MOVING FROM SELF TO SYSTEM:

A FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE CENTERED ON ISSUES AND ACTION

ASHLEY S. BOYD
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

ALISON E. LAGARRY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL
JESSIE MONTANA CAIN
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL

Abstract

In this article, authors propose a framework for social justice in pre-service teacher education that differs from traditional approaches to diversity related courses. Rather than a sole focus on the 'isms,' such as racism or classism, five distinct yet simultaneously occurring components are offered for the paradigm. First, this approach to social justice must continuously examine students' autobiographical experiences. Learners interpret new information through their personal, socially constructed lenses, and it is thus crucial to help them identify and unpack their complex experiences. Second, we call for an organization by topics of concern for dismantling inequity, such as understanding systemic injustices within schools and outside of schools; the social construction of identity; and examining both how and what we teach. Third, we incorporate the critical analysis of media in order to better understand the ways issues are constructed and upheld in the

dominant hegemonic culture. Fourth, our model encourages students to conceptualize social justice not only in pedagogical ways, but also as it relates to the content so as to address students' struggles in connecting social justice to their discipline or grade level. Finally, this method includes the creation and implementation of social action projects. Too often we teach students 'about'—about theories, about people, about schools without involving our students in the act of social justice. For each component, we provide a description and justification as well as tangible examples of its implementation from our own practice. We include further considerations for using the paradigm in discipline-specific ways, and we end with a call to action for continuing social justice education.

Keywords: Social justice, teacher education, autobiography, critical media literacy, social action projects

Since the 1980s, many colleges of education in the United States have attempted to include some sort of diversity component in their pre-service teacher education programs. Over the years, these efforts have been criticized for their manifestations as isolated, add-on courses or as survey approaches to multicultural education that promote 'cultural tourism' (Derman-Sparks, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Despite scholars' proposals for ways to facilitate teacher candidates' critical dispositions, including providing diverse and consistent service learning type experiences (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007), centering social justice education on power and activism pervasively *throughout* a program (Nieto, 2000), and engaging students more fully in local school communities (Murrell, 2006), the foundations course nonetheless persists as the sole location for such education. It is here that students are often exposed to the theories, ideologies, and assumptions that we, as critical teacher educators, hope they will interrogate and use to guide their teaching. It also places, however, a huge responsibility on the foundations classroom to become a space that is transformative and that cultivates teachers as agents of social change. How do we accomplish these crucial, yet challenging goals?

Each of us writing this article has taught one such social foundations course at the same large southeastern university. Our courses

each included pre-service teachers whose programs of study ranged from focusing on early childhood to secondary discipline-specific education such as English or Social Studies. We met once weekly for three hours each session. Mirroring the larger population of teachers, our students were primarily white, middle class, females. From our experiences planning, reading, and working in those courses as well as our conversations with one another as critical colleagues (Lord, 1994), we developed the model for social justice education proposed here. In our interactions with one another, we acknowledged the importance of teacher educators engaging in critical self reflection, having been "educated in very different social and political climates than their students," and thus we engaged throughout in thinking about social justice and the role it plays in our lives as we collaborated with one another and with candidates (Zollers, Albert, & Cochran-Smith, 2000, p. 1).

We thus fashioned what we have now labeled a "self to system" approach, one in which we want to encourage students to discern both the personal aspects related to social justice such as the ways their socialization shapes their thinking, as well as the structural elements of oppression, where power dynamics operate in broader systemic ways. Furthermore, we envision a movement back and forth, in between those two spaces in order for students to recognize that fluidity exists between these locales, that individual complicity contributes to and upholds institutions of oppression. Thus, as a result of our work in courses aimed to prepare teacher candidates to become equity-oriented and activist pedagogues, we offer a paradigm for social justice education that includes five continuously and simultaneously occurring components. Those five elements are: examining student autobiographies, organizing by factors, analyzing media critically, relating to practice, and including social action. These are based on literature in the field and our own experiences, and they represent what we feel is effective and necessary for a 21st century teacher candidate.

