

The Graduate School

College of Education

**UNDERSTANDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIALLY JUST TEACHERS  
THROUGH SUPERVISION IN A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL  
PARTNERSHIP: AN ACTIVITY THEORETICAL ANALYSIS**

A Dissertation in

Curriculum & Instruction

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2021

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## ABSTRACT

Schools should be the place to cultivate and model a just society. Teacher candidates must be equipped with the ability to recognize, critique, and oppose any practices, policies, or structures that perpetuate the social and economic inequalities that currently exist. Yet the culturally responsive teaching strategies increasingly adopted by researchers and teachers across the U.S. have been attempted with little to no systemic, institutional, long-lasting change (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009). Mills and Ballantyne (2016) make several recommendations for addressing these methodological gaps include investigating 1) the links between understandings and enactment of socially just practice, 2) the influence of the field placement, and 3) the pedagogy employed in teacher education and teacher educators' attitudes/beliefs. Cochran-Smith and Zeichner's (2009) call for teacher education research to use more complex frameworks that discuss "how practice is shaped by not only by what individuals may believe or hope to achieve also by contexts, materials, and other people" (p. 16). We know that preparing teacher candidates to enact socially just pedagogies is necessary, but the literature has little to suggest on how this transformation might be possible. In response to these gaps in the literature and in practice, I developed an intervention study informed by Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and Cultural Historical Activity Theory (AT; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Leont'ev, 1978; Engeström, 2015) such that I could promote and trace teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching microgenetically. This took place in two concurrent parts: 1) I co-taught six lessons on social justice over the course of a 15-week Spring Seminar and 2) I observed teacher candidates in their teaching placements and led post-observation debriefs focused on their teaching practices that suggested socially just teaching. This study asks, *how are aspects of socially just teaching materialized through the practices of an intervention focused on social justice in a teacher*

*education Seminar course, in what ways do the PDS teacher candidates enact socially just teaching, how was this enactment influenced by the researcher's responsive mediation, and in what ways does the PDS activity system mediate teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching?* Findings revealed that in coursework, an inquiry-based teaching approach provided teacher candidates with the space and opportunity to begin to ask different questions and inquire into their practices in different ways. Yet this was not enough to promote development; it only created moments of cognitive/emotional dissonance. However, when coupling teacher education with my supervision, which was focused on socially just teaching, it was possible to see microgenetic development. All three cohorts oriented to socially just teaching in ways that was dependent on their own lived experiences, their context, and the influences of their PDA and mentor teacher. Analysis of my own supervisory skills and responsive mediation revealed successes, but also missed opportunities, misinterpretations of what teacher candidates were thinking, and raising questions that were not targeted within the teacher candidates' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Thus, the findings for each cohort are multifaceted, highlight *emergent* ways in which the teacher candidates enacted socially just teaching, and are contingent on the character and quality of my mediation and their PDA's supervision. Finally, findings revealed two constraints on the teacher candidates' development as socially just teachers. First, their object of activity was, at times, compartmentalized and siloed – being a good teacher for some teacher candidates was choosing either developing socially just teaching *or* developing an inquiry stance. Second, a lack of shared understanding of social justice allowed for mixed signals and a greater potential of teacher candidates not seeing social justice as needing to address institutional and systemic inequities. Implications speak to the powerful role practitioner inquiry can have when coupled with social justice, as well as highlights the

importance of the university supervisor and that they hold a uniquely powerful role in bridging theory and research and offering more targeted support to teacher candidates. Though this study was disrupted by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings suggest that teacher education and supervision within professional development schools can foster teacher candidates' emergent socially just teaching.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not be possible without colleagues, friends, and family members. First, to my doctoral committee – Bernard Badiali, Rachel Wolkenhauer, Uju Anya, Karen Johnson, and Matthew Poehner. I would like to thank each of you for your guidance, advice, and mentorship. I appreciate everything you have done to support me as a human being and a scholar, as well as supporting my work. I am indebted to each of you and cannot wait to begin to honor you in the years to follow.

I could not have written this dissertation without Nicolas Doyle, Eleanor Sweeney, Holly Klock, and May Lee. You are all brilliant and inspiring in so many ways. I am so lucky to have found such an amazing and supportive group of friends amidst an unhealthy culture of competitiveness and perfectionism.

To my PDS community – I can't name you here, but you know who you are. Taylor, Cameron, River, and Parker, you exude love, support, and nurture. Your mentorship and guidance are priceless. You made me feel at home and that I had something important offer even when I didn't believe it myself. Cameron, the world needs to hear what you have to say.

To my Science 20/20 team –Carla Zembal-Saul, Frances, Michelle and Jen. You all challenged and strengthened me in every interaction. You were non-apologetic and forgiving. You pushed me forward, and I think differently now because of each of you.

To the other professors, colleagues, classmates, and students that I've met along the way – thank you for being part of this journey and shaping my beliefs and experiences.

And finally, I would like to my partner, Mike Maes. I literally could not do this without you.

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The participants in this study reminded me that there is *hope*. Hope for educational change within a system of schooling that I contend reproduces societal inequalities and is reluctant to change. I am not arguing that there are no issues or concerns revealed in the study, nor am I ignoring them. I address them in the pages that follow. Instead, I want to start this dissertation with a reminder that the work we do, as teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and teacher-researchers, is ongoing, does not have a fixed endpoint, and matters.

Along these lines, the study that I designed, enacted, and report on in this dissertation is both educational theory and educational practice with the aims of educational *change*. It is a form of praxis-oriented research that “aims at involving teachers, students, parents and school administrators in the tasks of critical analysis of their own situations with a view to transforming them in ways which will improve these situations as *educational* situations for students, teachers, and society” (Carr & Kemmis, 1991, p. 157, italics in original). Praxis-oriented research is situated in the concrete, practical educational realities of the participants and the researcher (myself, a participant and practitioner) and their situations. This study is a first step toward understanding how to “transform the interacting webs of practices” (p. 160) to improve actual educational situations in the context that this study took place.

### Problem Statement

To take one instantiation of the above-referenced education realities in need of change, let us consider the phenomenon of school lunch debt. In July 2019, according to Folley (2019), the Wyoming Valley West School District in Pennsylvania sent home a letter to the guardians of nearly 1,000 students threatening to not provide food for the students and to take their children

away from them (i.e., send them to Dependency Court and risk being placed in Foster Care) if they do not pay their school lunch debt. A Pennsylvania-based CEO offered to pay the nearly \$22,000 with no strings attached. The school district denied the money. Not only do families not have enough money for food, but they are being publicly shamed and blamed for their conditions, the school district is threatening to separate kids and families, and one CEO has amassed enough wealth to cover the cost of over 1,000 students' lunches. School lunch debt should not exist.

Gaddis (2019; 2020), who spent years interviewing cafeteria workers and studying school lunch activism, emphasizes the economic, racial, and environmental justice issues at hand. She highlights the macro-cultural (Ratner, 2012) factors stemming from the current capitalist political economic system that surround the National School Lunch Program: low-wage cafeteria workers; low-wage, often migrant workers and immigrants who grow, harvest, process, and distribute the food; federal and state policies that dictate what food can be served; supply chain outsourcing to private companies that cut corners in order to maximize profits; minorized students of color and students experiencing poverty are those most likely to be affected; and brand advertising and marketing to children as they select their food choices. Gaddis (2019, 2020) offers practical steps and strategies for food justice. She contends that “universal free, healthy, tasty, eco-friendly, culturally appropriate school lunches could be a reality in the United States, but only if students, cafeteria workers (over 90% of whom are women), and communities join together in solidarity to fight for real food and real jobs in K-12 schools” (2019, p.1).

I assert that this is but one example of the ways in which public schooling, as an American institution, is not “work[ing] for the ordinary citizen but function instead to maintain class distinctions (Urban, 1978, p. vii). We desperately cling to the belief that education is a

solution to society's inequities, however, the institutions primarily responsible for education, schools, "instead of directing the course of change, are themselves driven by the very forces that are transforming the rest of the social order" (Counts, 1932, p. 1).

### **Justification for the Study**

The inequities that are reproduced in, and are consequences of, the current P-16 institution of schooling are the responsibilities of many to address and overcome. It is not possible for just one group to challenge alone. Because of my personal and professional interests, background, and experiences, I argue that teacher education programs, and thus teacher educators, have the responsibility to develop the capacity in teacher candidates to teach in ways that recognize their role in creating classrooms that promote the acquisition, generation, and collective contribution of knowledge; care and well-being for all students; and social justice for all students. I, too, accept this responsibility.

To guide renewal efforts that seek to transforming schooling, teacher educators must work in schools and with the people in them, as well as their teacher candidates, to take on an agenda for education in a democracy. And this cannot be seen as an add-on once the "technical" aspects of teaching have been taught (Dyches & Boyd, 2017). Instead, teaching that is grounded in social justice is in actuality a teaching philosophy that undergirds all of the decision-making in a school building. Along the same lines as the school lunch debt issue raised above, Fenstermacher (1990, p. 133) explains this philosophy as follows:

What makes teaching a moral endeavor is that it is, quite centrally, human action undertaken in regard to other human beings. Thus, matters of what is fair, right, just, and virtuous are always present. When a teacher asks a student to share something with another student, decides between combatants in a schoolyard dispute, sets procedures for who will go first, second, third, and so on, or discusses the welfare of a student with another teacher, moral considerations are present. The teacher's conduct, at all times and in all ways, is a moral matter. For that reason alone, teaching is a profoundly moral activity.

Teacher candidates must be equipped with the ability to recognize, critique, and oppose any practices, policies, or structures that perpetuate the social and economic inequalities that currently exist. At the same time, teacher candidates are often new to these “threshold concepts” and may experience “social justice learning bottlenecks” (Gorski et al., 2013), “[b]ut it is intolerable for future teachers to remain ignorant and unconcerned. And so their professional education must ensure the necessary loss of innocence” (Goodlad, 1990, p. 22). A path towards a more just and equitable society requires pre-service teachers to develop a critical consciousness, a new way of thinking, and overcome “social justice learning bottlenecks.”

This study is a first attempt at understanding how teacher education programs can do just that. The primary goal driving this study was to better understand the activity system in which teacher candidates in a K-4 Professional Development School (PDS) participate, how they develop into socially just teachers, and what role their supervisors and teacher educators (including myself) have on such development. In the next two sections, I will briefly state why I use the concept *social justice* and why this study took place in a PDS.

## **Social Justice**

One of the principal concerns with advocating for equity work is that the terminology, practices, outcomes, assumptions, and problems it claims to address are vast and constantly changing. The work of social justice in education is typically an umbrella term that encapsulates other constructs, such as culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2004), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017); anti-racist teaching (Kendi, 2019); multicultural education (Banks, 1993); or more recently, abolitionist teaching (Love, 2019). Gorski (2009), Gorski and Dalton (2019) and Grant and Sleeter (2006) have created typologies of the empirical work drawing on these constructs and

their applications in preservice teacher education demonstrating that it ranges across a spectrum of conservative, liberal, and critical/liberatory approaches. At the time of the study, I understood socially just teachers and teacher candidates (SJ teachers) to be ones who enact a critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), consistently working with their students towards the eradication of inequalities in and of schooling. They view teaching as a political act, and see themselves as political activists (Ayers, 2016; Love, 2019; Picower, 2012). SJ teachers are able to recognize and address issues of social justice when they arise. SJ teachers recognize that injustices and social justice as content can occur at any point of the school day, not just in social studies or reading (Dyches & Boyd, 2017). They understand how and why those injustices exist, think beyond the four walls of the classroom, and understand that schools operate as a site of reproduction and are part of the same society that creates and sustains inequities (Dyches & Boyd, 2017; Love, 2019). SJ teachers identify and unpack ideologies present in our capitalist/neoliberal society (Apple, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 2011). By being able to uncover these ideologies and work towards “unlearning” them, SJ teachers can intentionally support more democratic practices (Apple, 2004; Ayers, 2010; Fraser, 1997). SJ teachers should understand their location and role in relation to the structures and institutions. They can do this by critically evaluating whose and what knowledge, habits, and values are of most worth (Bourdieu, 1977; Moll et al., 1992). Ultimately, SJ teachers see how oppression and power operate in schools and instead of addressing symptoms of inequalities in schools, they seek out root causes of inequalities and work towards eradicating the ideologies and structures that perpetuate them.

### **Professional Development Schools**

A Professional Development School (PDS) was selected as the research context for several reasons. First, the PDS model has a legacy of viewing education as a moral endeavor that



ensures all learners have equitable access to knowledge, sustains democracy, works towards addressing injustices by eliminating class and social barriers, and supports simultaneous renewal and parity of all partners (Goodlad, 1994; Holmes Group, 1990; National Network of Educational Renewal [NNER], 1990). Surveys of PDS research in the late 1990s (Abdal-Haqq, 1999; Valli et al., 1997) found that the radical social and political action the Holmes Group advocated for in *Tomorrow's Schools* has been forgotten; in their work, they condemn PDS partnerships for being apolitical, reliant on insufficient definitions of equity, and disproportionately concerned with PDS logistics and structures over matters of equity and justice. A decade later, Breault and Lack (2009) surveyed PDS literature from 1999-2006 and find that over 80% of the literature did not mention equity or social justice; those that did, reinforced narrow conceptions of equity tied to student achievement. Additionally, they argued that organizational structures and teacher educators acted as barriers to a more critical approach. Around the same time, in 2008, the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) released a statement that asserted nine essentials, or “fundamental qualities” of a PDS. The first essential addresses equity specifically:

A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community.

Since the release of the nine essentials, the PDS literature has placed a more intentional focus on equity, which will be reviewed in Chapter 2.

There are signs that PDS partnerships are making strides to return to a more socially just agenda. In March 2021, NAPDS unveiled a second edition of the nine essentials. Of particular note is the shift in language in the first essential,

A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners. (NAPDS, 2021).

With a renewed focus on social justice and community partnership as the mission of a PDS that addresses the four PDS pillars: 1) the improvement of P–12 student learning; 2) the joint engagement in educator preparation activities; 3) the promotion of professional growth of all its participants; and 4) the construction of knowledge through intentional, synergistic research endeavors, a study situated in a PDS partnership which many members willing and ready to make social justice a priority is well justified and offers significant contributions to the PDS literature.

### **Research Questions**

Taken together, the three research questions guiding this study provide insight into questions around 1) what teacher educators (and in the case of this study, myself) can do to materialize, or make concrete, the act of socially just teaching in coursework that takes place during field experiences, 2) what and how development and mediation that can occur in supervision when it is aligned with socially just teaching, and 3) how the practices of teacher educators and supervisors within a shared context are parts of systems of activity that provide space for and constrain the possibilities of teacher candidates' development.

The research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. How are aspects of socially just teaching materialized through the practices of an intervention focused on social justice in a teacher education Seminar course?

2. In what ways do the PDS teacher candidates enact socially just teaching?
  - a. How was this enactment influenced by the researcher's responsive mediation?
3. In what ways does the PDS activity system mediate teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching?

In the next chapter, I provide a review of the empirical literature and an explanation of the overarching theoretical frameworks within Cultural Historical Activity Theory that inform the research questions, the methodological approach for the study, and the findings.

### **Significance of the Study**

Carr & Kemmis (1991, p. 217) remind us to ask, “whose interests are likely to be served by the study?” It is my intent to act on behalf of the interests of the marginalized students in the context where this study took place. At the same time, I recognize that my work with fellow teacher educators, supervisors, classroom teachers, and teacher candidates was in our own interests, as well as the institutions to which we belong. However, this dissertation does offer significance in other ways. It addresses many of the recommendations for future research made by Mills and Ballantyne (2016). Based on their literature review of social justice as a theme teacher education research, more than half of the studies they reviewed included data from one source, were self-contained, and did not link teacher candidates' understandings of social justice to their teaching practices. Some of Mills and Ballantyne (2016)'s recommendations for addressing these methodological gaps include investigating 1) the links between understandings and enactment of socially just practice, 2) the influence of the field placement, and 3) the pedagogy employed in teacher education and teacher educators' attitudes/beliefs. In addition, this study contributes to the literature on the skill and knowledge base of supervisors by offering responsive mediation and sociocultural theory as a way to study one's supervisory practices

(Johnson & Golombek, 2016; Lynch, in press), pre-service teacher education in professional development schools (Burns, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey, 2016; Burns & Yendol-Hoppey, 2015), and social justice in professional development schools (Breault & Lack, 2009; Polly et al., 2019; Zenkov et al., 2013).

### **Dissertation Roadmap**

This chapter provided a brief purpose and justification for the study, including making clear a problem statement and the significance of this study. In Chapter 2, I build on the justification for the study with a review of literature on socially just teaching in preservice teacher education and professional development schools. I also detail the theoretical frameworks that inform the methodology and analysis of the study. In Chapter 3, I outline the research design, brief details on the study's context and participants, the types and procedures for data collection, the methods of data analysis, and my positionality within the study. The subsequent three chapters, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present findings for the study. Chapter 4 documents how I, over the course of six lessons embedded in a teacher education course, attempted to engage teacher candidates in reasoning teaching through inquiry-based teaching practices as a way to develop their understanding of socially just teaching. In Chapter 5, I present the *emergent* ways in which teacher candidates are enacting socially just teaching in their teaching placements. I also present an analysis of my influence in responsively mediating their development through the supervisory functions I enacted. Chapter 6 then reports on the teacher candidates' activity system and what afforded and constrained their development as socially just teachers. Finally, in Chapter 7, a summary of the main findings, as well as implications and recommendations for future research are offered.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **A Review of Relevant Literature**

This central aim of this study was to understand how teacher candidates learn how to enact socially just teaching practices. Specifically, I designed a two-part intervention based on existing mediational spaces on the PDS that included co-teaching during a Seminar as part of teacher education coursework and functioning as a supervisor for five of the teacher candidates. In order to do this, I took an approach grounded in Cultural Historical Psychology (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Leont'ev 1978, 1981; Engeström, 1987) to promote and trace the teacher candidates' development in socially just teaching, as well as analyze the teacher candidates' activity system for affordances and constraints on their development. Therefore, the methodology and analysis for this study utilized social justice in teacher education as a conceptual framework and the theoretical frameworks of Sociocultural Theory, and by extension Activity Theory, both of which will be covered in this chapter.

#### **Conceptual Framework: Social Justice in Professional Development School Supervision**

The literature reviewed in this section is not exhaustive. The section begins by providing a rationale for why social justice is relevant for preservice teacher education. Then it offers a review of the relevant literature in two areas: social justice within professional development schools and how it is talked about in the literature on supervision and clinical field experiences.

#### **A Rationale for Social Justice in Preservice Teacher Education**

Classrooms are complex environments; microcosms of the social, historical, cultural, political, and ideological practices that comprise our world. Classroom walls are permeable; the ideologies present in the world shape and are shaped by the practices in the classroom. Though localized and socially-situated, teachers and students, as well as physical artifacts – curriculum,

materials, activities, policies – and symbolic artifacts – the purpose of schooling and roles of teachers/students, are subject to the macro-structures that comprise the professional world (Johnson, 2009). Thus, if we want to unpack and affect change in schools, “it is essential to understand the broader social, cultural, and historical macro-structures that shape those activities” (Johnson, 2009, p. 62).

Meanwhile, the culturally responsive teaching strategies that are increasingly adopted by researchers and teachers across the US that have been attempted with little to no systemic, institutional, long-lasting change (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009). In addition, the changes and interventions to supposedly address the problems in schooling through K-12 curricula, testing, accountability measures, teacher certification requirements, and for-profit charter schools, have largely been produced within a capitalist ideology. As such, I posit that the problem of school inequalities is a much larger problem that is in a dialectical relationship with the societal level. The rise of a neoliberal mindset, a focus on the individual, on competition, success, and deregulation (countered by hyper-regulation), has resulted in a crisis of mass inequalities in schooling and as a result of schooling that must be addressed (Block, 2018; Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012; Ratner, 2019) with this in mind.

Two analyses (Gorski, 2009; Gorski & Dalton, 2019) into the type of multicultural education curricula and reflection prompts highlight the lack of critical approaches in teacher education. Gorski (2009) finds that the vast majority – 73.4% – of the multicultural education course syllabi they analyzed represent “conservative” or “liberal” approaches. Only 28.9% represent critical approaches. The conservative and liberal approaches can be described as teaching the “Other”, teaching with cultural sensitivity and tolerance, or teaching with multicultural competence. The critical approaches, which is where my work in socially just

teaching lies, is described as teaching in a sociopolitical context or teaching as resistance and counter-hegemonic practice. Objectives for these courses focus on a critical institutional analysis, the consideration of the larger sociopolitical context, the engagement of critical and postcolonial theories with the objectives of “engag[ing] teachers in a critical examination of the systemic influences of power, oppression, dominance, inequity, and injustice on school, from their own practice to institutional and federal education policy” while also “prepar[ing] teachers to be change agents” as well as “deconstructing and *acting against* oppression” (p. 313).<sup>1</sup>

A decade later, Gorski and Dalton (2019), apply a similar approach to an analysis of the critical reflection tasks outlined in the syllabi and course descriptions. The analysis yielded similar findings. Reflection approaches could be grouped along the conservative, liberal and critical typologies. Fourteen percent of the reflections were consistent with conservative multiculturalism. This approach is marked by *amorphous “cultural” reflection* with a vague interpretation of culture and an avoidance of explicitly naming inequities. The liberal approaches include *personal identity reflection* that does not ask one to account for their identity in relation to society and *cultural competence reflection*, which asks teacher candidates to reflect on teaching “diverse learners.” These represented 47% of the reflection types analyzed. Critical approaches, at 39%, include *equitable and just school reflection* and *social transformation reflection*. These deal with anti-oppression and willingness and development of the capacity to be a change agent. While this research is limited, it does offer a helpful tool in analyzing curriculum. This needs to be overlapped with the actual instruction and evaluation that correspond to these course instruments.

