts in their ideas and commitments, some candidates still had a hard time differentiating their lesson plans for all students or coming up with topics that included a sociopolitical analysis from a structural or systemic perspective.

Implications

We identified several important implications for social justice teacher education. First, teacher candidates need opportunities to form a community so they may engage in real dialogue about difficult issues, not just about content matter or instructional strategies. We found that our cohort model, in which candidates take all classes together for a semester, worked well in creating a safe space for dialogue to occur. We engaged candidates in community-building activities at the beginning of the semester, believing that with a strong support network they could take more risks as the semester progressed. Teacher educators for social justice need to create venues for cross-candidate dialogue to occur, as well as dialogue with other social justice educators and those involved in political movements and other forms of activism.

Second, teacher education for social justice *requires* real examples of P-12 teachers' classroom practice. Candidates appreciated and learned the most from stories of critical teachers' practices and the challenges they faced while implementing critical pedagogies. If we are to foster agency and help candidates see themselves as critical actors disrupting the status quo, we must give them tools and powerful examples of practice to help them visualize this new identity as a social justice educator. *Rethinking Schools* (www.rethinkingschools.org), The Zinn Education Project (www.zinnedproject.org), *Teaching Tolerance* (www.tolerance.org), *Radical Teacher* (http://radicalteacher.library.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/radicalteacher/index), and edited books offer

real examples of social justice education in action. There are, however, substantially fewer examples of classroom teachers in the fields of math and science education. We need to use our authorial privilege to proliferate additional teachers' stories in these content areas.

Third, our data revealed that, for the majority of candidates, this was the first time they were challenged to think critically and question the legitimacy of the official canon. Yet, this was the result of a concerted effort by four progressive faculty members who collaborated to make it happen. Teacher educators have a moral imperative to ensure that every teacher candidate has the same opportunity. Institutional support is needed to accomplish this goal. Our work would have had a greater impact if we and other instructors had more structured time to collaborate, especially at institutions like ours where there is an onerous teaching load in addition to advising, research, and service responsibilities. Our efforts could have been far more cohesive if we had more collective preparatory time to scope out experiences for our candidates in the local community, such as riding public transportation, interviewing local community members, and connecting to teacher activist groups. Course releases, a reduction in other responsibilities, graduate student assistance, and a general recognition of the urgency of this work would make more collaboration possible. In turn, this would have enabled us to develop meaningful learning experiences that candidates need to effect change in their classrooms and schools as well as local, national and international communities.

We four faculty members happened to have a background in and commitment to diversity and social justice. Yet we, and our colleagues, need further professional development in social justice pedagogy. We believe that such professional development should have a multifaceted approach that includes on-campus workshops, conferences, and structured opportunities for faculty to observe each other's teaching. Tenure and promotion committees and processes need to value social justice work and understand that professors' course evaluations may not be as strong when putting social justice at the center. Teacher educators need material resources, such as content-specific books, magazines, videos, and other pedagogical tools. Funding for field trips into the local community would help strengthen the connection between what happens in schools and what is happening in the world outside the classroom.

Furthermore, institutional support needs to go toward matching candidates with collaborating teachers who themselves practice social justice teaching. Candidates' field placements may fail to support or may even negate the social justice concepts and practices being taught in teacher education. We need to match candidates with teachers who enact social justice education, even if it means increasing the candidate-to-teacher ratio. We also need better professional development for collaborating teachers so they—and increasing numbers of their colleagues—understand the social justice lens our candidates are bringing to their classrooms. Additionally, candidates need supervisors who understand what to look for when making observations during their methods courses-related field experiences, not to mention student teaching assignments. Many social justice scholars have developed and are developing assessments geared toward social justice. Supervisors need additional or different capacity development, and observational rubrics may need to be changed. Furthermore, resources are needed to support new teachers: better induction processes, strong mentor teachers, and resources for university-school partnerships such as teacher study groups and ongoing professional development, as well as practitioner research collaborations. And, of course, these resources would ideally have a social justice focus.

Notes

[1]. Heteronormativity is a construct that privileges heterosexuality and subjugates homosexuality.

[2]. We would like to thank Dudgrick Bevins for his work in organizing and coding data for this project.

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