APPROACHES TO SOCIAL JUSTICE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

In 2000, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (now the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation)

labeled social justice as a desirable professional disposition but in 2006 removed the stipulation from publications (Kumashiro, 2008). Despite this extrication, social justice in teacher education flourished and built upon the work of multicultural education, shifting "the focus from issues of cultural diversity to issues of social justice, making social change and activism central to the vision of teaching and learning promoted" (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009, p. 597). The field has been studied and theorized in increasing depth over the last 20 years. Although scholars have noted "the meaning of social justice is neither incontrovertible nor static" (North, 2008, p. 1184), there has arisen some agreement in the field on a few basic assumptions that comprise social justice education.

Teaching for social justice and teaching social justice (Moje, 2007) are noted for containing an explicit commitment to achieving equity in society and to dismantling structures of oppression (Cochran-Smith, 2008; Hackman, 2005), where "oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society" (Bell, Adams, & Griffin, 1997, p. 4). Thus social justice education seeks to promote awareness of how power operates daily in ways that appear axiomatic and examines those structures of power for how they contain elements of racism, genderism, classism, heteronormativity, and the intersections of such categories. Beyond knowledge, however, social justice education should generate *action* (North, 2008) based on the cognizance gained, as social justice is a "way of being" (Jones & Enriquez, 2009, p. 160) and a toolkit (Grant & Agosto 2008) rather than merely an amalgamation of content.

The literature surrounding social justice education overwhelmingly justifies its existence based the predominance of white, female, middle class pre-service teachers (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Sleeter, 2001) who are potentially lacking in knowledge of critical pedagogies and dispositions. The mismatch between our diverse student populations and the faces of those who teach those individuals provides teacher educators warranted cause for concern, as the experiences and socialization of such teacher candidates are often very different from their students. Without critical reflection on these ex-

periences, teacher educators fear the reproduction of inequity and the perpetuation of pedagogical practices that uphold social stratification and dominant ideologies. Without truly knowing the students they will teach, it is impossible for candidates to achieve effective and engaging pedagogy for *all,* which is one of the goals of social justice education. While we believe these points to be true, we, along with others, (Cochran-Smith, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto 2000) also feel that social justice education is for all of our pre-service teachers who are "participants in a diverse democratic nation" (p. 5), including white students and students of color. We hope to join in shifting the discourse on such education to conceptualize those students in more additive ways, asking what experiences they have that connect to our goals.

Extending this argument, we note that pre-service teachers come to the profession with varied awareness of their own position in an oppressive structural hegemony. We note this, not only to point out that some pre-service teachers may not recognize their dominant position in this hierarchy, but also to acknowledge the rich and meaningful experiences of those who must face oppression on a daily basis. Additionally, students come to the university having experienced and understood various *dimensions* of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, and other sociocultural positionalities. Labeling this repertoire "funds of social justice knowledge," Miller (2014) explains this collection as

> an already available embodied, moral, cultural, and socially conscious understanding of how ideologies perpetuate oppression within and among various subjectivities and can manifest internally and/or externally—that can be tapped into and expanded to understand students' dispositions for social justice teaching. (p. 45-46)

We hoped to do just that--activate our students' experiences, knowledges, and backgrounds to build the case for social justice. We agree with the literature on the need for social justice education, and we expand on its call to enhance the critical dispositions of all pre-service teachers. Like Sheets (2000), we worry that the trend to focus mainly on whiteness in teacher education programs has the potential to center whiteness as the all-important solution for addressing soci-

etal inequity rather than a comprehensive critical analysis of the social positions that we all occupy.