### **Relevant Empirical Literature in Professional Development Schools**

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<sup>1</sup> The bulk of this paragraph appears in a drafted manuscript that is currently under review.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Breault and Lack (2009)'s survey of PDS literature from 1999-2006 found that over 80% of the literature did not mention equity or social justice; and of those that did, they reinforced narrow conceptions of equity tied to student achievement. In recent years, PDS research has made significant strides to explicitly center equity and social justice (see Zenkov et al., 2013). In a synthesis of John Goodlad's postulates, AACTE proclamations, and the NAPDS Nine Essentials, Polly, Reinke, and Putman (2019) recommend placing equity at the forefront of school university partnerships and share vignettes of school-university partnerships that exemplify some of their equity work. Research on urban placements and urban partnerships (Cantor, 2002; Glass & Wong, 2003); use of a range of instructional devices (e.g., q-sorts, visual art, photovoice projects, and textbook analysis) to elicit conversations related to culture, bias, and equity (Bazemore-Bertrand & Handsfield, 2019; Cormier, 2020; MacPhee & Kaufman, 2014; Zenkov et al, 2013a); and PDS structures and models that change or result in change from centering equity (Bazemore-Bertrand et al., 2019; Polly et al, 2019) are becoming more normative to the field.

Bazemore-Bertrand et al. (2019) share their initial steps in developing a school-university partnership in an urban school center that is focused on equity. They established core principles of what they call equity in their teacher education coursework: teachers are critical reflective practitioners, teachers educate through critical lenses, teachers cultivate equity practices, and teachers are change agents. Their justification for these principles is to help reconceptualize teacher candidates as teachers that are able to "unpack their worldview," use asset-based pedagogies, authentically engage students, "understand the social nature of learning," engage communities, and "recognize systemic inequities" (p. 75). The authors provide examples of tasks the teacher candidates can engage in to demonstrate their core principles. Examples include



photovoice projects,<sup>2</sup> funds of knowledge studies to learn about self and students, creating lesson plans using diverse texts, and collaborating with PDS partners to design and carry out projects that support the schools.

The core principles that Bazemore-Bertrand, Quast, & Green (2019) suggest are in line with much of the literature on social justice in teacher education. Yet, I do not see a strong connection between the suggested assignments and the core principles, nor do I see a strong linkage back to social justice. Many of these assignments are typical in teacher education programs and do not inherently lend themselves to the cultivation of socially just teaching practices. They can be tools to do so, but the concepts and ideas guiding the use of the tool matters.

Yet, in spite of this rising trend in centering equity and social justice, there is much work to be done. In their introduction to an edited volume on PDS and social justice, Zenkov et al. (2013) do not explicate a definition of social justice. And the chapters that appear throughout generally focus on exemplar cases, justifications for using a PDS model, and sharing core assignments to their PDS partnership. Echoed throughout the book is a notion of social justice that claims to be in the best interests of marginalized students, seeks to transform and disrupt inequitable power structures, and enact equity pedagogies through practitioner inquiry and action research. Yet, if we take this statement about from Dodman et. al. (2013) about their PDS school partner:

The school faculty has sought to break a cycle of underachievement that often plagues schools with similarly high rates of poverty and English Language Learners. Increasing or maintaining student achievement in schools with high percentages of students living in

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<sup>2</sup> Teacher candidates “take photographs that represent their thoughts, feelings, and experiences” (p. 78)

poverty tends to be challenging. For instance, when poverty levels in an elementary school rise twenty-five percent, reading and math achievement scores decrease by approximately thirteen points. (p. 328).

Despite the authors' best intentions, the selected quote is full of deficit framing, and coupled with the schools' record and rate of achievement being more important than their students, I am left to wonder how the authors define social justice. They appear concerned that when more students experiencing poverty enter their schools, their scores decrease. I am particularly struck by the phrase "a cycle of underachievement that often plagues schools." Does underachievement plague schools, and by extension their funding, resource allocation, and reputation? Or does being assessed by inequitable policies, and by extension receiving fewer resources and opportunities in school, plague the students? If the authors are beholden to the institutions they work in and reinforce their power and authority in the "socially justice action research" they do, their capacity for being change agents seems suspect.

The edited volume from Zenkov et al (2013) and article from Bazemore-Bertrand et al. (2019) are representative cases of some of the concerns and potential pitfalls when advocating for social justice work in PDS partnerships. Shared meanings and clearly defining social justice is a necessary next step in the field to address the mounting concern that social justice is talked about in one way and carried out in PDS partnerships in another, which is why clearly defining social justice is a recommendation shared by Breault & Lack (2009).

### **Relevant Empirical Literature in Supervision and Clinical Field Experiences**

A survey of the literature (Blumberg, 1974; Bowers & Flinders, 1991; Cogan, 1973; Costa & Garmston, 2016; Glanz & Zepeda, 2016; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2014; Goldhammer, 1969; Pajak, 1993; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002) provides the following hybrid

definition of supervision: *a purposeful, morally-rooted role and function for teacher leaders to increase student learning and achievement through supporting teachers' development and building/sustaining a positive school relationships/community, while attempting to minimize bureaucratic, administrative responsibilities.*

The work of Goldhammer (1969) and Cogan (1973) at Harvard's Master of Teaching program in the 1960s is one widely accepted starting point in the literature on clinical supervision. Their original work sought to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to learn in meaningful ways instead of bureaucratic surveillance check-ins on performance. The field of supervision spent years following Goldhammer's (1969) push for supervision to work towards building teachers' and school communities' commitment to the emotional, personal, and social well-being of students. He also argues that supervision can rectify the misfortunes of the then-current state of schooling by improving teacher performance in a model of clinical supervision that values learning and inquiry, teacher autonomy and self-regulation, outcomes that are humane, "perfect technical behaviors" of teaching, supportive and empathic methods of supervision, the pleasure of learning of becoming, and a commitment to everyone's betterment.

In 1991, Bowers and Flinders make the case for "culturally responsive teaching and supervision." In their practical handbook for supervisors, they start by grappling with the way in which schools are "embedded within a cultural milieu" (p. 4). They argue for neither "open partisanship" nor the "illusion of political neutrality." Instead, they ultimately align themselves with a center-of-the-road stance that understands "unresolved political issues related to problems of drug abuse, gender inequality, ecological disruptions, and the domination of minority groups [...] should serve to *sensitize* and *inform* the supervisor's awareness of what happens in the classroom" (p. 4, italics in original). They ultimately offer supervisors a set of guides that they

suggest being used as prompts instead of tools. These guides are meant to help supervisors focus their observations on looking for the ways in which the classroom is socialized, the forms of thinking the teacher and students are drawing on, metaphorical thinking, and the presence of cultural stereotypes. The value of this work is lost, however. For Bowers and Flinders, societal issues are “outside” of the school, and purpose in recognizing these “the fundamental changes occurring in society” (p. vii) is predominately simply to explain classroom behavior and raise awareness.

In recent literature, supervision scholars have shifted focus to more equity-oriented work (Jacobs, 2006; Jacobs, Beck, & Crowell, 2014; Jacobs & Casciola, 2016; Lynch, 2018; Willey & Magee, 2019; Yeigh, 2020). Mette (2019), in a report on the current state of the field of supervision, makes a direct call for scholars to

“support more critical analysis of supervision, particularly the ongoing questioning of the impact race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and identities more broadly have on existing supervision frameworks. Much of the work written by supervision scholars continues to be dominated by White males, and as such inherently does not adequately question power, privilege, and the impact supervision could have on addressing issues of social justice.” (p. 5).

The *Supervision for Social Justice* framework put forth by Jacobs and Casciola (2016) is a possible path forward and an example of how supervision can promote social justice. In their 2016 article, Jacobs and Casciola first identify the strands in the supervision literature that undergird supervision for social justice. They are a moral imperative, a stance of critical inquiry, and culturally responsive supervision. Jacobs and Casciola illustrate the process of supervision for social justice in the following sequence: 1) reflection and development of the supervisor’s

own lens for social justice, 2) the influence of the supervisor's platform, knowledge, and skills on how they support teachers in supervisory tasks, and 3) the teacher's platform and pedagogy for social justice develops. For the authors, "[t]he ultimate goal of supervision for social justice is to promote teacher learning to support change toward greater social justice" (p. 225).<sup>3</sup>

However, to date, there are very few empirical studies (Lynch, in press) that show how this framework can be utilized and strengthened in practice.

### **Summary**

This brief review of relevant literature highlights the attempts that the field of supervision and professional development schools have attempted to more intentionally and thoroughly orient to tenants and outcomes for social justice. The texts cited above do not align with the vision of social justice that I put forward in chapter 1, but they demonstrate the current work in the field and where it has room to grow. I argue that supervisors and professional development schools are in unique positions to support their teacher candidates in developing a critical praxis that can overcome and transform institutional and societal inequalities to create the best possible learning opportunities for all students.

### **Theoretical Framework: Sociocultural Theory**

This section starts by providing an overview of Sociocultural Theory (SCT). It addresses key tenants of SCT, including the genetic method, sign-based mediation, and the zone of proximal development. Then the section discusses two extensions of SCT in the area of second language teacher education: reasoning teaching and responsive mediation. Following, I shift to a discussion of Activity Theory (AT). I make the case that there are two points of departure in AT

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<sup>3</sup> This paragraph up to this point appears in a drafted manuscript that is currently under review.

– a political/macro-cultural interpretation and a more ‘neutral’ stance. I then review the relevant empirical literature relevant to school-university partnerships.

### **Overview of Sociocultural Theory**

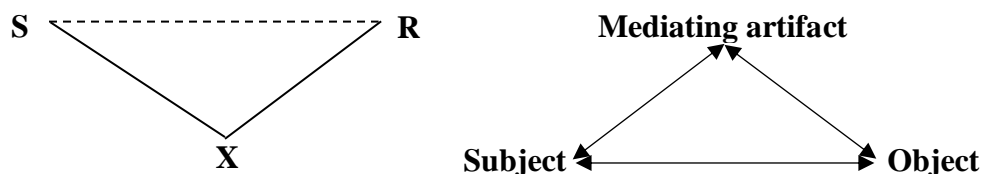
Lev Vygotsky’s contributions to the field of psychology, and subsequently education, are transformational and groundbreaking (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). His roughly ten-year body of work from the 1920s to 1930s stemmed from his frustration with then-current forms of psychology. Vygotsky saw fundamental problems with Cartesian dualism – the notion that there is a mind / body separation, the mind being “rational” and isolated from the external world (Poehner, 2017; Wertsch, 1989; 2007). Instead, Vygotsky argued from a materialism perspective – that “cognition can be systematically investigated without isolating it from social context” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 1). Vygotsky, like many Russian psychologists at the time, drew heavily upon Marxist philosophy to explain that the mind is embedded in the interactions between human beings and world and that the mind is, in fact, social.

“On the one hand, the subject is social. Human beings are shaped by culture, their minds are deeply influenced by language, and they are not alone when interacting with the world.... On the other hand, the world itself is fundamentally social. The entities people are dealing with are mainly other people and artifacts developed in culture” (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006, p. 37).

Vygotsky rejected the idea that culture is a straightforward, unidirectional influence on humans. Instead, he draws on dialectical materialism as a key to understanding the relationship between the mind (the individual) and the body (the social) (See Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1**

*Vygotsky's Mediated Act (left), and its Common Depiction as First-Generation CHAT (right)*



Vygotsky points out that like two threads weaving together to comprise a single rope, the child develops along a line of natural development (general organic growth, maturation, development of reflexes) and a line of cultural development mastering the cultural methods of behavior (psychological development, use of signs, higher mental functioning, etc.). To Vygotsky (1978), instead of a direct stimulus-response relationship between the subject and object, human consciousness requires mediation – “a link between social and historical processes, on the one hand, and individuals’ mental processes, on the other” (Wertsch, 2007, p. 178). The relationship between people and the world is both indirect/mediated and direct (see Figure 1). Direct relationships are involuntary, biological reflexes; indirect relationships are the ones that separate humans from other animals, showing higher psychological processes (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). As explained by Lantolf and Thorne (2006), mediation “is the appropriation and eventual self-generation of auxiliary means... that enables us to voluntarily organize and control (i.e., mediate) mental activity and bring it to the fore in carrying out practical activity in the material world” (p. 62).

Therefore, Vygotsky’s (1930/1997) research proposal for investigating the uniquely human higher mental functioning is built on the premise that humans use instruments (i.e., mediating links) to influence their physical and psychological behavior (physical tools and psychological tools). Of particular interest are psychological tools – social, artificial formations that are directed toward the mastery of mental processes. Psychological tools are stimuli, but not

all stimuli (e.g., a fire alarm sounding) are psychological tools. Common examples of psychological tools include language, counting, mnemonics, writing, maps, blueprints, “all sorts of conventional signs,” etc. Psychological tools are inserted between an individual’s activity and an external object not with the intent to change the object (as a physical tool would do), but instead it is a means of influencing one’s own mind or another’s. To illustrate this, we can consider the way a shovel can mediate as a psychological tool or a physical tool depending on its purpose. As a physical tool, we might use the shovel to move snow from our sidewalk; as *a psychological tool*, we might set the shovel next to the front door to remind ourselves to shovel in the morning. Important to psychological tools is that “[t]hey are the product of historical development” and as a result, “behavior can be understood only as the history of behavior (Blonsky)”. This is evident in Vygotsky’s assertion that “the application of psychological tools enhances and immensely extends the possibilities of behavior by making the results of the work of geniuses available to everyone” and the way in which the instrumental method can be considered “a unified alloy” of the process of natural development and education that “aims to reveal how all the natural functions of the given child are restructured at the given level of education. The instrumental method seeks to present the history of how the child in the process of education accomplishes what mankind accomplished in the course of the long history of labor,…” In sum, “[t]he mastery of a psychological tool and, through it, of one’s own natural mental function, always lifts the given function to a higher level, enhances and broadens its activity, recreates its structure and mechanism.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> All of the quotes in this paragraph appear in Vygotsky’s *The Instrumental Method*. A talk given originally in 1930 and available through translation in 1997. This corresponds to the citation at the start of this paragraph (Vygotsky, 1930/1997).



If, as educational researchers, we want to take seriously the attempt to understand the thinking and development of individual human beings, we cannot ignore social, cultural, and historical conditions. These are conditions that individuals are composed of and of which they actively compose in a dialectical unity. This unity of individual and societal conditions is not the only unity that influences individuals' psychology. If we want to study how an individual thinks and develops, we must be able to see beyond a static, individual, abstracted conception of the mind, but instead see it as "an aspect of the material world, stretching across social and material environments" (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 189). The consciousness of human beings is formed in particular social activities (Ratner, 1996) that are mediated by signs and psychological tools. We must "step outside of the psychology of the individual and to consider an independent set of principles which explain sociocultural evolution and social processes in general" (Wertsch, Minick, & Arns, 1984). Thus, to understand the psychology of an individual, we must study their psychology in the unity itself.

### ***Zone of Proximal Development***

The zone of proximal development, or ZPD, has certainly been Vygotsky's lasting impact in education, one of the most widely used aspects of sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). As defined by Vygotsky (1978, p. 86), the ZPD is

The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

It is important to note that some researchers have attempted to keep a doctrinal interpretation of the ZPD, focusing too narrowly on the "adult guidance" or "more capable peer" (Lantolf &

Thorne, 2006); however, the ZPD can be opened with peers at similar zones of proximal development as long as the mediational activity creates an opportunity for new knowledge to be constructed.

Set against a reading of Vygotsky as a dialectical thinker, the view of the ZPD that emerges is one in which the concept carries within itself the essential features of the theory, including how the past and future may be brought together in the present; the relation of teaching and learning to development; the interconnection of everyday and scientific concepts; the unity of theory and research with practice; and the twin foci of teaching and assessing in activity. (Poehner, 2017)

The ZPD is not a place or a pre-determined set of interactions, but it is an activity, a unity between the personal and social. It cannot be materially observed as it is not an object, but it is a way to explain how mediation is used to change a subject's understanding and interaction with the social world. Finally, it is emergent and future-oriented.

The development that happens in this space is not simply transferred into the mind, but it goes through a psychological process of internalization and externalization of everyday and academic/scientific concepts. The character and quality of the mediation shapes and is shaped by the learners' potential development. Each learner will internalize concepts differently according to their own *perezhivanie*, the dialectical unity of emotion and cognition.

### ***Responsive Mediation***

Responsive mediation takes the essential Vygotskian SCT concepts and applies them to teacher education. In this sense, responsive mediation can be seen as a specific form of

mediation that supervisors can enact with their teacher candidates<sup>5</sup>. For supervisors, taking a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical stance necessitates targeting the mediation that supports the development and “becoming” (or transformation) of teachers because teachers’ cognitive development is made possible by mediation of signs, social interactions, and cultural artifacts. The internalization of sound pedagogical practices and knowledge through mediation of social interaction and cultural artifacts should be a priority for supervisors. It is in the process of externalization and internalization that a supervisor can “see” a student teacher’s thinking.<sup>6</sup>

Johnson and Golombek (2016) put forth *responsive mediation*, a form of mediation specific to teacher educators, and I argue, supervisors. Responsive mediation highlights the “emergent, contingent, and responsive nature of teacher/teacher educator mediation” (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p. 170). They situate responsive mediation in dialectics, specifically the ideal/material dialectic, writing

Teacher educators have an ideal of what they want to accomplish in an activity and an individualized sense of each teacher, but it is in the material, the *in situ* enactment of that activity, that teacher educators attempt to identify concretely the lower and upper thresholds of each teacher’s ZPD as they seek to cultivate development. The *in situ* activity, on the social plane, may alter the teacher educator’s ideal, as well as understanding of the teacher, while also, we hope, altering the teacher’s ideal and activity. (p. 167)

From this explanation, we see that responsive mediation focuses on the individual development of teachers, identifying their specific growth points, with the goal of cognitive development, all of which is happening in activity. Responsive mediation requires that

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<sup>5</sup> Responsive mediation isn’t exclusive to supporting student teachers. Responsive mediation also supports in-service teachers, veteran and novice; however, teacher candidates in professional development schools are the focus of this study.

<sup>6</sup> This paragraph appears in a drafted manuscript that is currently under review.

supervisors be “attuned to critical instances of teacher cognitive/emotional dissonance, recognize and capitalize on these as potential growth points, and create the conditions for responsive mediation to emerge” (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p. 45). To assist teachers as they transform their thinking, they engage in dialogic interactions, exposing teachers to psychological tools, recognize and intentionally direct teacher thinking, and all of this must be done with the self-reflexivity of what teacher educators are bringing to the table (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

**Reasoning Teaching.** One practical application of responsive mediation is developing a teacher’s reasoning teaching. Reasoning teaching “represent[s] the cognitive activity that undergirds teachers’ practices: the reasoning that determines the doing of teaching” (Johnson, 1999, p. 1). As teacher educators, we want to both understand and expand teacher candidates’ reasoning so that they can “develop complex, flexible, conceptual understandings of the landscapes in which they work and to be able to use those understandings flexibly to carry out their teaching practices” (p. 7). Reasoning teaching dialectically links teachers’ beliefs and practices such that the act of reasoning shifts a focus to how teachers are thinking. It helps to uncover the psychological tools teachers or teacher candidates are using and support them in internalizing and externalizing said tools to self-regulate their thinking.

### **Theoretical Framework: Activity Theory**

The unit of analysis found in Soviet Psychology in the Vygotskian school of psychology – **activity** (*deyatel’nost’*). “Activity” is the minimal unit for making sense of phenomena or “the nonadditive, molar unit of life for the material, corporeal subject” (Leont’ev, 1981). It is not meant in a general sense, but it is actual and identifiable. It is sustained and reproduced at a

societal level as common institutions (e.g., formal schooling). **Activity theory**<sup>7</sup> provides us with the opportunity to understand “the psychic reflection of material reality that emerges in the course of labor and produces ordinary and everyday society in the way we are familiar with it” (Leont’ev, 1981).

Applying the genetic method to activity theory, educational researchers can investigate the dialectical, interactional moments in which development takes place. Leont’ev (1978, p. 41) offers the analogy of a spark. To understand what a spark is, we cannot just look at the rock or the steel, but “in the white heat, the sparks are the interaction of the rock and the steel.” We cannot understand consciousness by looking at a subject or an object, by extracting the psyche from themselves, but in the interaction, which is at first external, then becomes internalized. For Leont’ev (1981) “the real function of this unit is to orient the subject in the world of objects.”

In a world of objects, it is impossible to understand human development without also considering the social, cultural, and historical mediating artifacts to which human development is tied. Leont’ev (1978; 1981) defines activity as the level of internal or external subject-object interaction necessary for human consciousness and development in which the activity has an object, or motive (Leont’ev 1981). This dialectical relationship is “the cornerstone of cultural-historical activity theory” as “situated social interaction connected to concrete practical activity is the source of both individual and cultural development, and in turn, cultural-societal structures provide affordances and constraints that cultivate the development of specific forms of consciousness” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 213). The collective, social nature of activity is fundamental in allowing individuals to each produce something that contributes to the greater

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<sup>7</sup> Though not within the scope of this chapter, activity theory is a contested line of the Vygotskian school of cultural historical psychology. The extent to which activity theory holds Marxist psychology “more doctrinally” or distorts it is up for debate but is not further elaborated in this chapter.

society (Bakhurst, 2009; Roth, 2012). Activity theory then gives us “the affordance to integrate macro-sociological with micro-psychological dimensions of cognition and learning” (Roth, 2012, page 7).