Scholarship in the area of social justice education includes both models for incorporating its ideals throughout teacher education program sequences (Nieto, 2000) as well as recommendations and renderings related to specific course material and activities (Gay, 2010), pedagogies (Boler, 2004), or experiences such as clinical placements (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini, & Isken, 2003; McDonald, Tyson, Brayko, Bowman, Delport, & Shimomura, 2011). A major aim of these scholars and pedagogues is to reveal the structure and implications of "unearned advantages" and "conferred dominance" that have been granted to whites as a result of systemic white supremacy (McIntosh, 1990). Following this aim, scholars have sought to understand how pre-service teachers both engage and strategically disengage with a critical study of whiteness (Hytten & Warren, 2003; Marx, 2004; Pennington, 2007; Picower, 2009). King (1991) frames her work with pre-service teachers using the idea of "dysconscious racism" which she defines as "the limited and distorted understandings students have about inequity and cultural diversity – understandings that make it difficult for them to act in favor of truly equitable education" (p. 134). This particular assertion allows for students to seriously consider oppressive and hegemonic racial ideology as a framework for privilege, as opposed to using the examination of privilege as an entry into the discussion. The aim here is to attempt to lessen denials and resistance at early stages of discussion that serve to shut out further discourse. Another reason for considering King's theory as an entry point is that all students can be included in the conversation, since students of all social and cultural positions can be complicit in accepting and reproducing hegemony. This is not meant to shift focus from white complicity, or the discourse of whiteness, but to emphasize our collective "miseducation," as a starting point for discussion.

Examples of programs centered on a mission of social justice include the thematic approach of Boston College, which was built on five goals: "promoting social justice, constructing knowledge, inquiring into practice, affirming diversity, and collaborating with others" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009, p. 352). In a study of this program's

impact on teacher candidates, researchers followed teachers from the preparation program, through their internship experience, and into their first year of teaching. Interview data highlighted that when asked to describe social justice, candidates emphasized "building relationships with students and also to respecting and working with parents" (p. 356). They connected what they were doing in their classrooms to students' improved life chances. Findings also included that while students often referenced their capacity for change, this was alluded to on an individual level but not through critique of larger structures or through activism on a broader scale. The teachers' plans did not extend beyond their classroom walls to the macro-level despite their commitment to making a difference with their own students. The researchers cited the individual level as a possible "starting point for new teachers" (p. 373), hoping that with experience, these educators could expand their focus. Hollins and Guzman (2005) conducted a review of studies published on the preparation of teachers for working with diverse groups and recounted how programs can aim for "prejudice reduction" (p. 485) or can entail "equity pedagogy" (p. 490). Furthermore, in an effort to mark programs that illustrated possibility for effective use of critical race theory throughout teacher education, Ladson-Billings (1999) reported on six specific programs and described each one's strategy; for example, she noted a program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison that was built on both social change and teacher reflection and an immersion program at Santa Clara University that placed students in community organizations prior to beginning classes. These examples demonstrate that here have been numerous efforts in teacher education to work with candidates toward the goals of social justice.

Considering this groundwork illustrates that social justice education derives from a rich body of scholarship and research. Equipped with this knowledge, the question then becomes one of how we continue to go about preparing teachers for the monumental task of effecting long-lasting change in our society. Ours is one step in that direction. We hope to demonstrate in theory and practice, providing tangible examples, ways to accomplish the work set before us. What follows then, are the five components of our developing social justice

education framework. For each, we offer a description of the approach followed by specific examples of our own experiences working with students to actualize the goal.

MOVING FROM SELF TO SYSTEM: THE FRAMEWORK

EXAMINING STUDENT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

A vital component in encouraging pre-service teachers to develop critical perspectives lies in helping them to understand the complex concepts of socialization and subjectivity. This is a first step in recognizing knowledge, among other concepts, as socially constructed. Learning to recognize that our experiences are unique and particular to our own positions insists that students eschew objectivity. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) state, “Socialization refers to our systematic training into the norms of our culture. [It] is the process of learning the meanings and practices that enable us to make sense of and behave appropriately in that culture” (p. 15). For our purposes, we believe that asking pre-service teachers to reflect on their own socialization in terms of schooling and education is not only a starting point, but a foundation for study throughout the semester. As instructors, then, our role is to help them identify and unpack complex experiences and to make connections to the course readings. Along with many other scholars and activists (Bell, 1997; Bettez, 2011; Hackman, 2005; King, 1991) we feel that there is great value and insight to be gained by asking students to use their own schooling experiences as a lens to explore social justice concepts.