At the collective, societal level, common activities are work/labor, play, and formal schooling. Because activities are social institutional phenomena, they change form as society changes. Indeed, Roth (2010) suggests replacing the activity of formal schooling in its current form with activism. Activities are driven by motives. Motives arise from biological and/or cultural needs that are transformed into objects. Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p. 218) explain the interrelation of motives and objects as follows: “the object is the focus of the activity; the motive is the cultural-psychological-institutional impetus that guides human activity toward a particular object.” Because activities are organized at a societal level, an analysis of activities “is concerned with socially defined systems of human activity” (Wertsch, Minick, & Arns, 1984, p. 168). Thus, we cannot have direct evidence of activities, but instead infer the activity an individual is engaging in. Bakhurst (2009, p. 200) explains this as “the very identity of his action depends on its relation to the broader social activity, which in turn draws its sense from the individual actions that constitute it” (Bakhurst, 2009, p. 200).

### **Levels of Activity**

Because of this distinction between individual actions and a collective activity, Leont’ev (1978), recognized that there is a hierarchical and dialectical relationship between the various acts in a collective activity system. He proposed three levels in an activity: activities, actions, and operations. Activities and actions require conscious action, whereas operations can be more automatic processes. Activities are directed by objects/motives and are often collective. They answer the question “*why does something take place?*” Actions are individually carried out to

meet a conscious goal and answer the question “*what takes place?*”. Operations are automatic and driven by the conditions of the conscious action and goal. They answer the question “*how is it carried out?*” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006)

Let us take a study by Wertsch, Minick, and Arns (1984) as an example. Wertsch et al. (1984) analyze a study previously conducted by Arns in 1980 that investigated the way twelve adult-child dyads oriented to the task of helping a child construct a three-dimensional toy barnyard based on a model. Of the twelve dyads, six were mother-child pairs and six were elementary school teachers paired with a student of their own. All of the participants were from the same rural area in Brazil. The mothers who participated had no more than four years of formal schooling while the teachers had all completed at least their final year of high school. The results of the joint problem-solving task revealed that the mothers oriented to the task differently than the teachers. Though there were slight variations among each of the dyads, in general, the mothers favored direct/explicit regulation (e.g., “This one”) over indirect/implicit regulation (e.g., “What might you do next?”) and tended to perform task behaviors for their child (e.g. picking up pieces of the model). In the teacher-child dyads, the teachers used more indirect regulation and did not perform task behaviors for the child. The children paired with the teachers also looked at the model much more frequently. This tells us that “the two groups differed not in what was carried out (i.e., the level of goals), but in how it was carried out (i.e., the level of operations)” (p. 167). From the data, we can make inferences about the activity and the motive for participating in the joint problem-solving action. For the mothers, the motive was to make error-free, efficient moves to correctly complete the model; conversely, for the teachers, the motive was to encourage the children to take risks and try it on their own even if they cannot do so efficiently or correctly. For the authors, this reflects activities found in society – household

economic activities (for the mothers) and schooling (for the teachers). In household economic activities, one cannot make mistakes or risk economic loss, while formal schooling has led to the concentration of learning happening almost exclusively in school settings. The differences in how the mothers and teachers oriented to the task can be explained by activity theory in that “the organization of systems of activity at the societal level establishes important parameters that determine the manner in which an individual or group of individuals carries out and masters a particular type of goal-oriented action” (p. 171).

Much can be said of the implications of the Wertsch, Minick, and Arns (1984) study. What is not always discussed in relation to the findings is the way in which the activities of the mothers and the teachers represent class-based inequalities that result in a difference in their psychological functioning and development issues of access. More generally, changes in social and material conditions produces change in consciousness (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). As such, a theory of activity must include a critical perspective informed by Marxist psychology.

Vygotsky was heavily influenced by the work of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, not just methodologically in terms of dialectical materialism, but also as a form of educational change alongside political economic change. This marks a distinction in the current trends in activity theory scholarship. Generally speaking, there are two “camps” – those that work with Yrjö Engeström’s “third-generation” activity theory as a form of organization change and those that maintain a critical tradition, such as Carl Ratner and Wolff-Michael Roth. These two camps are compared in the following section.

### **Activity Theory as Macro-Cultural Psychology**

While Engeström’s work has benefits in uncovering hidden work, relationships, and contradictions within systems of activity, it often omits connections to the political economy and



fails to advocate for social change. In his critique of Engeström, Bakhurst (2009, p. 202) writes that Engeström has mistakenly approach activity as a way to theorize and form models of activity systems through “merely empirical observation”, while the Russian founders of activity theory were more concerned with what activity says about “our place in the world, the nature of consciousness, or personality.” He ends by saying activity is meant to have “deep philosophical significance; that is, it is a claim about the very nature and possibility of thought and its bearing on the world” (p. 202). Any analysis of our place in the world *must* admit that our world is comprised of a structured, politically-organized social system centered around a political economy that expresses the predominant interests of a particular social class which generates, requires, organizes, and administers particular kinds of subjectivity/psychology (Ratner, 2015, p. 55-56).

Carl Ratner’s work in activity theory and macro-cultural psychology has attempted to draw attention to the imperative for his vision of social justice: class consciousness and total transformation, liberation, and emancipation. In his 2015 article centered on arguing for a “culture-centric” approach to cultural-historical activity theory, he uses Sarah Michaels’ work on literacy in urban elementary classrooms. Mindy (a white, “evidently middle-class” girl) and Denna (a Black, “evidently lower-class” girl) each share a narrative with their first-grade teacher. There are stark differences in their narratives with use of referential nouns, logic, topic coherence, content, vocabulary, etc. What can account for these differences?

It is the transformation of our social world into our individual psychology through the creation/use of cultural artifacts and psychological tools available to us in our environment. Our social world is “class-based, class-organized, and class-functional” (p. 66). As such, language is also. For Bourdieu, Bernstein, Ratner, and others, language is cultural capital. It is a marker and

perpetuator of social class. In Mindy and Deena's narratives, it is clear then that Mindy has cultural capital that Deena does not. And Deena's teacher, by neglecting to teach Deena the "middle class codes," has perpetuated the structural oppression of the popular classes by the dominant class. It is not that Deena does not have the *potential* to gain access to the linguistic cultural capital that Mindy has. Instead, it is that a capitalistic society cannot be structured any other way than to limit the number of people that can have said capital. For Mindy and Deena to truly be equals, a "revolutionary transformation of society is necessary to change the material conditions (production, standard of living, economic opportunities), social relations, educational opportunities, and cognitive and other psychological capabilities" (Vygotsky, 1994b, as cited in Ratner, 2015, p. 60). For social change then "poverty is not escaped by individual acts or by receiving personal respect; it must be eradicated through social policies that alter macro-cultural factors" (2016, p. 13).

Individual freedom is a lie; an ideology that "traps people in a restricted social, symbolic, material and psychological reality" (2016, p. 23) from which there can be no political movement for social change. It is the stuff of neoliberalism which is entirely antithetical to a Marxist psychology. Marxism is directed at changing macro-cultural factors, not individual freedoms by recognizing oppression as a reflection of the political-economic system (i.e., capitalism). Deena is oppressed. Not by her own agency, not because the majority of others who are oppressed or benefit from forms of oppression actively, consciously want her to be oppressed, but because a political-economic system of capitalism *requires it*. This sounds too cruel to the person-centric psychologists. They would rather label it "deficit theory," attempt "colorblindness," sweep glaring systemic inequities under the rug and perpetuate a harmful optimism that has only privileged the ones arguing for person-centric psychology. They argue for "freedom to have

one's voice heard" instead of arguing for what really matters: "the freedom to develop a voice worth hearing" (Ratner, 2015).

The importance of activity theory to work in "the service of emancipatory efforts that uproot the tendency for schooling to reproduce bourgeois society and its class structure" (Roth, 2012, 7) should be identifiable at this point. If we return to Marx's 11<sup>th</sup> Theses on Feuerbach, we are urged to change the world and the human subjects that inhabit it, to create and change the social conditions. Drawing heavily on Marx's 11<sup>th</sup> theses, Roth (2010) introduced activism as an activity to replace formal schooling. For Roth, activism *is* learning *and* a way to contribute to and change society. Roth is unique in his work. "To date, most of the SCT-L2<sup>8</sup> research has not paid sufficient attention to the power of the theory to evoke change in the pursuit of social justice" (Lantolf, Poehner, & Swain, 2018, p. 16). While not in the L2 field, this study contributes to the literature on how the theory can evoke change for social justice.

### **Constructs for an Activity Theory Analysis**

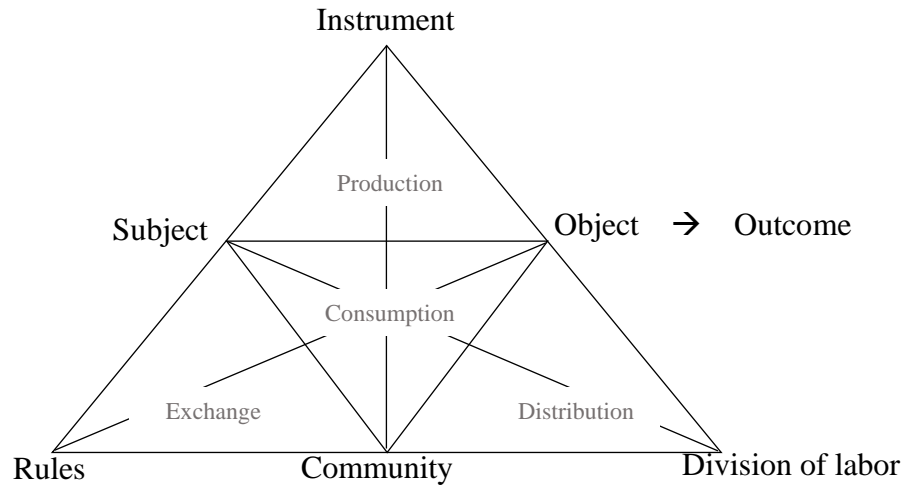
One way to conduct an activity theoretical analysis is by identifying the components of an activity system and the contradictions it contains. The components and forms of contradictions found within an activity system are described below.

#### ***Components of an Activity System***

Leont'ev never visually depicted his work on activity. Yrjö Engeström, in 1987, however, took up this endeavor (See Figure 2.1). Using Vygotsky's mediated act as a starting point, the tip of the iceberg, he included three other concepts that underlie collective activity: rules, community, and division of labor. These three newly added concepts at the bottom are typically the "unseen" aspects of an activity system.

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<sup>8</sup> L2 = Second Language

**Figure 2.1***The Structure of Human Activity (Engeström, 1987)*

The *subject* is the individual or group of individuals through which their perspective of the activity system is analyzed. *Mediating artifacts* are the tools and signs (i.e., psychological tools) that mediate how the subject orients to the object of activity. The object is the “problem space” that the activity is directed towards, which is turned into *outcomes*. The *rules* are the implicit and explicit expectations of behavior and responsibilities; the *community* is represented by the individuals and groups that have a shared object of activity; and the *division of labor* is marked by the rules and community members – who does what action.

Roth and Lee (2007) provide a vignette to exemplify a classroom activity system. Two seventh-grade co-teachers bring in an article from a local newspaper on the environmental concerns in a local watershed and ask their students if they would be willing to do something about it. The students enthusiastically agreed, and the project was underway starting with a field trip the watershed. In groups, students were responsible for creating and finalizing their own

projects. The project resulted in a number of *outcomes* (posters, 3D models, etc.) at an open house and a feature in a local newspaper.

The students (*subjects*) chose their own *object* – generating knowledge and saving the creek. They accomplished this through a wide range of means, thus there was a *division of labor* in individuals who assumed different roles within student groups directed by different, but complementary *actions* to meet their *goals*. One group might have been documenting water levels while another could have been building 3D models of various organisms. *Conditions*, such as what tools and options were available (e.g., a digital camera, a yard stick) helped shape the *operations* the students took (the automatization of taking photos, holding a yard stick up to measure) in completing their actions. Of course, the students were obligated to follow the *rules* set forth by the co-teachers, research ethics, and codes of interaction/pragmatics. If the individual actions were the level of analysis, we would miss on the collective activity that is shaped by the actions and which shape which actions take place.

### ***Contradictions***

Within an activity system, Engeström (2015) shows that there are levels of contradictions. He describes four levels of contradictions: primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary. Primary contradictions, typically internal, are those found within a component of the central activity. Secondary contradictions are those between the components of the central activity (e.g., between rules and division of labor). Tertiary contradictions are those found between the object of the central activity and the object of a “culturally more advanced central activity”. Quaternary contradictions are those found between a component of the central activity and the object of neighboring activities.

Engeström (2015, p. 72) uses a physician's general practice as an example. A primary contradiction in the work of physicians might be the tools of the work: drugs/medication. The medication is marked by prices meant for profit, a contradiction doctors face when deciding which medication to use/prescribe. A secondary contradiction might occur between the conceptual tools (mediating artifacts) of diagnosing patients (e.g., classifications and frameworks) and correctly diagnosing the patient (the object). A tertiary contradiction has the potential to occur when the hospital administration introduces new holistic procedures, but the procedures are resisted by the previous forms of activity. A quaternary contradiction might occur when a doctor suggests that a patient adapt a new habit to change his/her health behavior (the object of the activity), but the patient actively resists because his/her health behavior is taken abstractly and in isolation from his/her central activity.

This example illustrates that in the levels of contradictions, there is the potential for something new to develop – new health habits, procedures, new medicines, new classification tools. As such, “new qualitative stages and forms of activity emerge as solutions to the contradictions of the preceding stage or form” (Engeström, 2015, p. 73). Contradictions are the drivers of change. Contradictions enable horizontal, or expansive learning, when “an emerging new object is identified and turned into a motive” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 7). This creates new, expanded possibilities for activities as movement through the zone of proximal development through zones of learning actions.

### **Relevant Empirical Literature with Activity Theory**

In this way, activity theory has been applied as a theoretical framework and analytical tool to study individuals' agency and development within complex activity systems (Feryok, 2009, 2012; Smolcic, 2009, 2011), to radically transform schooling (Roth, 2010), to understand

and/or undergo curricular reform (Ahn, 2011; Kim, 2011; Thompson, 2015), to create and study organizational change (Engeström, 2001, 2007; Engeström, Engeström, & Suntio, 2002; Tasker, 2011; Van der Riet, 2008), and to understand clinical field experiences and professional development in school-university partnerships (Tsui & Law, 2007; Yamagata-Lynch, 2003; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009; Yamagata-Lynch & Smaldino, 2007).

Tsui and Law (2007) provide an example of how expansive learning can be used in a school-university partnership by introducing and then changing the mediational tool at the source of the contradictions in the activity system, the lesson study. An examination of a school-university partnership in Hong Kong revealed two inner contradictions: the evaluative nature of the lesson study process and the simultaneous collective-individual components of the lesson study, both of which reveal issues of unequal power distributions. The student teachers felt defensive during the lesson study protocols and that the classroom mentor teachers and university faculty were only “assessors.” After one cycle of lesson study, the student teachers were given more autonomy and flexibility in their lessons and the discussions of their lessons focused more on the lessons instead of the student teacher. The expansive learning that took place was that those in a supervisory position (classroom mentor teachers and university faculty) adopted less “assessor-behaviors” in order to lessen the frustration and resentment experienced by the student teachers.

### **Summary**

The literature reviewed in this chapter emphasizes some of the concerns in social justice work in preservice teacher supervision and professional development schools: The research is on the developed and planned curriculum and not the in-the-moment teaching and learning. There is

a lack of shared meaning, and the meaning that is able to be gleaned from curriculum, narrative and case study accounts seem to suggest that social justice is something less than critical.

Described above, activity theory can be summarized as follows.

the transformations of individuals and their community, which result from the fact that human beings do not merely react to their life conditions but that they have the power to act and therefore the power to change the very conditions that mediate their activities. (Holzkamp, 1983, as cited in Roth, 2004)

As such, the meta-theory of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Scribner, 1990) has the potential to contribute to PDS contexts in new and remarkable ways. This literature review shows the possibilities for AT to be a powerful theoretical and analytical framework, and intervention methodology to promote and trace development, determine the quality of mediation, and/or to determine what and how learning is occurring within an activity system. This is the research design I detail in the next chapter.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter discusses the methodology for the research study<sup>9</sup> as well as the rationale behind the design of the study. Then it re-introduces the research questions and provides detailed information of the professional development school context in which this study took place. Details of the research design, the intervention, and the data sources are presented, followed by the procedures for collecting, preparing, and analyzing data. The chapter ends with a discussion of my self-reflexivity and positionality within the study.

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to understand how teacher candidates in a professional development school orient to and develop into socially just teachers. As explained in Chapter 2, I conceptualized socially just teachers as those that enact an anti-capitalist critical pedagogy, consistently working towards the eradication of structural, historical inequalities in and of schooling.

Rooted in the critical tradition and critical theory (Marx, 1888/1946) and the understanding of concrete practical activity as the source of individual and cultural development, I developed an intervention study informed by Sociocultural Theory and Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Leont'ev, 1978; Engeström, 2015) such that I could promote and trace teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching in learning and teaching activity. In order to see their development microgenetically, the intervention took place in two concurrent parts: 1) I co-taught six lessons on social justice over the course of a 15-week

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<sup>9</sup> IRB approval for the study was obtained. IRB# STUDY00013041.

Spring Seminar and 2) I observed teacher candidates in their teaching placements and led post-observation debriefs focused on their teaching practices that suggested socially just teaching.

Because activity theory gives us “the affordance to integrate macro-sociological with micro-psychological dimensions of cognition and learning” (Roth, 2012, pg. 7), this study investigates the underpinnings of the activity system in which individuals (teacher candidates) participate and the ways in which they shape and are shaped by one another.

Thus, the research questions that guide this study are as follows:

4. How are aspects of socially just teaching materialized through the practices of an intervention focused on social justice in a teacher education Seminar course?
5. In what ways do the PDS teacher candidates enact socially just teaching?
  - a. How was this enactment influenced by the researcher’s responsive mediation?
6. In what ways does the PDS activity system mediate teacher candidates’ development of socially just teaching?

Taken together, these three research questions provide insight into 1) what teacher educators can do to materialize, or make concrete, the act of socially just teaching in coursework, 2) the development and mediation that can occur in supervision aligned with socially just teaching, and 3) how the practices of teacher educators and supervisors within a shared context are a part of systems of activity that provide space for and constrain the possibilities of teacher candidates’ development.

### **Research Context**

The study took place within the Spring Valley School District - Mid-Atlantic State University K-4 Professional Development School (SVSD-MSU PDS)<sup>10</sup>. The 22-year partnership

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<sup>10</sup> pseudonyms

includes all eight elementary schools in the school district. Spring Valley School District (SVSD) is a suburban/rural school district in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. It employs over 650 teachers, serves approximately 7,000 students, and is a high-performing district across most state measures. Students identified as Asian represent 8.1% of the student population, 2.5% for Black, 3.8% for Hispanic, and 6.6% for Multi-racial. Just 0.2 and 0.1% of students are identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, respectively. The remaining 78.6% of students in the district are White. The school district identifies 20.2% of the students as “economically disadvantaged” and 3.0% as “English learners”.

The current mission of the SVSD-MSU PDS is “to create and maintain a community of pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators who strive to engage all partners, including K-4 students, in continuous learning, reflection, and innovation through respectful, collaborative inquiry.”

### **Structured Mediational Spaces for Teacher Candidate Learning within the PDS**

Each teacher candidate-mentor teacher pair is partnered with a supervisor – a professional development associate (PDA) – to form a yearlong triad. The year-long triadic relationship between supervisor (PDA), mentor teacher, and teacher candidate is but one of the many ways the SVSD-MSU has created structured mediational spaces (van Lier, 2004; Johnson & Golombek, 2016) for learning to occur for all PDS participants. Here I will broadly note the standard mediational spaces for teacher candidates’ development. This is not an exhaustive list.

Throughout the entire SVSD school year, teacher candidates spend up to four days in their assigned classrooms with their mentor teachers and are responsible for varying levels of co-teaching. Their mentor teacher is largely responsible for support, mentorship, and feedback on teacher candidates’ planning, instruction, and development. Teacher candidates are observed at

least twice a week and participate in feedback cycles with their PDAs, as well as a 1-on-1 meeting each week. They participate in one-hour weekly teacher candidate meetings with their PDA and their PDAs other teacher candidates. They also complete two weekly reflections in multimodalities (i.e., video, text, or visual representation) that their PDAs respond to in varying ways. One day a week, they go to their partner classrooms, a K-4 classroom in the district at a different school from their student teaching placement and in a different grade level. In their partner classrooms, they are expected to fully engage in the classroom, observe, lead small groups or work with students 1-on-1, and co-plan and co-teach with the partner mentor teacher.

In the Fall semester, teacher candidates participate in four three-hour methods courses once a week: CI 405 – Strategies in Classroom Management (referred to as Classroom Learning Environments), SCIED 458 – Teaching Science in the Elementary School, MTHED 420 – Teaching Mathematics in The Elementary Schools, and SSSED 430W – Teaching Social Studies in the Elementary Grades<sup>11</sup>. In the spring semester, teacher candidates participate in a three-hour weekly seminar that is coordinated and led by the supervising PDAs. It fulfills two MSU course requirements: CI 495 D – Practicum in Student Teaching: Childhood and Early Adolescent Education and CI 495 F – Professional Development Practicum. Teacher candidates also complete a semester-long inquiry project throughout the spring semester which is presented at the annual Teacher Inquiry Conference in late April.

### **Teacher Educators within the PDS**

Teacher educators fulfill many duties, roles, and responsibilities in the PDS, broadly divided into three categories: professional development associates *without* supervisory duties,

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<sup>11</sup> Throughout the dissertation, these courses are referred to as CLE or Classroom Learning Environments, Science Methods, Math Methods, and Social Studies Methods.

professional development associates *with* supervisory duties, and mentor teachers. Each of which are briefly described below.

***Professional Development Associates without Supervisory Duties***

Co-instructors of Fall methods courses are considered PDAs, though some do not have supervisory duties. These methods course co-instructors can include SVSD classroom teachers, graduate students in MSU's College of Education (e.g., Science Education, Math Education, and/or Social Studies Education), and university faculty. And in the Spring Seminar, there are also co-teachers without supervisory duties that are considered PDAs. These co-teachers are typically university faculty and graduate students.

***Professional Development Associates with Supervisory Duties***

PDAs with supervisory duties assume boundary-spanning, hybrid roles in the third space of the PDS (Clark et al., 2005; Gutiérrez, 2008; Zeichner, 2010). While PDAs are conceptualized in this way and there is buy-in to this positioning, oftentimes PDAs align themselves with either the school district or the university. PDAs are typically 1) SVSD classroom teachers on release (typically for three years), 2) MSU graduate students with an assistantship in the PDS, or 3) full-time university faculty whose work is in the PDS (including the program coordinator). In attempts to position non-hierarchical roles in the PDS, the two co-coordinators of the program (one aligned with SVSD and one aligned with MSU) are also PDAs.

Supervising PDAs are assigned to supervise teacher candidates in the triadic relationship described above. This requires observing each teacher candidate that he/she is assigned to at least twice a week, engaging in supervisory practices (e.g., coaching cycles or other observation/feedback protocols) with their teacher candidates, offering feedback and meeting to discuss lesson planning and other teacher duties, responding to their bi-weekly reflections on

teaching practice with each teacher candidate, commenting on assignments, and guiding them through their inquiry projects, etc.

Supervising PDAs are also responsible for co-teaching a weekly methods course in Fall, co-planning and co-leading weekly seminar meetings in the Spring, and leading weekly teacher candidate cohort meetings each week, and meeting as a PDA team each week.

### ***Mentor Teachers***

Mentor teachers are the classroom teachers with which the teacher candidates complete their year-long student teaching. Classroom teachers that wish to serve as mentor teachers apply for the position and are confirmed by their building principals. The PDAs then select the appropriate number from all available mentor teachers. In the Spring semester prior to the start of the next school year, the mentor teachers and teacher candidates participate in a matching event where they select their top choices for mentor teacher or teacher candidate. Other classroom teachers volunteer to open up their classrooms as “partner classrooms” for the teacher candidates to observe and teach in once a week.

### **Research Design**

In line with a critical theory research paradigm, I understand research as active participation in transformation of the self and the world. For this study, taking a praxis approach entailed designing an intervention study based on the structures already present within the PDS context. In doing so, I am able to study the dialectical, interactional moments in which development takes place. Leont’ev (1978, p. 41) offers the analogy of a spark. To understand what a spark is, we cannot just look at the rock or the steel, but “in the white heat, the sparks are the interaction of the rock and the steel.” In other words, we cannot understand consciousness by looking only at the subject or the object, but in the interaction, which is at first external, then

becomes internalized. This study is one that both attempts to initiate the spark and study the spark. In order to see teacher candidates' development "in flight" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 68), *activity* is the unit of analysis at a microgenetic, or genetic<sup>12</sup> level.

The primary purpose of this study is to better understand how to promote and trace teacher candidates' development towards becoming socially just in their teaching. In order to do so, I introduced a new object of activity – learning to be a socially just teacher. This was done through a two-part intervention (detailed in the sections below). In addition to the intervention, I also conducted interviews with teacher candidates, PDAs, and mentor teachers. These semi-structured interviews (Spradley, 1979) provided additional opportunities for development as well as to understand better the experiences and insights of the participants, particularly for understanding the teacher candidates' activity system.

### **Intervention**

In order to develop this intervention, for two semesters prior to the study, I participated in myriad events, meetings, and classes to familiarize myself with the context. As stated previously, it was communicated to me from several PDS partners – including teacher candidates, mentor teachers, and PDAs – that a more intentional focus on social justice in the PDS was needed. My intervention design is in response to this need and my own interests in social justice, supervision, and teacher education.

The intervention took place during the Spring 2020 semester. At the midpoint of the study, the COVID-19 pandemic begged the entire world to go into quarantine. SVSD and MSU both switched to remote, virtual learning during March, and thus, significant aspects of my

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<sup>1212</sup> It is unclear when "microgenetic method" replaced Vygotsky's use of "genetic method." Some scholars use the term microgenetic while others prefer genetic; in many instances, both are referring to the same methodology (Wertsch, 1985).

intervention had to be redesigned. In the details of my methodology, I describe the intervention both pre COVID-19 and the adjustments made as a result of the ongoing pandemic.

### ***Pre COVID-19***

My intervention was intended to take place in the Spring Semester, from January and June, beginning in week 2 of the semester and ending in week 13. The intervention consisted of two alternating components: co-facilitating a curricular thread of socially just teaching in the PDS Spring Seminar and coaching cycles that included observations and post-observation debriefs. See Table 3.1 below. The goal was to see, in activity, the ways the teacher candidates take up the concepts introduced in the seminar.

**Table 3.1**

#### ***Intended Intervention Schedule for the Spring 2020 Semester***

<b>Spring 2020 Semester</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Spring 2020 Semester</b>	<b>Intervention</b>
<i>Week 2</i>	Co-teach 45 min. to 1 hr. of seminar centered on socially just teaching practices	<i>Week 3</i>	Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate (pre-observation, observation, and post-observation)
<i>Week 4</i>	Co-teach 30 min. to 1 hr. of seminar	<i>Week 5</i>	Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate
<i>Week 6</i>	Co-teach 30 min. to 1 hr. of seminar	<i>Week 7</i>	Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate
<i>Week 8</i>	Co-teach 30 min. to 1 hr. of seminar	<i>Week 9</i>	Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate
<i>Week 10</i>	Co-teach 30 min. to 1 hr. of seminar	<i>Week 11</i>	Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate
<i>Week 12</i>	Co-teach 30 min. to 1 hr. of seminar	<i>Week 13</i>	Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate

**Co-Facilitation of Seminar.** In the Spring, I co-planned and co-taught lessons in the Seminar course centered on socially just teaching practices. These lessons needed to be weaved into the course curriculum. In order to do so, before the Spring 2020 semester, I worked with the other facilitators of the Seminar course (six PDAs) in order to co-create the essential questions,



goals, and learning framework that would guide seminar planning and the course calendar.

Because Seminar is a co-planned and co-taught course that requires buy-in from the entire PDA team, the essential question and related objectives for the work related to my dissertation were negotiated and co-constructed with the PDAs. The essential question that was decided on was “How does my development as a teacher leader relate to an emergent understanding of teaching for social justice as one that consistently works toward the eradication of inequalities in and of public schooling? [social justice]” Later in the semester, four objectives were collaboratively written by the PDAs to ensure students would meet the essential questions by the end of the semester. The four objectives were:

- a. Interns will articulate increasingly complex, intersectional understandings of diversity.
- b. Interns will be able to articulate an increasingly specific, personal definition of social justice.
- c. Interns will recognize and articulate their position as a teacher within systems of inequality.
- d. Interns will begin to discuss current and future plans and actionable items for addressing inequalities.

The curricular thread around social justice included activities and tasks grounded in SCT and activity theory with the intentional purpose of provoking concept development. The specific plans for each lesson are detailed in Chapter 4 as they answer the first research question “*How are the aspects of socially just teaching materialized through the practices of an intervention focused on social justice?*”

**Supervision.** In addition to co-facilitating in Seminar, I intended to enact the functions of a supervisor (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002) with the five teacher candidate participants bi-

weekly from January to May, on weeks in between the six intervention lessons, to see in activity, instances of teacher candidates enacting socially just teaching (see Table 3.1). My supervision was limited to teaching observations and post-observation debriefs.

Observations were of teacher candidates leading lessons, co-leading lessons with their mentor teacher, or leading small groups in their student teaching placement lasted 20-40 minutes and could occur during any content area or time of day (e.g., Morning Meeting, read-alouds, math or science lessons, reading and writing workshops, Number Corner, etc.). Being able to observe teacher candidates teach their students in a variety of content and lesson types provided the opportunity to see socially just teaching in multiple ways.

After each observation, the teacher candidates and I arranged a time for a debrief meeting. More often than not, this occurred directly after the observation. In several instances, it occurred later in the day, and at other points, on a different day entirely, and in one instance, not at all. The format and style of the post-observation is dependent on the needs of the teacher candidate; thus, it varied for each teacher candidate. Mentor teachers and PDAs were welcomed whenever meeting times and spaces overlapped. The content of my coaching cycles was on developing the skills and dispositions for teaching in a way that is socially just. In line with Johnson & Golombek (2016), I conceptualized my coaching cycles as opportunities to engage in responsive mediation in a structured mediational space (van Lier, 2004, as cited in Johnson & Golombek, 2016). As explained by Johnson and Golombek (2016), a pedagogy of mindful L2 teacher education “is about creating the ‘social conditions for the development’ of L2 teacher/teaching expertise” (p. 164). To assist teacher candidates in the transformation of their thinking, I attempted to engage in dialogic interactions, expose teachers to psychological tools, and recognize and intentionally direct teacher thinking.

### *During COVID-19*

Due to unforeseen and unprecedented conditions, my intervention underwent significant changes midway through the study. The spread of COVID-19 to the United States required pandemic lockdown procedures to take place and the Spring Valley School District and Mid-Atlantic State University went to remote learning in mid-March. The final two lessons of my intervention were able to be delivered remotely through video conferencing software. However, the content and focus of the lessons shifted, as did the teacher candidates' priorities and needs, because of changing conditions in the school district, the university, and the world. See Table 3.2 for the intervention adjustments made due to COVID-19.

**Table 3.2**

#### *Intervention Schedule for the Spring Semester During COVID-19*

<b>Spring Semester</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Spring Semester</b>	<b>Intervention</b>
<i>Week 2</i>	Co-teach 45 min. to 1 hr. of seminar centered on socially just teaching practices	<i>Week 3</i>	Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate (pre-observation, observation, and post-observation)
<i>Week 4</i>	Co-teach 30 min. to 1 hr. of seminar	<i>Week 5</i>	Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate
<i>Week 6</i>	Co-teach 30 min. to 1 hr. of seminar	<i>Week 7</i>	Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate (didn't complete for each teacher candidate)
<i>Week 8</i>	Co-teach 30 min. to 1 hr. of seminar	<i>Week 9</i>	<del>Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate</del> 1-on-1 video conferencing discussions
<i>Week 10</i>	Co-teach 30 min. to 1 hr. of seminar – Remote	<i>Week 11</i>	<del>Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate</del> 1-on-1 video conferencing discussions
<i>Week 12</i>	Co-teach 30 min. to 1 hr. of seminar – Remote	<i>Week 13</i>	<del>Coaching cycle with each teacher candidate</del> 1-on-1 video conferencing discussions

Observations and debriefs were replaced with 1-on-1 check-ins that through the same video conferencing software because of the near impossibility to observe teacher candidates.

Many of the teacher candidates were not responsible for teaching or planning lessons; they were unable to lead breakout rooms<sup>13</sup> at the time; they had highly irregular/unpredictable schedules; and much of the work was asynchronous. I sent an email to each of the primary participants to ask if they would be interested in meeting biweekly to check-in and discuss what's happening in their classroom through the lens of socially just teaching. All five teacher candidates agreed. See Appendix A for a portion of my email.

The 1-on-1 check-ins varied in content based on the individual needs and interests of the teacher candidates. The purpose of the check-ins was to continue to work with the teacher candidates on developing their concept of socially just teaching and connecting theory to practice from content introduced in Seminar and their teaching practices. However, instead of being able to use observational classroom data as the starting point for discussion, the teacher candidates' spent time reflecting on and recapping their experiences in teaching remote during the time of COVID-19. Before the meetings, I sent out articles related to COVID-19 inequities and other videos or media related to socially just teaching (e.g., a 15-minute talk by Paul Gorski on YouTube) that could be springboards for discussion. Some 1-on-1 meetings were spent brainstorming lesson plan ideas, discussing relevant online readings I shared via email, and talking through their inquiry projects.

Not intentionally part of the intervention, but an additional component of small group meetings titled "Inquiry and Equity" were hosted in April and May with several of the other PDAs. During the first remote Seminar course, teacher candidates had implicitly indicated their interest in meeting together in small groups to work on their inquiry projects, examine COVID-

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<sup>13</sup> The video conferencing software used by the Spring Valley School District had a feature called "breakout rooms." From the main video session (i.e. room), the host of the video call could make smaller sessions (i.e. rooms) in which students and/or teacher candidates could be moved.

19 exacerbated inequities, and spend time together. Following that Seminar, in the next PDA co-planning meeting, several of the PDAs decided to host two informal inquiry and equity chats as long as the teacher candidates were interested. I attended each of the small group sessions, and for two weeks, 1-2 other PDAs joined and 1-4 teacher candidates.

## **Participants**

### **Participant Recruitment**

Participants for this study included six PDAs (seven, including myself), twelve teacher candidates, and three mentor teachers. The PDAs and teacher candidates were identified through their involvement in the PDS for the 2019-2020 academic year. The mentor teachers were identified through their relationship as mentor teachers to three of the teacher candidates.

Prior to recruitment, I had developed a personal and professional interest in professional development school models throughout coursework and being part of a department that self-promoted a highly celebrated, prestigious 20+-year PDS partnership. Thus, in Spring 2019, I approached three of the PDAs to ask for peripheral participation in the PDS in order to learn more about the educational context. More specifically, I sat in on weekly PDA meetings, attended PDS-wide information sessions, and attended the Spring Teacher Inquiry Conference. I completed an independent study with one of the PDAs in Spring 2019 to learn more about the past, present, and future directions of the PDS. I shadowed another PDA in Spring 2019 by attending their teacher candidate meetings and observations and coaching cycles. By the end of Spring 2019, I made the decision to include the SVSD-MSU PDS partnership in my proposed dissertation project.

In Fall 2019, I again approached the 2019-2020 PDAs and explained my proposed dissertation project. Over the course of several meetings with different configurations of PDAs in

Fall 2019, it was decided that my dissertation project could take place in Spring 2020. In Fall 2019, I observed and took ethnographic fieldnotes in the Social Studies Methods course co-taught by two of the PDAs and met with them regularly to discuss planning and observational notes. School district approval was obtained at the end of Fall 2019.

At the start of Spring 2020, I obtained permission to attend the PDS Spring semester Pre-Week 1 meeting for the teacher candidates. I did not need to introduce myself to the teacher candidates because I had spent the Fall 2019 semester observing them and working with them in Social Studies Methods. I did, however, explain in detail my research project, the goals, and level of participation, what commitments they would be making as participants, and confidentiality. I explained that there were two levels of participation. I distributed a broad consent form for data collection in Seminar, including the collection of teacher candidates' work and Spring reflections, video and audio data from Seminar, fieldnotes, and other artifacts connected to Seminar. In addition, I distributed a half sheet that asked if teacher candidates would be willing participants for the additional supervision aspect of the intervention: observations and debriefs. I left the room, and the PDAs collected the consent forms in a sealed envelope, which was given to me later in the day. Ten of the twelve teacher candidates consented to the supervision aspect; all twelve consented to the teacher education intervention in the Seminar course.

### **Participant Selection**

Although 10 teacher candidates consented to the supervision aspect of the intervention, it would not be feasible to work with all ten teacher candidates for bi-weekly observations and debriefs. Thus, in order to select four-five teacher candidates for supervision, I relied on purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) at two iterative levels.

The first inclusion criterion was that the group as a whole was to be representative of multiple schools, grade levels, and supervising PDAs. There were teacher candidates placed across five grade levels, six school buildings in the district, and from all three PDAs. For example, three teacher candidates were placed at the same school with the same PDA; thus, it would not be representative for those three teacher candidates to be selected.

The second inclusion criterion was that there was an established relationship with the participants that could be viewed as productive and positive for both the researcher (self) and participant (Glesne, 2016; Patton, 2002; Maxwell, 2012). Because I had observed the teacher candidates and participated in the Fall Social Studies Methods course, I had gotten to know many of the teacher candidates. Several spoke with me one-on-one and sought advice related to social justice matters. I had previously supervised one of the teacher candidates and felt that we had a trusting, positive working relationship. Though not an intentional inclusion criterion, one teacher candidate wrote “help me define this [social justice] more!” on her consent form, which made me feel obligated to include her as a primary participant, assuming she fit the first inclusion criteria.

After narrowing the 10 interested teacher candidates down to five-six, I consulted with the teacher candidates’ PDAs as to whether they would be a good fit for the study. Some teacher candidates were excluded because they were engaged in other research projects that already added outside time commitments. One teacher candidate was excluded because her PDA felt that she was struggling to make progress and already had additional observations for support; thus, being a primary participant might be too great of a burden. The selection process in consultation with the teacher candidates’ PDAs resulted in five “primary participants” (Eve, Fiona, Kayla, Matilda, & Natalie). Descriptions of primary participants are in the section that follows.

### ***Teacher Candidates***

**Primary Participants.** The five primary participants self-identified as White, female, monolingual, and middle-class. They mostly described their hometowns and schooling experiences as being predominately White and monolingual. Three of the primary participants, Natalie, Eve, and Matilda, noted marked socioeconomic differences in their hometowns. Two teacher candidates, Matilda and Kayla, grew up in towns less than 30 miles away from the Spring Valley School District. In initial interviews, they all expressed interest in being part of the study because they felt they had more to learn because they did not experience much diversity growing up, felt that the world was changing, and were concerned about their future teaching placements and being able to teach “diverse student populations.” Fiona had completed the required coursework to earn an ESL certificate.

Regarding their student teaching placements, one taught kindergarten, one was in first grade, one in second grade, and two in third grade. See Table 3.3 for building assignments and PDAs.

**Table 3.3**

***Overview of Teacher Candidates; Primary Participants in Gray Rows as Cohorts***

<i>Name of Teacher Candidate<sup>14</sup></i>	<i>Supervising PDA<sup>15</sup></i>	<i>School Placement<sup>16</sup></i>	<i>Grade Level</i>
Anna	Taylor	Crossroads Elementary	4
Sam	Taylor	Bridgeview Elementary	4
Fiona	Taylor	Crossroads Elementary	2
Eve	Taylor	Bridgeview Elementary	3
Ashley	Cameron	Greenland Elementary	2
Kayla	Cameron	Greenland Elementary	1
Matilda	Cameron	Greenland Elementary	K
Grace	Cameron	Horizon Elementary	4
Jenna	River	Farmstead Elementary	4

<sup>14</sup> pseudonyms

<sup>15</sup> pseudonyms

<sup>16</sup> pseudonyms



Mandy	River	Farmstead Elementary	K
Natalie	River	Meadows Elementary	3
Ellen	River	Meadows Elementary	2

***Note on My Prior Relationship to Fiona.*** In May prior to this study, Fiona was one of 12 students in a two-week immersion experience in a new immigrant community. I was one of the three supervisors and had direct responsibility for responding to Fiona’s daily reflection logs and supervising her co-facilitation of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade group in the after-school center for the two weeks. During this time, I worked closely with Fiona professionally, and at the same time, got to know her personally since we spent two weeks in the same hotel sharing meals, coffee breaks, van rides, and other time together. I do not believe my prior relationship has a significant impact on my supervision of Fiona, teaching during Seminar, or analysis of the data. However, it allowed for us to start with some common ground and familiarity in our work together for this study.

### ***Professional Development Associates***

The six PDAs that were present for Spring Seminar in a co-planning and co-teaching model all consented to be part of the study. They each had an impact on the data used to answer the research questions and all played a role in co-teaching my six lessons (e.g., leading small groups, asking questions in whole-group discussions, offering suggestions in co-planning, providing reflective feedback after each lesson).

The three supervising PDAs, Taylor, Cameron, and River were each assigned four PDAs across two school sites each; all three were the supervising PDAs for my five primary participants. There were also three nonsupervising PDAs that co-planned and co-taught Seminar during the time of data collection: Billie, Parker, and Jordan. In addition, in Fall 2019, Taylor,

Cameron, River and Parker were responsible for teaching methods courses. See Table 3.4 for descriptions and responsibilities of the six PDAs.