Educational autobiographies give pre-service teachers an opportunity to begin examining their assumptions about knowledge and how they believe it to be constructed. Describing the what, why, and how of past schooling experiences may help them to consider how this will affect future interactions with students who may experience schooling from different perspectives and positions. We began our course by asking our students to compose their own multimedia educational autobiographies, selecting artifacts that represented significant moments in their learning and presenting those in whatever multimedia fashion they chose accompanied by a written reflection. At the end of the

semester, students re-visited this assignment to critique their original submission and re-vision themselves as future social justice educators through the inclusion of additional multimedia artifacts.

It is important to note here that we conceptualize the autobiographical examination as ongoing throughout the semester, rather than a one-time project. As students learned and practiced a critical approach they eventually used their own initial autobiography assignment as an artifact worthy of critique. Thus, students visited and revisited this self-examination over and over again, adding language and textual support as they read course material and participated in course discussions. Based on feedback they received throughout the course, we asked students to re-engage with the initial assignment and to consider how their lenses changed or expanded over the course of the semester.

This revisioning process required a specific approach to grading and feedback. As students completed written assignments throughout the semester, we provided feedback that was encouraging, but we also challenged students to push beyond their current level of understanding. Written feedback on reflections and essays took the form of questions posed to the student, a suggestion of textual evidence that would support their argument, or a direct statement that pointed out problematic discourse. Overall course objectives drove feedback from the start, encouraging growth and inquiry over the course of the semester. We noticed that students took this feedback very seriously, and often considered the questions posed as they continued reading the course material. This style of feedback allowed engagement with course concepts outside of the classroom environment, and it provided a way for instructors to dialogue with individual students.

The course material we employ in our syllabus is meant to reveal social inequity that is often obscured, especially from those who benefit most from hegemonic power structures and the resulting privileges. Students often *learn* the language to accurately describe their experience and privileges through the course material and discussion in this course. Thus, it is unrealistic to expect that students initial autobiographical reflection will necessarily use the language of social justice. We often encounter deficit language and perspectives (Valenzuela, 1999) as well as discourses that students initially believe

to be progressive and anti-racist, such as colorblindess (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Rather than approaching this as an opportunity to knock points off the students' grades - though we do point out problematic discourse in our feedback - we conceptualize this as an opportunity for students to re-engage in dialogue with their former selves at the end of the course. Thus, our approach to autobiography in our social justice education model is a first step in locating the self and initiating how it is connected to larger social structures.

ORGANIZING BY FACTORS

Second, we call for an organization of foundations or social justice courses by topics of concern for dismantling inequity, rather than by labels of marginalized populations. In our society, we have what Ladson-Billings (2006) refers to as a culture fetish, where we use culture to explain anything. This overuse of culture has become so common that it is often used as a rationalization, and the intention and impact of the labels are not critiqued. When organizing a syllabus by marginalized populations, it sends the message that these groups are isolated and that they are the problem. Paris and Alim (2014), in their critique of current asset-based pedagogies, lamented that many culturally-centered pedagogies ignore the dynamic and critical nature of culture.

Nieto (2008) describes culture as the "ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include common history, geographic location, social class, and religion" (p. 129). Further, culture is embedded in a *sociopolitical context*. Divorcing culture from the sociopolitical context is essentially antithetical to the aims of social justice (Nieto 2000; 2008). As our society continues to evolve, so does the culture of power. Understanding the dynamic and embedded nature of culture is critical to confronting issues of inequity. It was thus important that our students move beyond superficial and aesthetic notions of culture and understand that culture is fluid and influenced by characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, ability, sexuality, language, and religion (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Nieto, 1999).