**Table 3.4**

***Roles and Responsibilities of PDAs***

<i>PDA</i>	<i>Positions in SVSD-MSU PDS</i>	<i>Responsibilities in Teacher Education in Fall</i>	<i>Responsibilities in Teacher Education in Spring</i>	<i>Responsibilities in Supervision Fall &amp; Spring</i>
Taylor	PDS Coordinator; Co-Facilitator of the PDS (MSU)	Co-teach Math Methods	Co-teach Seminar	Supervise 4 teacher candidates across 2 school sites
Casey	Co-Facilitator of the PDS (SVSD); SVSD classroom teacher on year two of a three-year classroom release to serve as a PDA	Co-teach Social Studies Methods		
Cameron	Professional Development Associate			
Parker	Assistant Professor of Education that does research and conceptual planning in the PDS	Co-teach Classroom Learning Environments		None <sup>17</sup>
Billie	Graduate Student Partner			
Jordan	Research Assistant to Parker; Graduate Student Partner			

***Mentor Teachers***

After the primary participants were identified, I sent individual emails to each of their mentor teachers to inform them of their teacher candidates' interest in participating and to ask mentor teachers to what level they would like to be involved in the study. I arranged for 1-on-1 meetings with each mentor teacher to discuss the study and to obtain consent. Four mentor

<sup>17</sup> While Jordan does not have a formal role as a supervisor in the PDS, they conceptualize part of their role as a supervisor broadly, "I see myself as a person who whose responsibility is to support and facilitate the learning of people within the partnership in whatever ways that I can ... thinking about supervision as a way to basically assist others in their learning." [Int. 1]

teachers agreed to be interviewed and to participate in the study. One mentor teacher asked to not be part of the study but wanted her teacher candidate to be part of the study and agreed to video-taping the teacher candidate and students as long as she was not included in fieldnotes or video/audio data. Background information on each of the mentor teachers is in Table 3.5 below.

**Table 3.5**

***Mentor Teacher Information***

<i>Mentor Teacher<sup>18</sup></i>	<i>Teacher Candidate</i>	<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>School Building</i>	<i>Years in PDS</i>	<i>Other PDS roles</i>
Alice	Matilda	K	Greenland Elementary	1	-
Elena	Fiona	2	Crossroads Elementary	12	Former teacher candidate & PDA
Harriet	Natalie	3	Meadows Elementary	20	-
Lydia	Kayla	1	Greenland Elementary	16	-

**K-4 Students.** The final stage was to send home consent forms for all K-4 students in the five primary participants' classrooms. Consent was obtained and is on file as described in the IRB protocol.

### **Data Collection**

Data for this study were collected from December 2019 – May 2020 after spending two semesters observing methods courses and supervision, attending meetings, and peripherally participating in the SVSD-MSU PDS partnership. The data for the study consist of a variety of sources, including interviews with teacher candidates, PDAs, and mentor teachers; video-recordings, instructional artifacts, and fieldnotes from the Seminar course; fieldnotes from teacher candidate observations; fieldnotes and audio-recordings from teacher candidate post-observation debriefs; video-recordings and fieldnotes from one-on-one teacher candidate

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<sup>18</sup> pseudonyms

meetings; and fieldnotes and instructional materials from PDS instructional activities broadly. Each data source, organized by participant type (i.e., teacher candidates, primary participant teacher candidates, PDAs, mentor teachers, and K-4 students) is described in more detail below.

### **Data Collected from PDS Teacher Candidates**

#### ***Data Collected from All Twelve Teacher Candidates***

Data for all twelve teacher candidates stems primarily from Seminar, which lasted 15 weeks. I took fieldnotes during each Seminar and collected PDA- and teacher candidate-generated materials and artifacts via photograph (e.g., notes, whiteboard text, post-it note brainstorming and mapping, etc.) or by saving them electronically (e.g., Google Docs, presentation slides, protocols, etc.). Once the semester ended, and the final Seminar course was taught, I saved bi-weekly written and oral reflections that the teacher candidates submitted to their PDAs throughout the Spring Seminar course. My six intervention lessons were video-recorded, and thus teacher candidates' interactions and participation in those lessons were recorded.

#### ***Data Collected from Primary Participants***

In addition to the data collected stemming from Seminar, data from the five primary participants included interviews, observations and post-observation debriefs, COVID-adapted 1-on-1 meetings, and additional sources of data. Table 3.6 includes a summary of the data collected from primary participants and the dates of data collection.

**Table 3.6**

<i>Dates of Data Collected from Primary Participants</i>						
<i>Cohort</i>	<i>Primary Participant Teacher Candidates</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Debriefs</i>	<i>1-on-1 meetings</i>	<i>Additional Sources of Data</i>
1	Eve	1/27, 5/12	2/07, 2/27	2/18, 2/28	3/23	-
	Fiona	1/21, 5/15	2/07, 2/18	2/07, 2/18, 2/25	3/23, 4/09	Co-teach 2/25
2	Kayla	1/22, 5/11	2/03, 2/24, 3/06	2/03, 2/24, 3/06	3/23	-
	Matilda	1/27, 5/14	2/20, 3/06, 4/20, 4/27 <sup>19</sup>	2/20, 3/06	4/09	Co-plan 4/24
3	Natalie	1/20, 5/20	2/06, 2/20, 3/05	2/06, 2/20	3/24, 4/07	-

**Interviews.** The five primary participants were interviewed twice. The first was during the second-to-third weeks of the semester and the final interviews were after the semester had ended. The purpose of the initial interview was to establish the teacher candidates' thinking as they entered the Spring semester. They were asked to share how they are thinking about social justice, what role it has in the classroom, examples of (in)equitable practices they have seen/experienced in schools, and other questions to elicit their understanding of socially just teaching. In the final interview, instead of asking teacher candidates how they are thinking about social justice, I shared with them their definition from the first interview and asked them to reflect on their original definition, talk through how they understand it now, what they might change, and what still holds true. Most other interview questions remain the same. Though because I had gotten to know the teacher candidates closely over the year, the final interview was more like a conversation. This is in line with Talmy's (2010) understanding of research

<sup>19</sup> While not traditional observations on 4/20 and 4/27, these were pre-recorded lessons Matilda shared through her choice boards.

interviews as a social practice. The focus is not on objectivity, but instead on co-construction of ideas, experiences, facts, and details. See Appendix A for interview protocols.

**Observations of Teaching and Post-Observation Debriefs.** I completed 12 observations and took extensive fieldnotes and collected lesson plans that were shared prior to my observation. Each teacher candidate was observed at least twice before the pandemic shutdown. Debriefs lasting 20-40 minutes were held after 11 of the 12 observations.

**COVID-Adapted 1-on-1 Meetings.** I met with each teacher candidate at least once, some twice, by the end of the semester. Each meeting lasted from 40-60 minutes through video-conferencing software and was video-recorded. There are a total of seven 1-on-1 meetings.

**Additional Sources of Data.** In my second debrief meeting with Fiona, she asked if I could co-teach a lesson with her. This led to an additional data point unique to Fiona: a co-teaching video-recorded lesson with Fiona, Elena (her mentor teacher) and me, and an audio-recorded debrief with Fiona. Unique to my time with Matilda, she contacted me specifically to co-plan an upcoming thematic choice board<sup>20</sup> related to her teaching and final inquiry assignment; thus, we spent a session co-planning instead of having a 1-on-1 meeting responsive to what was happening in her classroom.

## **Data Collected from PDAs**

### ***Interviews***

PDAs were interviewed after the semester had ended. Because I was not looking at their development, an interview prior to the intervention nor multiple interviews were necessary. After following Interview One Protocol with the first PDA I interviewed, I realized that because of the

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<sup>20</sup> During asynchronous, remote learning, SVSD worked in grade level teams to create grids of activities for K-4 students to complete at home, which were referred to as choice boards. Choice boards included activities across all content areas. This included work suggested outside of the several hours a week devoted to synchronous teaching. MSU accepted choice boards in lieu of lesson plans during this time.

collegial relationships I had with the PDAs, it was difficult to stick to pre-written questions when the interview was more conversational (Talmy, 2010). Thus, I modified the Interview One Protocol (See Appendix A) to cover four broad conversation topics: your history and involvement in the PDS, sharing your social justice journey/trajectory, the history of social justice work in the PDS, and what you want for the teacher candidates and PDS (the dream big topic). This interview protocol modification allowed for more natural conversation to emerge and allowed me to think with the PDAs for the dream big topic.

### ***Fieldnotes***

I collected fieldnotes anytime I was part of a PDS function or event (seminar, PDA planning meetings, observations and post-observation debriefs); thus, any input, interaction, or contributions from the PDAs was documented. Because I became close colleagues with the PDAs and developed several friendships, I wanted to make the research and personal line distinct. In order to do so, I did not include personal conversations or communication (e.g., text messages, small talk, or private conversations) in fieldnotes. One exception to this is private chats sent through the video-conferencing software during Seminar as they pertain to instruction.

Additionally, the PDAs met once a week for planning Seminar, professional development, and logistical programmatic needs. During the planning meetings, I took fieldnotes as the conversations were relevant to my dissertation questions.

### ***Documents, Materials, and Co-Teaching Interactions***

Similar to the teacher candidates' participation in Seminar as a data source, data for all six PDAs was collected during the 15-week Seminar. I took fieldnotes during each Seminar and collected PDA- and teacher candidate-generated materials and artifacts via photograph (e.g., notes, whiteboard text, post-it note brainstorming and mapping, etc.) or by saving them

electronically (e.g., Google Docs, presentation slides, protocols, etc.). Once the semester ended, and the final Seminar course was taught, I saved all of the bi-weekly written and oral reflections that the teacher candidates' submitted to their PDAs (Cameron, Taylor, and River) throughout the Spring Seminar course; therefore, the supervising PDAs' responses to their teacher candidates' reflections was recorded. My six intervention lessons were video-recorded, and thus PDAs interactions and participation in those lessons were recorded. The instructional artifacts created and used during the Seminar course (e.g., curricula, semester schedules, essential questions and goals guiding the Seminar, previous year materials, readings, protocols, and other instructional materials) were all saved electronically or photographed.

### ***Post-Observation Debriefs***

In five of the post-observation debriefs with teacher candidates, their supervising PDA was present. Cameron was present for four of the debriefs, and River was present for one of the debriefs. Because the debriefs were audio-recorded, the PDAs' interactions during those debriefs were recorded and considered sources of data collection.

### **Data Collected from Mentor Teachers**

Interviews with three of the four mentor teachers occurred at the start of the semester. Scheduling complications led one of the mentor teachers to not be able to be interviewed, though she did attend one of the post-observation debriefing sessions with her teacher candidate. Each of the mentor teacher interviews followed the Interview One Protocol (See Appendix A). The interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes and were audio-recorded. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not have the opportunity to schedule final interviews with mentor teachers at the end of the semester. Three mentor teachers – Alice, Elena, and Lydia – were each present at one



of their teacher candidates' post-observation debriefs and offered insights and questions during our meeting.

### **Data Collected from K-4 Students**

During observations of teacher candidates' teaching, I took fieldnotes that included information about students' interactions that could be discussed in the post-observation debriefs. No student names were recorded, only first initials (e.g., Student A, Student J).

## **Data Analysis**

### **Data Preparation**

The first step I took in data preparation was to securely upload all of the data to Mid-Atlantic State University's Box service. All data collected via my personal phone was uploaded to Box within 24 hours and deleted from my phone. Data collected through Zoom once COVID-19 required the university and school district to go fully remote, was automatically stored in Zoom's cloud and every effort was made to download and then upload to Box within 24 hours.

### ***Confidentiality***

As data were being stored, a pseudonym list was created on Box. The list contained the first and last names of all participants (teacher candidates, PDAs, and mentor teachers) as well as elementary school buildings. Pseudonyms for elementary school buildings were generated using an online Dungeons and Dragons fantasy town names generator. The generator pulls 10 random names at a time, and I selected ones that were easy to remember and simple in spelling. For the names of teacher candidates and mentor teachers, I selected comparable names in popularity based on gender, race/ethnicity, and age. I attempted to select shorter names when possible. For the PDAs, there was concern that only one of the seven PDAs identified as a male. To ensure confidentiality, I ultimately decided to assign "gender neutral" names to the PDAs : Billie,

Cameron, Jordan, Parker, River, and Taylor, except myself. I also made every attempt to avoid gendered pronouns. Once all transcription was complete (described below), the pseudonym list was deleted from Box.

For K-4 students, when their names were discussed in post-observation debriefs and in the teacher candidates' reflections, they were removed and replaced with first initials (e.g., Student A, Student R).

### ***Transcription***

After uploading all data, I began transcribing. Data collected through my phone had an initial transcription through the phone's default recording application. Data collected through Zoom during COVID-19 was also initially transcribed through Zoom's cloud feature. I started with the initial transcriptions as a base, and then I edited the transcripts based on the audio- and video-recordings. A "true, objective" transcript cannot exist; all transcriptions are subjective as the person transcribing brings in their own subjectivities and lived experiences to the transcription process. All data were transcribed orthographically (Jenks, 2011). Excessive utterances and fillers such as um, uh, and like were omitted. There are relatively few transcription conventions in the analysis chapters. Transcription conventions of note include the following:

[...]	omitted speech
(( <i>verb</i> ))	gesture/action occurring during speech
<b>bold</b>	lines to be referenced in the subsequent text
word –	restart
word=	
= word	overlapping speech
[text]	rephrased/added for clarification or anonymity

### **Data Analysis**

While transcribing the data, I utilized a constant-comparative method (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) to note moments that suggested microgenetic development (Wertsch, 1985). Doing so

allowed for notations and early-stage analysis and interpretation of data to occur while transcribing. After transcribing, I sorted the data based on the research question for which it provided data. To answer question 2, *In what ways do the PDS teacher candidates enact socially just teaching*, I sorted the primary participants into cohorts based on their PDA.

After sorting the data, I read through the entire data set chronologically to again refamiliarize myself with the data. I marked interesting and noteworthy passages while reading. Then I coded and interpreted the data employing a grounded content analysis approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In the first round of analysis, for each research question, the relevant data were open coded, utilizing in vivo and content-coding (Saldaña, 2009). After the first round of coding, for chapters 4 and 5, I completed a second round of coding – focused coding (Saldaña, 2009) related to the specific research question to further refine the first round of open, in vivo codes and identify salient themes. In this process, I also completed iterative readings of each theme and looked for disconfirming evidence. The multiple sources of data from multiple participants in different roles allows for rich data triangulation, a strategy Bogdan & Biklen (1998) recommend for ensuring trustworthiness. See Table 3.7 below for a summary of the data and data analysis used to address each research question.

### ***The Role of Critical Friends***

The role of critical friends during the data analysis and interpretation stages is often understated. Saldaña (2009) refers to the process of sharing your analysis, interpretation, and findings as “shop talking through the study” and searching for “buried treasure.” As a form of “talking shop” about my data, I engaged in Zoshak’s (2016) process of “tiny talks.” Tiny Talks are “snippets of time commonly deemed too short for anything productive [that] could be put to use as time for colleagues to reflect, articulate concerns, and/or gain insight into their teacher

practices” (p. 210). While Zoshak conceptualized tiny talks for teacher professional development, I found them incredibly useful for talking through my data with critical friends, some of which are participants in the study – Billie and Taylor.

**Table 3.7**

***Summary of Data Collection and Analysis Conducted***

<i>Corresponding Analysis Chapter</i>	<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Data Used to Answer the Question</i>	<i>Form of Analysis</i>
Chapter 4	RQ 1. How are the aspects of socially just teaching materialized through the practices of an intervention focused on social justice in a teacher education Seminar course?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transcriptions of audio- and video-recordings from Seminar</li> <li>• documents and artifacts related to Seminar</li> <li>• teacher candidates’ work in Seminar and weekly reflections</li> <li>• fieldnotes</li> </ul>	<p>Descriptive, grounded content analysis</p> <p>Microgenetic analysis</p>
Chapter 5	<p>RQ 2. In what ways do PDS teacher candidates enact socially just teaching?</p> <p>RQ 2.1 How was this enactment influenced by the researcher’s responsive mediation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher candidate initial and final interviews</li> <li>• fieldnotes from observations</li> <li>• transcriptions of audio- and video-recordings from debriefs</li> <li>• transcriptions of audio- and video-recordings from 1-on-1 meetings</li> <li>• transcriptions of audio- and video-recordings from additional sources of data</li> </ul>	<p>Microgenetic analysis</p> <p>Grounded content analysis</p>
Chapter 6	In what ways does the PDS activity system mediate teacher candidates’ development of socially just teaching?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all data listed above</li> <li>• PDA interviews</li> <li>• Mentor teacher interviews</li> </ul>	Activity theoretical analysis

**Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity**

As it has been made clear in the first two chapters of this dissertation, I care deeply about matters of injustice and advocacy for something better. This is shaped by my political, moral,

and philosophical beliefs about our social world, which are brought into the work that I do. My identity is also an important consideration in this work – I identify as a White, cis, heterosexual woman. How I position myself in relation to social justice is based on that identity. I can never fully understand the experiences of a Black person in the United States, of someone who has questioned their gender in relation to their biological sex, and so on. My identity matches the majority of the participants of the study, to varying degrees, predominately to the teacher candidate primary participants. I have my particular lens and relation to this work, and it certainly has an influence on the intervention as it unfolded and the analysis afterwards.

My positioning within this study is nothing short of a healthy entanglement. I was the researcher for the study, and I was an active participant. Though this is not a self-study, I do study my practices. Though I was not an official instructor or supervisor on record, I was positioned as an authority figure. My relationships with the PDAs are also both messy and special: some relationships were new yet developed very quickly in productive and trusting ways; some were older relationships as fellow graduate students; some relationships were deeply personal, close, and supportive both within and outside of the work; almost all of the relationships continue today in some capacity, even after the study concluded. It is important for researchers to understand their positioning and make it public so that educational research can continue to progress beyond attempts at “uncontaminated” and “clean” objective data and findings. The work is highly subjective, and my positioning and identity in the context of this study matters for the findings I discuss in the next three chapters.

### **Summary**

This chapter has outlined methodology and the research questions. It provided information of the professional development school context in which this study took place.

Participant recruitment and selection was explained. Details of the intervention, data sources, and procedures for collecting, preparing, and analyzing data were shared. The chapter ended with a discussion of my positionality. Over the next three chapters, I answer the research questions and sub-questions as indicated in Table 3.7 above.

## CHAPTER 4

### Practices in Teacher Education for Socially Just Teaching

In this study, I sought to promote and trace PDS teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching practices over the course of the Spring Seminar course through a two-part intervention (as part of K-4 teacher education coursework and teacher candidate supervision). In order to see genetically, the teacher candidates' development, the analysis for this study requires a dialectical analysis of both my practices as a teacher educator and the teacher candidates' development. Over the next three chapters (Chapters 4-6), I analyze the practices of the two-part intervention, how those practices mediated teacher candidates' development, and the ways in which the PDS as an activity system mediates teacher candidates' development.

This chapter specifically addresses the first research question, *how are aspects of socially just teaching materialized through the practices of an intervention focused on social justice in a teacher education Seminar course?* To answer this question, I analyzed the subset of data collected from the six lessons: lesson materials and artifacts, transcriptions of the video-recorded lessons, teacher candidates' work, and researcher fieldnotes. Through a descriptive analysis, I document how I attempted to materialize, or make concrete, the practices of socially just teaching within an inquiry-based teaching model over the course of six lessons. By practices, I am referring to the activities, broadly, in teacher education programs that are meant to promote teacher learning and development (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Practices can be both "moment to moment" interactions (e.g., in-class discussions and activities) and "at-a-distance" practices (e.g., assignments, reflections, lesson planning, etc.).

It is important to note that I am presenting the practices as they unfolded. In the actual practice of teaching, not everything goes according to plan, and the analysis reflects solely what

occurred; thus, some of the intended practices, follow-up questions, and activities that were planned were not materialized in the practice of teaching. Furthermore, while analyzing the practices in relation to inquiry-based teaching and how they materialized socially just teaching, I had to put aside my desire to re-write and re-imagine the lesson plans, activities, and practices. As teachers, we are notoriously difficult on ourselves and are often times our own worst critics. In my analysis, I will report on *what is* not *what could have been*.

Because this is a descriptive analysis of the practices in the six-lesson intervention, I do not interpret the teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching, though data from teacher candidates is present in this chapter. It is important for researcher-practitioners to make public their pedagogy. Not to simply share "best" practices, but to open our own practices to scrutiny and to reflect. In line with a Vygotskian sociocultural stance, teaching and learning are two poles of a dialectical unity (*obuchenie*) that are understood in relation to one another. They can be abstracted and studied separately, which is why this chapter focuses on my practices as a teacher educator while Chapter Five provides an analysis of the five primary participants' development across the entirety of the study.

This chapter begins by discussing the pedagogical approach of the intervention in the Seminar course. Then it provides an overview of the curriculum and the overall goals for each lesson in the intervention. Finally, I present an analysis of my teaching practices in each lesson, organized sequentially.

### **Pedagogical Approach of the Teacher Education Intervention**



Because I was co-teaching within a long-established context with signature pedagogies and practices, I primarily adopted the pedagogical approach of the context for the six lessons in my intervention.<sup>21</sup>

The SVSD-MSU PDS partnership considers inquiry its signature pedagogy (Curcio et al., 2020; Yendol-Hoppey & Franco, 2014). Since the PDS's inception, inquiry has been a foundational core of the partnership (MSU website, ND). It is embodied and celebrated in nearly every aspect of the PDS. In the fall Methods courses that the PDAs co-teach, PDS teacher candidates are *taught through* and *how to* teach inquiry-based science, math, and social studies, and they are taught how to use practitioner inquiry as a reflective practice and a way to learn more about their students. Because of the entrenched nature of inquiry in the PDS, I adopted an inquiry-based model of teaching for my intervention. Inquiry-based teaching practices exemplify the way in which teacher educators in the PDS explain how students and adults learn.