Given these notions of culture and the critiques of focusing teacher candidates on specifically labeled marginalized populations, scholars instead argue that equity should be at the center more than cultural congruence. In our courses, we therefore focus on topics such as understanding systemic injustices within schools and outside of schools; the social construction of identity; and examining both how and what we teach. This allows for the consideration of multiple and intersecting forms of oppression and shifts away from essentialized views of groups. Such a move resists the interpersonal narrative and looks towards social justice at the systemic level. Additionally, this approach has the potential to disrupt traditional classroom discourse that reinscribes common Western binaries.

In designing the topics of the syllabus, our goal was to continually journey our students from the personal to the professional to the systemic. As such we selected areas that would allow our students to become more critical of the system of stratification in the United States. We set the stage by beginning with the purpose of education, the reality of education, and the need for social justice. We then moved through a series of connections so that our students could begin to understand and see that we are deeply embedded in and influenced by our context (Nieto, 2010). We sought to connect the personal to the professional, then the injustices in schools and the injustices out of schools. With this foundation laid we then discussed the *social construction of identity* and focused on factors and not individual groups (i.e., African-Americans, Native Americans, Women, etc.). We examined the social construction, the impact, and the ways to challenge oppression regarding factors such as race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, nationality, and exceptionality. By discussing the social construction, impact, and ways to challenge these factors broadly, we hoped that our students would begin to see that this is not the sole problem of members of the group but our problem collectively. Through our intentional organization and strategic discussion of these factors as social constructions we hoped to disrupt our students taken-for-granted assumptions.

ANALYZING MEDIA CRITICALLY

Third, we advocate for the incorporation of critical media analysis in order to help students better understand the ways issues, especially those related to education, are constructed and upheld by dominant hegemonic culture. Those who work in the fields of cultural studies (Hall, 1997; Trier, 2003) and critical media literacy (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Beach, 2007; Duncan-Andrade, 2004) have well-established the need to bring popular culture into the classroom to engage students in reading the world around them. As participants in contemporary culture, our teacher candidates engage with a range of media on a daily basis including all forms of social and digital media as well film, advertising, and television. Each of these constructions is a cultural artifact whose language and representations is imbued with meaning, yet those meanings are often naturalized and thus appear as axiomatic (Kellner & Share, 2005). As social justice educators, it is our responsibility to work with students to deconstruct these texts for the ideological messages they convey. We anticipate that by cultivating these skills in an education-specific domain, using both mainstream Hollywood productions as well as national and local news outlets, we will ignite students to apply this approach to artifacts in their everyday worlds.

Our caution, however, is that, like many cultural studies scholars, we do not wish to posit our students as "cultural dopes" (Grossberg, 1994, p. 19), as unintelligent beings who blindly accept negative media messages, but rather as active readers and audience members. Echoing Alvermann and Hagood (2000), "we are interested in the pedagogical implications of helping students experience the pleasures of popular culture while simultaneously uncovering the codes and practices that work to silence or disempower them as readers, viewers, and learners in general" (p. 194). Our pedagogy here is one of investigation, not necessarily negation, of media texts, and we are careful not to present all media as monolithic. As Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, and Lopez (2013) avow, students "need to be made more explicitly aware of their relationships with media, and they need an education that imparts the skills they need to powerfully consume

and produce new media" (p. 3), thus is our hope in including it in our framework for social justice education.

Kellner and Share (2005) outlined five concepts central to defining critical media literacy: "all media messages are 'constructed;'" "media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules;" "different people experience the same media message differently;" "media have embedded values and points of view;" and "media are organized to gain profit and/or power" (p. 374-376). Their points make clear that engaging in critical media literacy involves uncovering the processes and intentions in media production as well as considering how viewers interact with texts. Garcia, Seglem, and Share (2013) explained:

> Critical media literacy depends on guiding students to explore difficult-to-see ideologies and connections between power and information. This approach embraces a democratic pedagogy, in which teachers and students study multiple narratives and ideological power structures as they push back on the popular myth that education can and should be apolitical. (p. 111)

As in the broader field of social justice education, the inclusion of critical media literacy within our framework is intentionally and unapologetically political because it aims for social equity. Despite the centrality of critique in critical media literacy, however, it is crucial to note that there is also a reconstructive element to the pedagogy. Kellner and Share (2005) emphasize that such teaching emphasizes "the importance of learning to use the media as modes of self-expression and social activism" (p. 372) and Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, and Lopez (2013) write that it "also enlightens students to the potential they have, as media producers, to shape the world they live in and to help turn it into the world they imagine" (p. 3). We wished to combine these elements of critical media literacy in our social justice in education course through assignments that both required students to critically analyze and to produce media.

A few illustrative examples from our own practice include a song investigation assignment in which we asked students, in small groups, to select a song with a message related to education and to lead a

critique and discussion of the lyrics and official music video with their peers. We probed students to frame their points around social justice, having modeled this activity for them with Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall" (1979) and other examples in the first few weeks of the course. Here, by allowing students the power to choose songs that we hoped were relevant to them, we modeled that critical media literacy "requires a democratic pedagogy which involves teachers sharing power with students as they join together in the process of unveiling myths and challenging hegemony" (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 373). Another major assignment that we created was for our students' critical reading of a 'school film' (Trier, 2001; 2005). In groups, students selected a film that again connected to education in some way. They then chose a specific social justice angle for individual critique. We provided time in class for discussions throughout the course, asking students to focus on specific elements of their film that related to our topic of discussion that day. Examples from student work include a critique of *The Lottery* for reflecting how charter schools maintain social class distinctions, and a rendering of the notions of privilege and masculinity in *The Breakfast Club.*

Broadly speaking, we included numerous clips from news outlets, particularly surrounding standardized testing and local issues such as teacher pay, for student discussion and analysis. Keeping with the productive nature of critical media literacy, we asked our students to create their own multimedia autobiographies for the future (described above) to illustrate who they "wanted to be" in the future as social justice educators. Many of their productions were counter-narratives to the grand portrayals of teachers they unpacked in their school film assignments. Although critical media literacy has been well established as a field, and calls have been made to include the pedagogy in educational spaces to promote analysis, it has rarely been included in a model for a social foundation course or social justice education. When we illuminate how power operates in society, we feel it is absolutely necessary to include a consideration of the ways that media constructs and represents that power.

RELATING TO PRACTICE

Fourth, the model encourages that students conceptualize social justice not only in pedagogical ways, but also as related to content so as to address students' struggles in connecting social justice to their discipline or grade level. Our attention to relevant practice is rooted in our understanding of learning theories, specifically definitions and demonstrations of what it means to learn. As such, we agree with Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, and Perry (1992) that "learning is an active process in which meaning is developed on the basis of experience" (p. 21). Key in this definition is that learning is active. Thus, as social justice educators we want our students to experience social justice as who one is as well as what one does in the classroom. For our teacher candidates, their real worlds will be their own classrooms where they will be expected to meet professional mandates, and we want an equity lens to be embedded within their practice. Two activities presented an opportunity for students to relate theory and practice: curriculum revisioning and social justice weekly.

The goal of the curriculum revisioning assignment was to practice the deconstruction, construction and reconstruction of curriculum. As Ladson-Billings (2006) explains:

> Deconstruction refers to the ability to take apart the 'official knowledge" to expose weaknesses myths, distortions, and omissions. Construction refers to the ability to build curriculum. ..relies on the experiences and knowledge that teachers and their students bring to the classroom. Reconstruction requires the work of rebuilding the curriculum that was previously taken aware and examined" (p. 32)

In cautioning against color blindness, Cochran-Smith (1995) urges teachers to critique instructional materials and practices and begin to teach against "the grain." Our assignment came later in the semester so that students had an idea of what "the grain" was so that they could begin to teach against it. One common concern that was echoed in all of our sections was difficulty based on grade level and/or subject area. Recognition of the difficulty was outweighed by the necessity. We therefore decided to use a class session for the students to work

collaboratively in content and level specific groups. Each group also paired with current practicing teachers who used their content and/or subject level to address issues of inequity.