Common to an inquiry-based approach is the notion that the teacher facilitates or guides the student(s) to new knowledge or understanding. Information is not fronted or presented to students; instead, they “discover” new knowledge through participation in semi-structured activities or experiences. In order for this to happen, the teacher primarily “asks, not tells” and creates the conditions for student-driven learning. In turn, students are expected to build on past experiences, construct knowledge based on dialogue, and create personal meaning. In an inquiry-based approach, teachers often collect empirical classroom data to reflect on and use to change or confirm practice immediately and in the long-term. See Figure 4.1 for a summary of the practices in inquiry-based teaching.

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<sup>21</sup> The role of inquiry is elaborated on in more detail in Chapter 6 as I address the third research question, “*In what ways does the PDS activity system mediate teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching?*”

**Figure 4.1*****The Practices of Inquiry-Based Teaching***

1. An emphasis on question-asking rather than information-giving
2. Knowledge construction based on dialogue
3. Creating personal meaning
4. Student-driven; teacher as support (e.g., provides or helps find materials/texts)
5. Reflection and change of self/practice

Inquiry-based teaching, along with critical reflection, can provide the structures and support to facilitate teacher candidates' *reasoning teaching* (Johnson, 1999). Described in more detail in Chapter 2, reasoning teaching is developed when “teachers articulate why they teach the way they do, when they reflect on general theories and methods within the context of their own experiences and/or classrooms and when they talk about their reasoning with others (p.11). In other words, *how* they think about their classrooms, practices, and students. For this study, my pedagogical intent was to explore and expand teacher candidates' reasoning so that they can teach in socially just ways.

**Co-Planning and Co-Teaching Approach**

In addition to inquiry-based teaching, the PDS also engages in co-planning and co-teaching practices. Embedded throughout all formalized teaching in the PDS, co-teaching is when two or more teachers work together in the same classroom sharing responsibility for student learning. Badiali and Titus (2010) write about several forms a co-teaching model can take in PDS settings specifically: mentor modeling, one teach/one guide (updated as “one lead/one guide”, Titus, 2016), synchronous team teaching, station teaching, parallel teaching, and alternative teaching. The format of co-teaching is secondary to the mindset that collaboration among colleagues (e.g., mentor teacher – student teacher, PDA – student teacher, PDA – PDA, etc.) is to put K-4 students' needs first. For co-teaching to be successful, co-planning is also part

of the process. The PDAs met weekly, dedicating at least 1-2 hours of their weekly meeting to co-planning for the next Seminar and co-reflecting on the previous week's Seminar.

### **Seminar Curriculum**

My intervention in socially just teaching occurred within the Seminar course over 12 weeks, from January to April 2020. As part of curriculum planning for the Seminar, PDAs consult mentor teachers and gather input from others, including previous semesters, and guidance from the field experience office. When planning began in December 2019, the PDAs started with reviewing and updating the essential questions – questions that function as goals for the teacher candidates to be able to answer by the end of the semester. If teacher candidates can provide a thoughtful, detailed answer to the essential question, it is considered a met goal. The essential question for the 2019 Spring Seminar that was most closely related to social justice was written as “*What is the role of cultural competency in teacher leadership?*” In co-planning, we re-wrote the essential question as “*How does my development as a teacher leader relate to an emergent understanding of teaching for social justice as one that consistently works toward the eradication of inequalities in and of public schooling?*”

We later formed objectives to ensure that our teaching over the course of the semester would lead to teacher candidates being able to answer the essential question. The four corresponding objectives are:

1. Interns will articulate increasingly complex, intersectional understandings of diversity.
2. Interns will be able to articulate an increasingly specific, personal definition of social justice.
3. Interns will recognize and articulate their position as a teacher within systems of

inequality.

4. Interns will begin to discuss current and future plans and actionable items for addressing inequalities.

These four objectives were negotiated in PDA planning meetings by drawing on our collective experiences from previous semesters with the teacher candidates as their co-teachers, supervisors, voluntary PDAs, and/or PDS observers. For objective one, we recognized that many of the teacher candidates were readily, yet broadly, engaged in work around diversity, developing inquiries that included diverse book selections, and had been exposed to the concept of diversity in their previous coursework; however, we believed that the teacher candidates still had an emerging and superficial understanding of diversity. Over the spring semester, we wanted to ensure we provided opportunities for teacher candidates to articulate more complex understandings of diversity that included the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). Regarding objective two, it was made clear that the goal was not for teacher candidates to come to a shared understanding of social justice that they had different entry points into discussions of social justice, and that they should have the opportunity to develop their own understanding of socially just teaching. This is distinctly in line with an inquiry-based teaching model. Objective three brings in a structural understanding of social justice and requires teacher candidates to recognize and articulate their position as a starting point for addressing systemic inequities in school systems. It also attempts to bridge the social and the individual. Objective four was written such that teacher candidates could either make plans for action or take action to address inequalities based on where they are in their understandings of socially just teaching.

Through these objectives, the PDS community articulates teaching for social justice as making current and future plans and actionable items to address and work towards eradicating

inequalities in schools while also articulating personal definitions of diversity and social justice and recognizing and articulating their position as a teacher within systems of inequality.

### **Analysis of My Teaching Practices Across the Six Lessons**

Keeping in mind the essential question, corresponding objectives, my definition of socially just teaching, and the pedagogical choices (practices of inquiry-based teaching, reasoning teaching, and co-teaching), I developed six lessons that would create a space in which PDS teacher candidates could develop in their articulation of socially just teaching (see Table 4.1). Because the six lessons occurred every other week and were embedded with other curricular strands – teacher leadership, developing an inquiry stance, understanding personal and professional identity, and becoming a curriculum-maker – lesson cohesion was a challenge. Therefore, the six lessons function more like stand-alone workshops rather than sequential lessons that build on one another.

**Table 4.1**

#### ***Overview of the Six Lessons and Corresponding Teacher Education Practices in Each Lesson***

<i>Lesson No.</i>	<i>Primary Obj. Covered</i>	<i>Lesson Goals</i>	<i>Practices grounded in inquiry-based teaching</i>
One, Week 2	2	Introduce a systemic understanding of socially just teaching and articulate current understandings of socially just teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Text-based discussion</li> <li>• Individual reflection and writing of definitions of socially just teaching</li> <li>• Share personal definitions of socially just teaching in small groups</li> </ul>
Two, Week 4	1, 3	Recognize the distinction between ‘differences’ and ‘inequalities’ in everyday phenomena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructor-facilitated whole group discussion</li> <li>• Small group discussion modeled after the whole group discussion</li> </ul>
Three, Week 6	2, 3	Critically examine and question what is “normal” and begin to distinguish between innate and learned behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-group text-based discussion</li> </ul>

Four <i>Week 8</i>	1, 3	To acknowledge intersectionality and privilege(s), connect societal privileges to students' experiences in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructor-facilitated whole group discussion</li> <li>• Small group collaborative activity on privilege</li> </ul>
Five <i>Week 10</i>	3, 4	Identify school-based inequalities, discuss their root causes, and problematize current solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Text-based discussion</li> <li>• Generating a list of school-based inequalities</li> <li>• Whole group discussion of causes from the generated list</li> <li>• Small group discussions of solutions</li> </ul>
Six <i>Week 12</i>	2, 4	Reflect on the role that teachers have in advocating for their students; refining definitions of socially just teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole group discussion</li> <li>• Individual, written reflections of personal meaning of socially just teaching</li> </ul>

## Lesson One

The primary goals for the first lesson were to engage in a text-based discussion from an article they were asked to read and comment on before coming to class. After engaging in the whole group discussion, teacher candidates were to sit alone and write out their current definitions of socially just education. Once the teacher candidates had written their definitions, they were asked to work in small groups to share their written definitions and extend them to current practices and experiences. This lesson lays the groundwork in establishing teacher candidates' reasoning of socially just teaching.

The week before lesson one, teacher candidates were asked to read and comment on Bill Ayers' (2016) article titled "These Children Won't Learn." In the article, Ayers' makes the argument that it is not the students who are failing, who are uninterested in school, who are demotivated, but it is the structure of schooling itself that has made it so students, particularly marginalized students, are not thriving. It touches on many of the aspects a socially just teacher would be expected to know and act upon. The article brings up issues of social justice that

teacher candidates might not have been familiar with, and it focuses on social justice from a structural perspective. Before the lesson, I read the teacher candidates' comments and selected the lines that generated the most controversy or disagreement. I added the lines from the article, not the teacher candidates' responses, directly to the first presentation slide, which I used as a springboard to start the text-based discussion. Table 4.2 includes two excerpts that were most frequently commented on and the teacher candidates' responses.

**Table 4.2**

***Selected Excerpts and Teacher Candidate Responses from the Ayers (2016) Assigned Reading***

<i>Original Line in the Reading</i>	<i>Teacher Candidate</i>	<i>Written Response</i>
“The goal is obedience, standardization, and conformity; the watchword, CONTROL.” (Ayers, 2016, p. 108)	Matilda <sup>22</sup>	This is difficult for me to read, as it is not something that I believe, nor is it something that other teachers I interact with regularly believe. It is making me wonder how I will react to others who believe in these goals, since they definitely are still a large party.
	Eve <sup>23</sup>	I look at my classroom now and think about the rules that are in place (or even in the school). How can we create rules where students do not feel like they have to be obedient? If there is discipline in a school, should all students be treated equally not matter what? Or would that not be fair to certain individuals?
	Kayla <sup>24</sup>	I thought this was interesting, especially because my intern group just had a conversation about this. I can relate this to the opening remarks of <i>Troublemakers</i> by C.S.
	Anna	Why do we need students to conform? Why is obedience the goal? At what point does this disrupt student learning? Who is this affecting?
“These kids won’t learn without the threat of sanctions, and so these schools turn on the familiar technologies of	Fiona <sup>25</sup>	How do these constraints help to benefit students? How does this help students to learn math and writing? At what age are these constraints introduced to students?

<sup>22</sup> Primary participant

<sup>23</sup> Primary participant

<sup>24</sup> Primary participant

<sup>25</sup> Primary participant

<p>constraint – ID cards, uniform dress codes and regulations, [...] surveillance cameras, armed guards, metal detectors, random searches- [...] the unaesthetic physical space and prison architecture, the laborious programs of regulating, indoctrinating, inspecting, disciplining, censuring, correcting, counting, appraising, assessing and judging, testing and grading—all of it makes this [...] feel like an institution of punishment rather than a space of enlightenment and liberation...” (Ayers, 2016, p. 108)</p>	Mandy	This phrase really stood out to me - constraint? I felt this was a very strong choice of word. The article is talking about how schools that have many variations of student background are targeted toward control. However, I have personally met students who would rather have things like uniforms, so that their SES does not stand out. They look at it as an equalizer. I do see the claim from both sides as valid and relevant.
	Eve	The author makes these things sound very negative, but I am wondering if these certain things are so bad? I would love to live in a world where we didn't need safety precautions, but unfortunately, that is not the case.
	Matilda	I am interested in some ideas for what we can do as preservice teachers, and even in the future as young teachers to influence this. It's not like we can just tear the school down or even paint all of the walls. So what tangible things can we do to work for reform against prison-like schools?
	Sam	When you don't feel safe and welcomed, you're not going to learn. It is important to first establish community and relationships in order for every student to learn, or at least begin to learn. I wonder if the word "control" is actually "safe" for some students? What if the familiar technologies of constraint seem to comfort some students?

The selected text opened a space for teacher candidates to externalize their understanding and interpretations of the reading. Teacher candidates' responses include reflections on past experiences, connections to current practice, questions about future practice, questions to the author, and justifications of their beliefs. Reactions to these two selected excerpts indicate that the teacher candidates were attempting to reconcile what they were reading with what they had experienced as students and as teachers, as well as their beliefs about the purpose of schooling. The statements they responded to were indictments of the current system of schooling, and they questioned whether or not those statements could be considered true. Teacher candidates' responses were mixed: for excerpt 2, Matilda recognizes that a prison-like structure for schooling



cannot be conceived as a positive thing, but admits she can't think of what to do, and thus, asks for a tangible action step. In contrast, Sam and Eve believe the control and technologies of constraint can be seen as necessary, or even positive. Interestingly, the teacher candidates could see each other's responses, but only commented directly to one another if it was a shared belief (e.g., "!!!!!!! Sam I agree with you 100%!!" [Fiona]) not if they disagreed with one another.

Once in class, during the text-based discussion, I displayed selected excerpts and gave teacher candidates a moment to read and think about why these were perhaps the most commented on excerpts and the ones that had varying responses. The expectation was that through dialogue, the teacher candidates would begin to build off of one another's ideas to lead to new understandings, while I facilitated the discussion. At approximately four minutes into the discussion, it became clear to me that the reading was unintentionally reinforcing the narrative that the Spring Valley School District (SVSD) is a nice, liberal progressive school without the problems Ayers' (2016) raises in his article; instead, they seem to be suggesting that "urban" and "other" school districts have those problems. In Excerpt 4.1, I attempt to redirect the discussion by first summarizing what I am hearing (lines 1-9) and then prompting the teacher candidates to think differently about their personal experiences in SVSD (lines 10-11).

#### **Excerpt 4.1 Lesson 1 Redirection on "Urban" versus "Progressive" Schools**

1 MEG: Yeah, I think it was easy for us to see through this reading  
 2 almost like they were presenting two different school systems of,  
 3 black and white schools, for lack of better words, but that's  
 4 kinda how it fits, right? And seeing, trying to imagine Spring  
 5 Valley, for example, as this ideal sort of school district and  
 6 thinking of an urban school district with a high level of  
 7 minorities not getting the same sort of resources because of the  
 8 way districts are lined and what supports the school can actually  
 9 get financially.  
 10 MEG: **But if we were to just dive into Spring Valley, do some of**  
 11 **these statements still apply?**

This redirection allows the teacher candidates to think differently about SVSD and they mention scripted math curriculum, standardized testing, accountability, bias in classrooms, and the district making decisions on financial benefits. A key component of reasoning teaching is figuring out how to “teach a particular topic, with a particular group of students, at a particular time, in a particular classroom, within a particular school” (Johnson, 1999, p. 1). For teacher candidates to begin to reason through socially just teaching, they must also understand more deeply their teaching context.

As the discussion winds down and we transition to the next activity, I ask the teacher candidates to return to their seats and take some time to write their current definitions of socially just teaching. Developing personal meanings is an important practice in inquiry-based teaching, and it was a suggested practice by several PDAs in the co-planning leading up to the lesson. It also provides insights into the teacher candidates’ reasoning so that I can then responsively mediate. Sample definitions are included in Table 4.3. Many of the definitions shared similarities with Ellen’s definition.

**Table 4.3**

***Teacher Candidates’ Personal Definitions of Socially Just Teaching Written in Lesson 1***

<i>Teacher Candidate</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Ellen	For students to be treated fairly without being judged based off of SES, race, religion, sexuality, etc.
Fiona	I believe that social justice in education is making sure that everybody's narrative is being presented and shared in class. One example may be that you are making sure that you have books in your classroom that represent all people (race, identity, culture, gender, ethnicity, language, lgbtq, ability, etc). Note that I did not specifically say all of your students. Another example could be sharing news that is going on in the world and having students talk about and question what is happening.
Kayla	So social justice in education is [bulleted list] equality, fair, being informed about differences and your personal biases, culturally responsive, teaching about it, state of mind.

After taking enough time to write out their initial thoughts of socially just teaching, the teacher candidates were asked to form small groups of 3-4. Many of the PDAs joined the groups as well. In doing so, the PDAs enact a parallel co-teaching model in which each PDA is working with a small group to ensure the lesson content is covered; however, each PDA approaches this differently, some taking a more active, leading approach while others listen and offer a question or guidance when teacher candidates are stuck. In their small groups, the task was to reason through “any examples, explanations of inequalities, possibilities, uncertain events, instances in your classroom and/or school” by mapping them to different lenses (artifact, 01/22/2020). Lenses included nature and nurture, individual and societal, individual and cultural, different and unfair, tolerate and enact change. The small group portion was recorded, but because of the overlap and sound quality, transcription was not feasible. Instead, I rely on my fieldnotes (01/22/2020).

I worked with one small group that included Jenna, Fiona, and Matilda. In our discussion, they each shared their definitions of socially just teaching and then I asked if anyone had an example of an inequity they wanted to reason through, again drawing on the inquiry practices of dialogue and sharing personal experiences to build to new understandings. Fiona volunteered the example of a second-grade newcomer in her classroom. She comments that one thing she notices is that he is unusually sleepy. She believes it is because he uses his mom’s cell phone at night. It was unclear where most of Fiona’s information was coming from, so most of the time was spent with Matilda, Jenna, and I asking questions to encourage Fiona to think about why it might be the case that he’s sleeping throughout the day. As we talked through some of the different lenses, we explored more possibilities<sup>26</sup> for what might be happening with her student.

- Nature/Nurture: Does he have a sleep disorder? Vitamin deficiency? Light sensitivity? When does he/his family go to bed? When does he eat, do his homework? What’s his bedtime? This is where more information about the cell phone came out.

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<sup>26</sup> This is not an inclusive list or an ideal list. It is what emerged during the small group discussion.

- Individual/General: Does it have anything to do with going to ESL during the day? Does he sleep in his ESL class?
- Individual/Cultural: Are there different cultural norms for sleep times in Guatemala, where he's from? Or is it just him/his family?

There was varying talk across the small groups in the room, each group discussing different cases: an instance in which a Black student is penalized repeatedly on the playground, cousins who are in ESL and have very different schooling experiences (one excelling while the other receiving remedial support), etc. By suggesting different lenses for teacher candidates to use, the intent was for the teacher candidates to develop widening and expanding conceptions of socially just teaching and begin to see new ways of explaining why injustices are occurring in schools, which can inform their reasoning teaching. Because of the inquiry-based nature of this activity, the intent was that through dialogue this could occur.

## **Lesson Two**

In lesson two, everyday phenomena like hair, hobbies, and language are discussed and unpacked in order to better articulate the differences between “different/diverse” versus unjust or inequitable. In this lesson are two student-driven activities that rely on the facilitator (and PDAs and teacher candidates) asking questions rather than giving information through extended dialogue.

Prior to the lesson, in a field note jotting on February 1, 2020, I essentialize statements and remarks the teacher candidates have made over the past semester, as well as what I know of teaching preservice teachers:

“I love that my students...

- Speak different languages.
- Come from ‘different backgrounds.’
- Celebrate different holidays (religious, nationality)
- Eat different foods
- Have different customs/traditions
- Are different races.”

“use this? all surface-level culture and diversity.”

“Hair, language, hobbies, classroom behavior, academic competencies, foods, emotions, scent, family structure, holidays.” (fieldnotes, 02/01/2020)

As indicated in my jotting, I wanted to create an inquiry-based lesson that would require teacher candidates to be able to reason through the differences between ‘different’ and ‘unjust/unequal.’ In order to do this, I first modeled the discussion with all teacher candidates and PDAs for approximately 20 minutes. Then the teacher candidates and PDAs formed small groups to repeat the discussion format with new phenomena. Each group wrote their information on poster-sized sticky notes. To wrap-up the lesson as a whole group, we put the poster notes side-by-side and compared the information from each group.

### ***Activity 1***

I oriented the teacher candidates with the quote “Nature made men equal as to their humanity and different as to their characteristics and peculiarities. Society on the other hand besides adding new differences instituted the aspect of inequalities in the human world” (adapted from Rousseau). On the board, I reintroduce the lenses of individual and cultural, different and unjust, and celebrate and enact change, and I give oral directions for the first part of the whole group discussion:

### **Excerpt 4.2A and 4.2B Lesson Orientation**

1 MEG: With thought to that quote. I want us to talk about hair. The  
 2 hair on your head. So let’s do a quick turn and talk. One, I want  
 3 you to describe your hair to the person next to you. And then I  
 4 want you to think about how your hair connects to the different  
 5 cultural groups that you belong to.

After asking the teacher candidates and PDAs to share out, I then directed them to the next stage of the discussion

1 MEG: These are all differences related to culture in the different  
 2 groups you belong to, but at some point it’s not just that we all  
 3 have different hair, but that we’re treated differently because

4 of the hair that we have... What are the different ways you've  
 5 been, not you, but people treated differently because of their  
 6 hair? Examples in the media, examples that you know of?