The curriculum revisioning assignment involved a final lesson, a rationale, and a reflection. With these three components we wanted our teachers to understand the need to be fully present and reflective on their roles as teachers. We saw the rationale as an opportunity for teachers to practice intentionality and to consider the ways in which their decisions as teachers disrupt or maintain the status quo. By also providing a rationale that considered how the lesson connected to students, what they hoped the students would gain, and the thought behind the choices made, students were practicing intentionality. One of our future middle grades math teacher used her lesson on percentage to compare the pay of men versus women and to then engage her students in a discussion of the impact of sexism on earning wage. A future high school biology teacher used her discussion on phenotype to discuss the gender continuum and the distinction between gender, sex, sexual orientation, and gender expression.

With the goal of reading both the word and the world, each week students took turns presenting a "social justice weekly." Our rationale for the assignment aligned with Macedo's (1994) argument that "we must first read the world--the cultural, social, and political practices that constitute it before we can make sense of the word-level description of reality" (p. 27). For this assignment students considered how current events impacted their experience as teachers and the experiences of students. Each week a group presented an issue or event related to social justice that affected our classrooms and/or our roles as teachers. Through this activity we discussed issues such as the cultural appropriation of Halloween costumes, the impact of Ferguson, and the portrayal of Marvel's Black superheroes.

In her study on programs that integrated social justice throughout, McDonald (2005) found that "teachers' opportunities to learn conceptual tools far outweighed their opportunities to learn practical tools" (p. 427). At the risk of repeating this, we wanted to ensure our students were consistently directed toward pragmatic application of the theories they learned in our courses. Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, and Lopez

(2013) acknowledge that "incorporating social issues into standards-based content areas is not impossible, but it takes a concerted effort by teachers to draw out and make connections (p. 157). By focusing on the practice and not solely the theory, we communicated to our students that social justice is action-oriented, which moves us to our final element.

INCLUDING SOCIAL ACTION

Hackman (2005) cautions, "Teaching about issues of oppression without proffering social action tools for students ultimately creates a classroom atmosphere that lacks hope and creative energy" (p. 106). A crucial element, then, of the model for social justice we advocate is the creation and implementation of social action projects. Too often we teach students "about"—*about* theories, *about* people, *about* schools. Our work must also include action, such as involvement in a movement or a local organization. Without this element, Bell (1997) avows, "dominants perpetuate the system as agents of the status quo" (p. 13). In our role of power as teacher educators, we do not wish to reproduce structures of inequality or especially notions of 'teacher saviors' (Ayers, 1994), but rather to have our students involved as agents of change.

This component of our model is perhaps the most difficult to implement because it involves work outside of our actual classrooms. Behrman (2006) avows, "Taking social action requires students to become involved as members of a larger community" (p. 495). Engaging students in the community, however, can be difficult to monitor and to attach to a foundations-type course when placements and activities are scarce or students are already overloaded with field experiences. We believe, however, that action related to the specific purposes of social justice is absolutely necessary, and it is our hope that students who begin such in their pre-service program are more likely to continue once they enter their careers. If nothing else, working alongside activists demystifies for many teacher candidates what it means to be a social activist, especially in states such as ours where political exercise on the part of teachers is often discouraged.

In recent years, teacher educators have broached engaging pre-service students in social action projects. Examples of these include Groenke's (2010) adaptation and use of 'equity audits' with teacher candidates to have students survey and assess inequity in public schools, Eidson, Nickson and Hughes (2014) work with service learning at a food pantry as social action, and Murrell's (2000; 2006) description of candidates assisting community leaders in order to engage in the local spaces from which their students attend schools. More work in the realm of social action has been described with K-12 students (for example, see Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2005/2006; Simmons, 2012; Westheimer & Kahne, 1998), but we feel that the best way for our pre-service teachers to learn about implementing these projects with their students is to actually engage in similar tasks themselves.

We find our own work is somewhat limited in this regard and are striving to improve upon it in future iterations of our courses. We felt, however, we would be remiss if we did not include it in our framework and have made some efforts to incorporate social activism in our existing courses. For instance, because we want our students to see themselves as teachers who can engage in advocacy for their profession or other education-related movements, we designed an assignment in which we required our students to interview a practicing teacher who had participated in social activism. The pieces of the assignment included interview questions, the candidates' personal reflections in the form of summaries and assessments of the interview as well as renderings of what this meant for them as professionals. We hoped that by discerning living models of the various ways for teachers to be politically active, our pre-service students would note the rewards and challenges of such work. In addition to this interview assignment, we also invited local teachers who we knew to be socially just in their practice to serve on discussion panels during our class sessions. Ranging from elementary to high school, these teachers illustrated projects and practices they conducted with students that included social action so that, again, our students would have examples for their own future careers. Finally, we invited a state representative to our class to speak with students about how they could engage politicians and policy-makers.

Despite these beginnings, we realize that there is much more work to be done on this final aspect of our paradigm. For future coursework, we plan to provide our students with options for social action and to have them engage in an arrangement of their choosing. This might be in the form of consistent volunteering at a local organization, participating in social action with a structured group, or working in a school to promote a social justice cause. We feel the latter would be particularly effective if the social justice cause were identified by school personnel, such as teachers or administrators, so that our students work alongside invested participants. By allowing our students to design and execute their own projects, we aspire to tap into their own personally motivated causes and to avoid the pitfalls of required experiences that could potentially reinforce negative stereotypes (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007). Walker (2003) wrote, “The struggle for social justice is hard work, but only through *doing* justice can we make justice ... So social justice is and must be a verb (about doing and acting) as well as a noun (theoretical descriptions)” (p. 185). Thus, we rest firmly in the belief that the theories we teach our students must be accompanied by action.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We have outlined above five elements we feel are central to social justice education. And yet we realize, as North (2008) writes, “we cannot expect a single approach to social justice education to be effective for all students in all contexts” (p. 1200). Social justice education is largely dependent on the population of students within any pre-service classroom and the experiences and backgrounds of those specific students. We do not wish to offer a “one size fits all” model, but rather to create a framework that is adaptable. It has been molded from successful approaches documented in the literature as well as our own conversations and understandings from working with students.

In our paradigm, we have suggested a movement from self to system. Starting with autobiography, we asked our students to reflect on their own experiences and then to locate themselves, over the course of their intellectual labor in our class, in the broader structural context. When our students revisit their initial autobiographies, they

often compose powerful narratives of critique wherein they use the language of social justice to illustrate how they had colluded with myths of meritocracy and later recognized their own privilege. In this continuous process, we add experiences with critiquing media to build greater awareness of the ways systems and hegemony operate, offering us collective social identities from which to base our knowledge of the world. By including social action, we hope to provide a space for agency, for disruption of those constructed subject positions and ways to influence those systems of oppression. We want to situate our students in a place that acknowledges individual performative acts such as those that exist within Whiteness and racism (Bettez, 2011) while also discerning the discursive role of themselves as individuals within ideological frameworks.

There is still much work to be done. University efforts to include social justice remain largely at the 'add on' course level (Ladson-Billings, 1999), and we hope a social justice mindset can become more pervasive throughout entire programs. We have here explained how our approach fits a social foundations or diversity course, yet it could also be easily adapted to methods courses that are age or discipline specific. Examining autobiographies, deconstructing and reconstructing media, focusing on social justice topics, and incorporating social action are relevant from pre-K to high school, from science to English Language Arts. Elementary school teachers, for example, can incorporate lessons that challenge heteronormativity through carefully chosen literature, and high school math teachers can examine statistics related to bullying or other social justice issues. Truly, the opportunities for such work are endless, but it first takes teachers' critical dispositions to recognize them and their desire for a better world to organize and implement a response. Our role as teacher educators, then, is to help our candidates assume a critical stance and imagine those responses for their future curriculum.

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