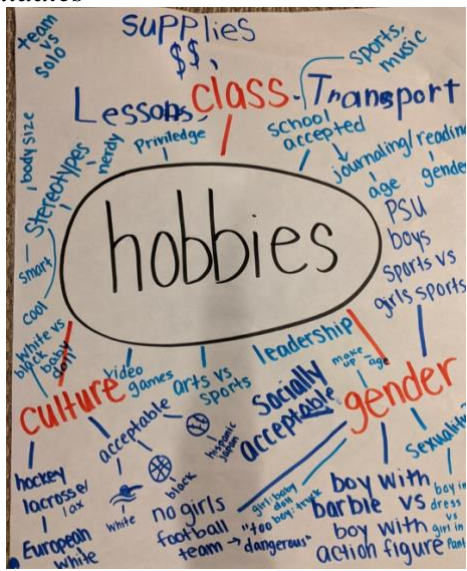
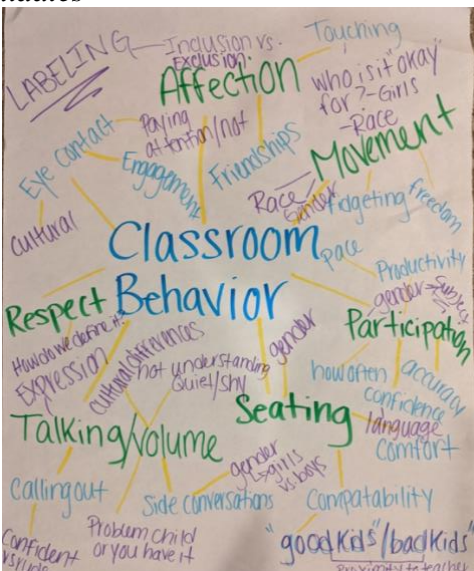
The discussion continues for around 20 minutes. The teacher candidates and PDAs continue to contribute personal examples (e.g., being blonde, brunette, or a redhead), current media examples (e.g., the wrestler, the high school senior, and the Penn State football player who were all discriminated against for wearing dreadlocks), current classroom examples, general stereotypes, and inequities around hair products available in stores.

### ***Activity 2***

Teacher candidates were then responsible for leading their own small groups through the same process drawing on their own knowledge and using that knowledge and those experiences to build to new understandings. Teacher candidates were presented with choices of phenomena to work in small groups and go through the same process: first describe, then match to cultural markers (i.e., race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, and all others), and finally to discuss what might need to change for equitable outcomes and to end discrimination based on perceived differences. In doing so, the teacher candidates wrote their answers on the poster-sized sticky notes. Some PDAs chose to stay with one particular group and others circulated to hear what each group was saying. In doing so, they enacted forms of co-teaching similar to “one lead (myself)/one guide (PDAs), By asking students to examine “everyday” phenomena through a lens of difference vs. unjust, they could begin to see that inequities are formed regardless of what instruction or resources students are provided in school. And that they could begin to reflect on their own socially just teaching as a stance towards accepting differences or eradicating inequalities. The hope would be that they could use this activity to reason through similar experiences in their own teaching. Figure 4.2 includes examples from two of the small groups.

Figure 4.2

**Student Work from Small Group Work**

Phenomena	Hobbies	Phenomena	Classroom behavior
Teacher Candidates	Ashley, Fiona, and Natalie	Teacher Candidates	Grace, Kayla, and Anna
			

**Lesson Three**

The third lesson draws on common inquiry-based teaching practices such that teacher candidates can critically examine and question what is “normal” and begin to distinguish between innate and learned behaviors. This was hinted at in lesson one when two of the lenses they used to ask about issues of social justice were *nature* and *nurture*, or *biologically* or *socially* determined. The entire lesson takes place as one whole-group discussion with two points of redirection that I initiate.

The whole-group discussion begins after Parker reads aloud *A Normal Pig*, as seen in Figure 4.3. This picture book was suggested in co-planning by Parker for a previous lesson, but it better fit the goals of lesson three. *A Normal Pig*, written by K-Fai Steele, is summarized as follows:

“Pip is a normal pig who does normal stuff: cooking, painting, and dreaming of what she’ll be when she grows up. But one day a new pig comes to school and starts pointing out all the ways in which Pip is different. Suddenly she doesn’t like any of the same things she used to...the things that made her Pip.”

This picture book was selected for several pedagogical purposes: it allows a PDA to model a read aloud – a practice the teacher candidates are developing, it provides a text that teacher candidates can bring into their own classroom libraries and use in their own teaching, and the content of the book can elicit conversations about what it means to be normal and extend the conversation on celebrating differences (which was discussed in lesson two).

**Figure 4.3**

**Parker’s Read Aloud of *A Normal Pig***



After Parker finishes the read-aloud, teacher candidates are asked to do a turn and talk on the themes of the book, then engage in a whole-group discussion. At around the 25-minute mark, I bring out the “classroom behaviors” chart that one of the small groups created in lesson two (see Figure 4.2 above). Up until this point, much of the discussion was on self-acceptance and personal identity, and I wanted the students to dig deeper into the question of “what is normal?” I direct the students to think about what they are doing in terms of classroom behavior (e.g., sitting



cross-legged in a large circle, not talking if someone else is talking, etc.) and allow the conversation to unfold from that point.

At this point in the discussion is a critical juncture. One of the teacher candidates, Fiona, says she was “conditioned” to raise her hand to speak, but that it went against her nature of just wanting to talk to everyone around her all the time. Parker and I engage in synchronous team teaching, in which we worked actively alongside one another and build upon one another’s comments spontaneously to respond to Fiona, as well as what the other teacher candidates bring to the discussion.

A second critical juncture occurs when teacher candidate Mandy brings in a classroom scenario she was struggling with and attempts to connect it to the conversation. Parker responds to Mandy to bring in Paul Gorski’s latest talk about different ideologies teachers can hold. She guides Mandy and the other teacher candidates through thinking about a students’ classroom behavior through a deficit, grit, and structural ideology and praises Mandy for bringing the classroom scenario to the group. The whole-group conversation continues about norms changing and what norms we value and would like to see change. At this point, with 15 minutes remaining, I bring in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. See Excerpt 4.3.

#### **Excerpt 4.3 Shift Conversation to Introduce the Concept *Habitus***

Meg – Megan; Sam = Sam

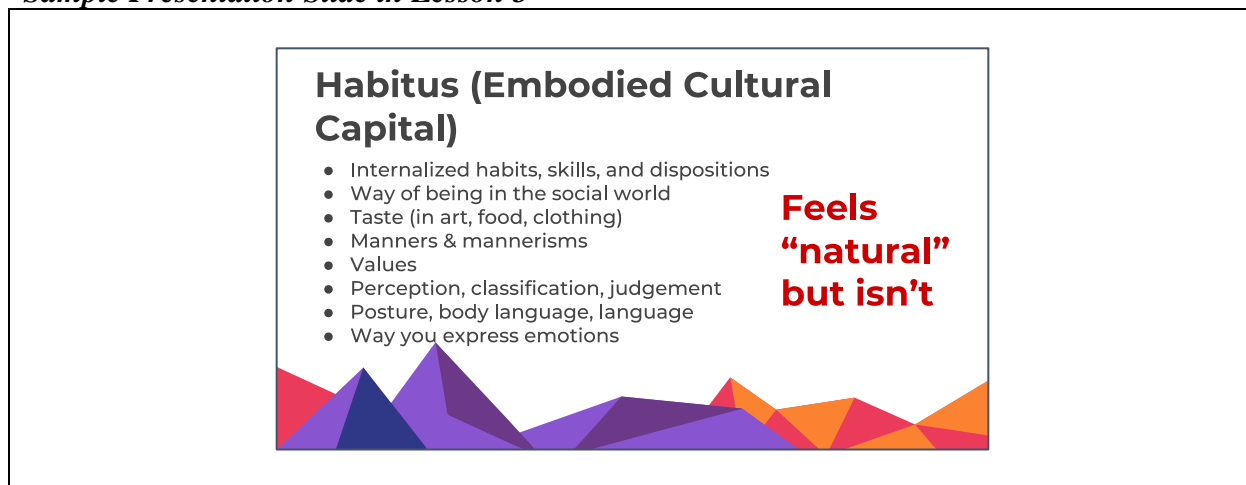
- 1 MEG: ... he wanted to know why there were differences among the levels
- 2 of performance and academic achievement of children within the
- 3 educational system of France in the 1960s. Guess what his answer
- 4 was. ...
- 5 SAM: punishment
- 6 MEG: punishment. for what? Discipline for what?
- 7 SAM: not “normal behavior” ((air quotes))
- 8 MEG: Yeah. His idea was there’s this secret message of what’s
- 9 normal and what’s not. And we think that it’s natural. And what
- 10 he calls that is our *habitus*, right? ... but Bourdieu says there’s
- 11 these different pieces of capital that we bring into a classroom.
- 12 So we bring in...

After a brief overview of habitus and embodied cultural capital (see Figure 4.4), we continue our discussion of normal, but with new constructs to guide the discussion. One PDA, Taylor, immediately brings up scent and the teacher candidates contribute to ask if cussing, crying (emotions and gender), procedures for kissing family, drinking culture, and eye contact are applicable while providing corresponding personal examples.

In this lesson, the goal was for the teacher candidates to experience cognitive/emotional dissonance around what they assume to be “normal” or taken for granted. Once the notion of normality breaks down, we can begin to ask questions such as *Why is it this way? Who benefits and who is harmed? Do hierarchies, power, and oppression even need to exist (why do they exist)?* and *What can I do about it?* By selecting a read-aloud and extending the conversation into empirical classroom examples they could draw on, they could *begin* to inquiry into their habits, teaching practices, and ways of being to answer some of the questions listed above.

**Figure 4.4**

***Sample Presentation Slide in Lesson 3***



### Figure 4.5

[illegible]

The teacher candidates and PDAs filled the entire board with what annoys them. PDA Cameron continued to ask teacher candidates to elaborate their answers and encourage deeper thinking and reflection.

#### Excerpt 4.4 Cameron's Mediation

- 1 CAM: Who wrote bad manners? Be specific! What are bad manners?  
 2 What's a bad driver? What does that mean?

Once PDAs and teacher candidates finished filling the board, they were prompted to make connections back to their own expectations and values and what connection that might make to their classroom. They mention routines, organization, cleanliness. At approximately 17 minutes into the lesson, I begin to transition to the main practice for the fourth lesson.

#### Excerpt 4.5 Transition to the Next Activity

- 1 MEG: [00:17:37] So what we're going to do now is we're going to  
 2 transition just a minute to an activity. But what I want us to  
 3 think about is how these things are culturally created, right?  
 4 They're not things that were born with. You weren't born with  
 5 the idea of disliking dirty dishes. That was something that you  
 6 had to get used to and these would vary. If we had a completely  
 7 different crowd of people in this room. We might get completely  
 8 different answers, right?  
 9 RIVER: [00:18:03] Our roommates would have completely different  
 10 answers.  
 11 MEG: [00:18:08] Yeah, you already said the roommates would have very  
 12 different answers. People with different backgrounds, people  
 13 from different places, people who speak different languages  
 14 would have possibly different answers on this board. Or they  
 15 could have the same thing, but it would be rooted in a very  
 16 different place and I want to think about how we get to this  
 17 ((gesturing to the board))

This point was important to make because it reminds teacher candidates that their responses are their own, but that they are situated within a broader social, cultural, historical context. This is perhaps one limitation of inquiry-based teaching, that because a common starting point is building on past experiences, when those from very similar identities and backgrounds are the only contributions, there can be a lack of diverse perspectives and many voices remain unheard. Additionally, I needed to restate the purpose of the activity and what I wanted teacher candidates to take up from it. It would not be an effective activity, for example, if the teacher candidates took up the belief that “we all believe cleanliness is important; therefore, everyone

else must think so, too, it must be part of our biology, and we all have the same understanding of ‘cleanliness.’” I also did not want to risk reinforcing stereotypes of identity groups not present in the classroom and ask, “how might a Black student answer the question, ‘What annoys you?’” Instead, I rely on the content in the next part of the lesson to begin to do that work “how we get to this ((*gesturing to the board*)),” and I return to it at the end of the next activity.

The primary activity in the fourth lesson was an adapted version of *The Safe Zone Project*’s Privilege for Sale activity (Bolger, ND). The goal was to move teacher candidates beyond conceptions of “I love all my students and treat all my students equally,” to understanding that they do not treat them all equally (as evident in lessons 2, 3, and the start of 4), and that even if they did in their classroom, institutions (schools, government, businesses) do not treat students equally. It asks teacher candidates to face unquestioned privileges that they may or may not be aware of and how they affect their students. Questions about gender and sexuality (other than cis heterosexuality), which are considered more “taboo” were intentionally included. There is contention about the effectiveness and purpose of privilege activities. They have been scrutinized for their centering of Whiteness, of further marginalizing BIPOC (see Levine-Raskey, 2000; Matias & Mackey, 2006). Ultimately, I made the choice to include the activity because different from a privilege walk, this activity asks participants to discuss privileges and rights rather than spotlighting who has the privileges and rights being named. It is intersectional and it places privilege not at the level of the individual, but more broadly about existing in a society in which some are granted these privileges while others are not. Many of the privileges related to political decisions and rights, the results of which oppress certain groups, primarily groups that were not represented in the teacher candidates.

The starting directions were modified from The Safe Zone Project activity:

“In your envelope are 30 privileges, for the purposes of this activity, you do not have any of these privileges. We have removed of these privileges and you, as a group, need to buy them back from us. Each privilege costs \$100. The envelope also includes how much money you have. That is the amount of money that you *as a group* have to spend. We will give you a few minutes to talk together and decide what privileges you’d like to buy. Then we’re going to come back to the big group and debrief.” (Lesson plan, 03/04/2020)

Teacher candidates self-selected into four groups of three. We asked the teacher candidates if they were comfortable with PDAs joining their groups. For co-teaching, we relied on a parallel teaching approach. One PDA joined each group, with another PDA collecting data on student responses and myself moving from group to group to ask probing questions, assess where teacher candidates and PDAs are in the process. Each PDA approached the activity and co-teaching differently. Some were asking probing questions, some were sitting quietly and observing, and some were fully participating with the teacher candidates as a group partner. The 30 privileges were each printed on a different slip of paper to allow the teacher candidates to sort and interact with the cards, placing them in different categories, moving ones to the side for later discussion, etc.

As I walked around from group to group, I took jottings of what teacher candidates and PDAs were saying and then recording an audio-reflection after class. Two instances that stuck with me for a long time, and still do, are the responses to privileges related to police and the attacks on Sept. 11. Both instances took place in Cameron’s group with Ellen, Jenna, and Fiona. In the paragraphs that follow, I rely on my post-class reflection (Fieldnotes, 03/04/2020).

The first instance, the teacher candidates were reading the card with the privilege “I don’t have to fear interactions with police officers due to my race/nationality/ gender/sexuality.” Jenna’s response was that it was not a privilege they wanted to purchase because no one needs that privilege, instead making the claim that everyone should fear the police. Ellen builds on

what Jenna has said to say that “we” have to fear authority. She further says (paraphrasing) if you do something wrong and you get pulled over you shouldn’t like not be scared of the cops and try to do whatever you want. For Ellen, the police *only* pull drivers over when they have done something wrong. My heart rate skyrocketed. Cameron and I looked at each other, trying to figure out who was going to respond. I speak up first and try to give a personal example, saying something along the lines of, you know I was pulled over in Spring Valley and I didn’t do anything wrong to my knowledge. Why should I have to fear the police officer? I did nothing wrong. It was not the best example and did not discuss police brutality, but I do not think the teacher candidates were ready for that conversation and as research has shown, they would have dismissed it as isolated incidents, as just “one bad cop.” In that moment and in my reflection, I believed that if I could disrupt her thinking just a little bit, just enough to get her to question her assumptions, then a space could be open to further discuss police brutality.

In the second instance, a little later with the same group, Ellen responded strongly to the privilege card that read “I can travel to any part of the U.S. and know my religion will be accepted & safe, and I will have access to religious spaces to practice my faith, without fear of violence or threats.” For Ellen, she felt that because of the attacks on September 11, 2001, she now fears for her safety when traveling on airplanes and so no one else should have that right. The implication being that those who practice Islam should not be able to practice their religion safely, without fear of violence or threats. Previous fieldnotes (09/10/2019) can provide some additional context to Ellen’s reaction. In social studies methods, Ellen expressed extensive concern about how her mentor teach was going to cover Sept. 11. She wanted it to be a central part of the day and that she had close, personal connections to the events of that day. There is reason to believe that this has affected how Ellen responded to the privilege card, but it does not

excuse her belief. Rather than responding in the moment, I spoke with her PDA, River, later that week to discuss how to address mine and Cameron's concerns over Ellen's statements.

This lesson was an attempt at bringing personal examples and experiences with the experiences of others. It was meant to be uncomfortable and ask teacher candidates to think about their personal experiences as privileges and recognize their position as that of an oppressor, as someone who wields power. It also added a layer of intersectionality that is important for teacher candidates to understand and can be helpful when White women turn to victimhood in conversations of Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2018; Jupp, Barry, & Lensmire, 2016; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Levine-Raskey, 2000; Matias, 2014; Sleeter, 2016). By asking teacher candidates to dialogue in small groups and negotiate, they were able to create personal meaning and reflect on their previous experiences with a new lens. See Appendix C for a list of the 30 privileges used.

### **Lesson Five**

It is important to note that this lesson is the first lesson in my six-lesson series to occur remotely as the university and school district switched to virtual learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal and intent of the lesson remain the same, but the structure and logistics of the lesson had to be adapted for remote learning. Lesson five deals directly with asking teacher candidates to problematize some of the largest movements that promote solutions to inequity. In Gorski's (2020) plenary address, he posits that educators and educational administrators become lured by "the shiny new thing" to promote equity. These shiny new things are initiatives such as mindfulness, trauma-informed practices, socio-emotional learning, grit, growth mindset, character education, and anti-bullying that he refers to as racial equity detours (Gorski, 2019). Gorski (2020) explains that in doing so, the individual is blamed for any perceived wrongdoing



and it is the responsibility of the individual to change his/her behavior to better fit the institution. Gorski's work has been incredibly helpful for teacher educators because he writes for practitioners drawing on common classroom practices. Thus, spending a lesson examining the practices more critically can support the teacher candidates' understanding of what it means to be a socially just teacher.

For our activity, four initiatives were selected: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), grit/growth mindset, socioemotional learning (SEL), and restorative justice. Similar to the other lessons, teacher candidates self-selected into groups of three to form four groups. The PDAs each joined one of the groups for a parallel teaching model of co-teaching. Each group was provided with two practitioner readings, no more than 2-3 pages. One reading presented a positive explanation and arguments for the equity solution while the other offered a critique and problematized the solution. After reading each article, the teacher candidates were asked to complete a Google Doc with a PDA as a facilitator and recorder that had four guiding questions, as shown in Figure 4.6: 1) What is the initiative, 2) What symptoms and/or root causes of inequalities does it address, 3) What are the benefits of implementing the initiative, and 4) What are its limitations? These questions are designed in a way to probe teacher candidates' reasoning about socially just teaching, as well as provide them with a set of questions they can continue to use as they expand their reasoning.

**Figure 4.6**

*Lesson Material (Google Doc) Each Group Was Asked to Complete*

BREAKOUT ROOM 1: [3 INTERNS] WITH [PDAs]			
WHAT IS THE INITIATIVE? (DESCRIBE IN MORE DETAIL)	WHAT SYMPTOMS AND/OR ROOT CAUSES OF INEQUALITIES DOES IT ADDRESS?	WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING THE INITIATIVE?	WHAT ARE ITS LIMITATIONS?

In each of the small groups, the discussion shifted in differing ways. While all four groups initially started with attempting to complete the Google Doc with a PDA volunteering as a recorder. As evident in Table 4.4, each topic lent itself to different discussions.

**Table 4.4**

***Main Discussion Topics Across Each Small Group***

<i>Teacher Candidates</i>	<i>PDAs</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Main Discussion Points</i>
Mandy, Grace, Ellen	Cameron, Parker	PBIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing and comparing across classrooms and schools</li> <li>• What is/isn't working in implementation</li> <li>• Parallels to "the real world"</li> <li>• The hidden curriculum of what PBIS enforces and teaches students</li> </ul>
Fiona, Eve, Natalie	Taylor	Restorative Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naming the benefits of restorative circles</li> <li>• Sharing and comparing across classrooms and schools</li> <li>• Parallels to prisons and the school-to-prison pipeline</li> <li>• Proposing solutions to equity issues and asking if restorative circles are an answer</li> </ul>
Anna, Sam, and Ashley	Billie	Grit / Growth Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining grit and growth mindset</li> <li>• How grit/growth mindset perpetuate equity issues</li> <li>• Alternatives to grit/growth mindset</li> <li>• Attempting to connect to systemic issues</li> <li>• Hypotheticals in their first year of teaching</li> </ul>

Matilda, Kayla, Jenna	River	Socioemotional Learning (SEL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing and comparing across classrooms and schools</li> <li>• History of SVSD incorporating SEL</li> <li>• Stigma of being poor</li> <li>• Discussing how SEL is used in the classroom needs/supports because teachers can't fix what's wrong outside of school</li> </ul>
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In this lesson, the intent was for the teacher candidates to gain a deeper understanding of one of the school district's initiatives (which are ubiquitous in many K-12 schools today), then based on the readings provided, discuss the symptoms or root causes of inequalities is it attempting to address and both of the benefits and limitations of implementing the initiative. Their personal experiences with the initiatives drove the conversation. Had this lesson occurred earlier in the semester when the teacher candidates did not have as much experience with the four selected initiatives, it is possible they would have not been able to engage in the ways that they did. One teacher candidate in at least three of the four groups (restorative justice, grit/growth mindset, and SEL) explicitly brought up how the initiative does not do what it purports and/or does not do enough to solve inequalities, and other members in the group agreed. This lesson generated incredibly important dialogue that suggests teacher candidates' development on a microgenetic level (discussed in Chapter 5).

### **Lesson Six**

And finally, in lesson six, teacher candidates revisit their definitions of socially just teaching. The final lesson did not go as planned or intended. The teacher candidates wanted to hear what each group discussed in the small groups from the previous week. This was a traditional sharing of information in a whole group setting, but it did not build to new knowledge. After spending time sharing out, remaining in a whole group setting, the teacher candidates were directed to reflect on their original definitions of social justice from the first

week. Two guiding questions were (a) how does what we have talked about fit with your definition/vision of social justice and (b) as we move forward, what is our definition(s) and what are our shared commitments towards social justice? Teacher candidates were encouraged to unpack terms in their definitions (e.g., what is “equality”?). Noting in fieldnotes (Fieldnotes, 04/08/2020) and in private chat messages sent to other PDAs during the reflection, only a few teacher candidates were participating in the whole group reflection, so we coordinated breakout rooms that contained combinations of 3-5 teacher candidates and PDAs. They were encouraged to continue the discussion from the whole group as well as reflect on what steps the teacher candidates have taken so far, what steps they are taking now, and where do they go from here.

The teacher candidates and PDAs persevered and tried their hardest to reflect on their understandings of social justice and action steps from the semester. As a final step, teacher candidates were asked to write out their current understandings of socially just teaching. Three representative responses are below:

- Natalie – “My current understanding of socially just education is a school environment that provides a just and equitable education regardless of factors such as gender, race, religion, SES, abilities/disabilities, language spoken, sexuality, gender identity, family interests, background, etc.”
- Kayla – “I believe that there are many complex layers to socially just education. I am realizing that it not only affects me and my students, but also society. I have learned to look at a topic in many different lenses and sometimes it is hard to figure out what the next steps might be. I believe that we are learning about socially just education because those next steps are going to be taken by us, as new teachers. I am also understanding that a component of socially just education is not just learning about it, but also acting on something based on what we've learned. Furthermore, teaching our students how to become advocates or "planting a seed" that may get them interested and teach them more about the injustices in the world.”
- Mandy – “Socially just education includes every student having access to the same resources, while getting the support they need.”

This session ultimately ended up being less structured and focused for a number of reasons. The COVID-19 pandemic and teaching conditions made it challenging to adapt

materials. The teacher candidates were learning increasingly difficult information each week regarding their placements, taking final certification steps, applying for jobs, learning about a virtual graduation, being told they will not be able to return to the classroom in-person for the remainder of the year, and so on. Additionally, Seminar typically culminates in several celebrations, one of which is the teacher inquiry conference. Many of the teacher candidates were unable to complete their inquiries, had to adapt them significantly, and were told there would be no inquiry conference. All of this was paying a toll on their motivation and engagement. It affected the PDAs as well. Many of the seminars that took place after going remote had teacher candidates and PDAs in tears, feeling frustrated, alone, helpless, and overwhelmed.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided an answer to the first research question, *how are the aspects of socially just teaching materialized through the practices of an intervention focused on social justice in a teacher education Seminar course?* By engaging the teacher candidates in various inquiry-based practices that were student-driven with the teacher as support/facilitator, my teacher educator practices emphasized question-asking rather than information-giving, knowledge construction based on dialogue, creating personal meaning, and post-lesson reflection and change/shift of self/practice. In such an approach, the teacher candidates were not provided theory or concepts to internalize and guide their thinking. Instead, the focus was on developing their reasoning, as well as personal meanings. This was done by asking questions that probe into teacher candidates' underlying reasoning as well as initiating moments of cognitive-emotional dissonance. In doing so, teacher candidates could begin to ask different questions, inquire into their practices in different ways, reason in new ways, and develop a stance of socially just

teaching that questions the everyday assumptions and systems of oppression that are taken for granted, seen as the only option, or feel immovable. Through the six lessons, I attempted to create these moments of cognitive/emotional dissonance, and in my practices/functions as a supervisor in the PDS, I build on these moments and further attempt to develop their reasoning, which is discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### Teacher Candidates' Development Toward Socially Just Teaching

Supervision and teacher education coursework in the PDS have historically had a range of overlapping, yet distinct functions in the support and preparation of teacher candidates. Recognizing the necessity of both teacher education and supervision to promote and trace teacher candidates' development of more socially just teaching practices in the PDS, I designed a two-part intervention study based on existing mediational spaces in the PDS. Chapter 4 addressed part one of the intervention study by providing a descriptive analysis of my teacher educator pedagogical practices to materialize socially just teaching for teacher candidates. Findings highlighted the possibilities for inquiry-based teaching to create moments of cognitive/emotional dissonance in the teacher candidates' development that neither impose nor pre-determine teacher candidates' reasoning towards a particular form of socially just teaching.

This chapter addresses part two of the intervention by zooming in on my supervisory practices to provide an analysis of the teacher candidates' development that takes place through their participation in the supervision portion of the intervention. It answers the study's second major research question and its ancillary question.

7. *In what ways do the PDS teacher candidates enact socially just teaching?*

a. *How was this enactment influenced by the researcher's responsive mediation?*

### My Supervisory Practices and Position Within the PDS

As described in Chapter 3, I was positioned as someone from the university who had a passion for and developing expertise in knowledge about and for social justice. At the same time, it was made clear that I was interested in learning more about the PDS system and its characteristics, motives, and ideologies, as well as how better to supervise teacher candidates.

Because of my developing expertise and the relationships that I formed with the teacher candidates in Fall 2019, they began to see me as someone they could go to for advice, ask questions to, and learn from as it related to social justice. At the same time, I underwent my own development as a supervisor because of my engagement in the activity of supervision and mediation from more experienced supervisors (i.e., Cameron, Billie, Taylor, River, and Parker). However, the focus of this chapter is on *the teacher candidates' development* as socially just teachers, not necessarily on my development, though the quality of my responsive mediation did impact their development (indirectly suggesting my development as a novice supervisor).

Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) delineate the *role* and *function* of a supervisor. They argue that even without a formal role, or title, anyone in a school building can enact the function of a supervisor, which is to support teachers' professional growth for improved student outcomes. This enactment is through practices common to supervision, which include, but are not limited to: conducting observations, collecting classroom data at teacher candidates' requests, co-planning, and collaboratively inquiring into classroom practice. In this study, I enacted the function of a supervisor by mirroring many of the practices of a supervisor in the PDS, though I did not hold a formal role. I began bi-weekly observations with the goal of holding observations and debriefs with the teacher candidates at least six times over the semester.<sup>27</sup> From late January to the first week of March, I had observed and debriefed with each teacher candidate at least twice. During Spring Break, in the first week of March, the Spring Valley School District (SVSD) switched to remote instruction. After several weeks, in conjunction with the state's department of education, the rest of the school year would be

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<sup>27</sup> PDAs are responsible for observing and debriefing with teacher candidates twice a week throughout the entire school calendar, so while I did fulfill some of the same roles as PDAs, it was not to the extent that they are expected to supervise teacher candidates.



remote. Thus, I had to change my observations and debriefs to one-on-one video conferencing meetings (see Chapter 3 for more detail on COVID-19 adjustments)<sup>28</sup> consisting of planning for instruction, reflecting on teaching, and sharing resources and ideas.

I understood my supervision through a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical (SCT) perspective (Johnson, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Because learning and development is socially mediated, this mediation must be targeted at the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD), or at the "ripening" stages of development (Vygotsky, 1978). During my supervision, the goal was to assist the teacher candidates in developing their reasoning teaching (Johnson, 1999) for social justice. In order to develop their reasoning teaching, I attempted to *responsively mediate* (Johnson & Golombek, 2016): to open/create a ZPD with the teacher candidates to develop their understanding of socially just teaching by offering intentional, goal-directed support that creat[es] the 'social conditions for the development' of expertise in teaching.

### **Primary Participants and Cohort Identification**

For the 2019-2020 year, 12 teacher candidates were divided evenly among three Professional Development Associates (PDAs). While there is a shared curriculum, mission, and co-planning and co-teaching, the PDAs have different strengths and areas of focus; they take distinctive but complimentary approaches to supervising teacher candidates, noticing and responding to teacher candidates' development; and they have different priorities of what they believe teacher candidates should be able to know and do. At the time the study began, the teacher candidates had already spent one full semester with their PDA, other teacher educators in the PDS, and their mentor teacher. In other words, supervision was already ongoing and one source of influence on the teacher candidates' development. Thus, the five teacher candidates I

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<sup>28</sup> Weekly one-on-one meetings between supervisor and teacher candidate are a supervisory practice common to the PDS

selected for this portion of the study are conceptualized as being part of three cohorts in the 2019-2020 PDS program (See Table 5.1).<sup>29</sup>

**Table 5.1**

***Overview of Teacher Candidates' Placements and Cohorts<sup>a</sup>***

<i>Cohort</i>	<i>Name of Teacher Candidate</i>	<i>Supervising PDA</i>	<i>School Placement</i>	<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Mentor Teacher</i>
1	Eve	Taylor	Bridgeview Elementary	3	--
	Fiona	Taylor	Crossroads Elementary	2	Elena
2	Kayla	Cameron	Greenland Elementary	1	Lydia
	Matilda	Cameron	Greenland Elementary	K	Alice
3	Natalie	River	Meadows Elementary	3	Harriet

<sup>a</sup> Cohort numbers are not significant; pseudonyms of teacher candidates' first names were recorded alphabetically, which happened to align with their shared PDA.

### **Data Informing the Research Questions in This Chapter**

Transcribed and analyzed audio and video-recorded data includes the initial and final interview with each teacher candidate, the teaching observations and follow-up debriefs (many with the teacher candidates' PDAs present), the one-on-one video meetings, and teacher candidates' participation in the teacher education lessons discussed in Chapter 4. Additionally, I transcribed data from a co-teaching experience with Fiona and a co-planning meeting with Matilda. I included in my analysis the teacher candidates' weekly reflections as well as their work on their inquiries<sup>30</sup> during and outside of the weekly Spring Seminar (see Table 5.2).

<sup>29</sup> Chapter 3 includes details of the selection process, and Chapter 6 includes an analysis of the teacher candidates' motives for being part of the study and how they position themselves in the work of social justice.

<sup>30</sup> Inquiry is both a signature pedagogy for the SVSD-MASU PDS as well as a stance for teacher reflection and professional development. Practitioner inquiry is introduced to the teacher candidates in their Fall methods courses, and in Spring, teacher candidates start the semester by developing and refining wonderings on teaching, learning, schooling, etc. Throughout the semester, during Seminar, they participate in workshops and activities meant to support their inquiries. The semester culminates with a Teacher Inquiry conference, in which teacher candidates present on their inquiries and write a final research paper.

**Table 5.2**

***Dates of Data Collected from Primary Participants***

<i>Cohort</i>	<i>Primary Participant Teacher Candidates</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Debriefs</i>	<i>One-on-one meetings</i>	<i>Additional Sources of Data</i>
1	Eve	1/27, 5/12	2/07, 2/27	2/18, 2/28	3/23	-
	Fiona	1/21, 5/15	2/07, 2/18	2/07, 2/18, 2/25	3/23, 4/09	Co-teach 2/25
2	Kayla	1/22, 5/11	2/03, 2/24, 3/06	2/03, 2/24, 3/06	3/23	-
	Matilda	1/27, 5/14	2/20, 3/06, 4/20, 4/27 <sup>31</sup>	2/20, 3/06	4/09	Co-plan 4/24
3	Natalie	1/20, 5/20	2/06, 2/20, 3/05	2/06, 2/20	3/24, 4/07	-

### **Comment on How the Excerpts are Used in This Chapter**

It is important to note that the selected data excerpts include multiple data points and overlapping content, even if the excerpt is used to provide evidence for one specific instance of development of socially just teaching. In some instances, a selected excerpt can be used as evidence for multiple claims, some excerpts may be repeated, and teacher candidates' interactions from one cohort may appear in excerpts used to support claims in another cohort. There was an attempt to balance data from the full spectrum of sources and all five participants. Chapter 3 includes explanations of transcription conventions and data analysis procedures.

### **Overview of the Chapter Findings**

This chapter highlights the ways teacher candidates are *attempting* to be socially just. The chapter introduces sources of development that I recognized when supervising. My goal was for teacher candidates to critically reflect on what they bring into the classroom and develop “complex, flexible, conceptual understandings” of socially just teaching within the particular

<sup>31</sup> While not traditional observations on 4/20 and 4/27, these were pre-recorded lessons Matilda shared through her choice boards.

contexts they work in and students they teach (Johnson, 1999). The findings for each cohort reveal several important considerations for both how the teacher candidates' thought about socially just teaching and in what ways it was enacted in their teaching practice. First, the findings reinforce that "a socially just teacher" is not a static or absolute descriptor. We are complex beings and part of deeply interwoven systems of oppression that we are actively working against while (un)intentionally reinforcing at the same time. As such, we are able to enact socially just teaching in multiple distinct and overlapping ways, ranging in intensity. The shared experiences in each cohort are not exclusive to the cohort, but are deeper, more frequent, and more salient in that specific cohort than in the other two. Additionally, the findings are emergent and underscore that the path of development is not a linear path from external to internal, though it appears first externally on the social plane and then internalized (Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher candidates began to develop "their own 'expert' knowledge with their own intentions, in their own voices, and create[d] instruction that is meaningful for their own objectives" (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p. 6), see Ball, 2000). Finally, the findings indicate instances of the influence of my responsive mediation on the teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching. Not only did COVID-19 lead to interruptions in my supervision, but my attempts at responsive mediation were not always successful. Analysis of transcripts revealed successes, but also missed opportunities, misinterpretations of what teacher candidates were thinking, and provoking questions or thoughts that were not targeted within the teacher candidates' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Thus, the findings for each cohort are multifaceted, highlight *emergent* ways in which the teacher candidates enacted socially just teaching, and are contingent on the character and quality of my mediation and their PDA's supervision. Table 5.3 includes a list of the ways teacher candidates enacted socially just

teaching. In each of the three cohort sections to follow, I discuss the development of socially just teaching within each cohort.

**Table 5.3**

<i><b>Summary of Findings: How Each Cohort Emergently Enacted Socially Just Teaching</b></i>		
<i>Cohort</i>	<i>Teacher Candidate</i>	<i>Enactment of Socially Just Teaching</i>
1 Taylor	Eve & Fiona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending to the identities and biases of teachers and students               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reflecting on self and teacher identity</li> <li>○ Celebrating the diversity students bring to the classroom</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2 Cameron	Kayla & Matilda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing goals of classroom community and citizenship               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Yet</i> prioritizing of the individual citizen over the community</li> <li>○ <i>Yet</i> unknowingly (mis)aligning teaching practices to community for social justice</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Differences in scope</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Kayla: Using different lenses as a state of mind for social justice</i></li> <li>○ <i>Matilda: Supporting students in developing an activist stance</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3 River	Natalie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skepticism of “Heroes and Holidays” curriculum</li> <li>• Awareness of U.S. current events and politics, <i>yet</i> outside of schooling</li> </ul>

### **Cohort 1: Eve and Fiona**

Eve was placed in a third-grade classroom at Bridgeview Elementary. Fiona<sup>32</sup> was placed in a second-grade classroom at Crossroads Elementary with a mentor teacher, Elena, who had been in the PDS for approximately 12 years. Elena also has the experience of being a teacher candidate in the SVSD-MSU PDS and served as a PDA for three years while on a classroom-release. Both Eve and Fiona were assigned to Taylor as their student teaching supervisor, or PDA. In Fall 2019, Taylor was one of their co-teachers for Math Methods. By having the same

<sup>32</sup> As noted in Chapter 3, Fiona and I had a prior supervisor-teacher candidate relationship in the Spring/Summer months before this study. This provided us familiarity and a common starting point in our work together.

PDA, Eve and Fiona received similar supervision from Taylor<sup>33</sup>. Taylor was present for one of my observations of Eve.

In initial interviews in January, I asked Eve and Fiona each about their current understanding of socially just teaching. They shared similar views. They note the importance of “being aware of [one’s] biases and how [she] can think about that and change it” (Eve) and “being cognizant and understanding of those around you and how what you’re doing affects them” (Fiona). At the same time, they both speak to inclusion in reference to their students, particularly related to the languages spoken in the classroom, “non-traditional” home lives, and classroom behaviors.

In the months that followed the initial interviews, as I worked with Eve and Fiona through observations, debriefs, co-teaching, 1-on-1 meetings, and Seminar, their initial understandings continued to take shape. Eve and Fiona’s socially just teaching is visible through their talk about their awareness of their identity, predominately their Whiteness, although gender and class are also considered. This led to their reflection on their identity groups and their attempt to consider their biases and how they are positioned in the classroom in relation to how they view and position their students. Eve and Fiona celebrate the diversity of their students as unique individuals whom they try to see as equal. Their celebration and consideration of what they perceived to be the unique needs of each of their students took on a new form once the COVID-19 pandemic led to school closures and the surfacing of deeply-rooted racial and economic inequities that were not on the minds of many prior to the pandemic. Eve and Fiona began to shift their attention to their students’ (in)access to resources; however, this finding is

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<sup>33</sup> Supervision included but was not limited to weekly teacher candidate cohort meetings with book club discussions; feedback on lesson plans and teaching observations; responses to their weekly reflections; exposure to Taylor’s regular reflections; assignment feedback, including their semester-long inquiries; and general support and advice.

beyond the scope of this chapter. The two ways that Eve and Fiona attend to identity and diversity 1) through a reflection of their own teacher identity and the need for increasing the number of BIPOC teachers, and 2) celebrating aspects of their students' identities will be discussed in the sections that follow.

## **Attending to the Identities and Biases of Teachers and Students**

### ***Teaching While White***

In my initial interview with Eve, I was struck by her description of where she is from.

She described it as a

"very White community... very Christian. There's no diversity there... I was just around the same individuals, not same but very similar people. And it's very middle, we're very middle class and then there's really high upper-class people, but then there's very low class too, so it's very wide range but the surrounding districts are very, some of them are very rich too." (Eve, Initial Interview)

After hearing this, I immediately ask Eve "so, when did you start talking about your town like that?" because it seemed that this was a fairly new way of describing her hometown. My intuition was validated; Eve said that she began using the above description in college after her close friend "made her realize how in a bubble [she] was." It became clear that Eve had been consciously reflecting on her upbringing, her race, class, and religion, and that this could be a developmental starting point and something to build upon in our work together. Later in the interview Eve extends this beyond herself and mentions her desire to see more "diverse teachers":

it's really important to have diverse teachers but at the same time it's not that we don't have a say in that, but like, do you know what I mean? it's hard to get- we can't force people to become teachers [...] but having as many diverse teachers as we can (Eve, Initial Interview)

I respond by sharing information with Eve about the teacher pipeline, teachers' roles in increasing teacher diversity, and the historical structures and policies that removed Black teachers from the classroom and led to today's 80% White teaching population. This consistent awareness of her own racial identity and that of other teachers was also present in my supervision of Fiona.

**Small Group Discussion on Restorative Justice.** One instance that typifies the ways in which Eve and Fiona enacted this aspect of socially just teaching is a small group discussion after Lesson 5 (03/25/2020). Eve, Fiona, and Natalie (in cohort 3) were present for the small group discussion, and Taylor and I were the facilitators. The task was to read two short practitioner articles I had selected on the role of restorative justice as one practice to redress inequities in education. After reading, the goal was to work as a group to complete a chart that included the following four questions:

- What is the initiative? (Describe in more detail)
- What symptoms and/or root causes of inequalities does it address?
- What are the benefits of implementing the initiative?
- What are its limitations?

Fiona opens up the discussion with a clarifying question from one of the articles about who can lead restorative justice circles. This becomes a central focus to our discussion on restorative justice. As shown below is Excerpt 5.1, she expresses confusion about whether or not the article is saying White teachers can lead restorative justice circles if they have students that are predominately Black or Latinx.

**Excerpt 5.1 from Small Group Restorative Justice Discussion (03/25/2020)**

FIO = Fiona



1 FIO: So something that was really interesting [...] um like, there  
 2 wasn't any white teachers. I thought was interesting because it  
 3 made it seem, like I thought it was interesting because primarily  
 4 in Spring Valley all teachers are white and with the exception of  
 5 [Crossroads, Horizon, and Bridgeview], this is a very white  
 6 school district. [...] But I was wondering a little bit about how  
 7 they're saying if 99 percent of your staff is white, but 99  
 8 percent of your students are not. And it made me think about,  
 9 like **is it saying that maybe I can't effectively do it for those**  
 10 **students because I'm white?** Like I don't know, something a little  
 11 bit totally random [...] But that was something that I had thought  
 12 about when I was reading it.

In this excerpt, Fiona is attempting to articulate her concern with how she, because of her race, is implicated in the article. She wonders if the author of the article is saying she cannot lead a restorative justice circle because she is White. It is clear that Fiona is aware of her racial identity and the impact it may have on the classroom. Though she has led restorative justice circles before and attended training offered through the school district, it was not until reading the article that I assigned that she began to question how her racial identity is implicated in the practice.

Before I am able to respond to Fiona, Natalie offers her interpretation of what the article is saying. She explains to Fiona that she believes the article is advancing the idea that White people do not need to occupy every space that people of color also hold. She says that people of color have shared experiences that White people could never understand or experience, and that perhaps restorative justice circles can be a way for minoritized students to have their own space. While Natalie's response is helpful, it does not fully address Fiona's question. In Excerpt 5.2, I attempt to redirect Fiona and Natalie back to the article to answer Fiona's initial question.

### **Excerpt 5.2 from Small Group Restorative Justice Discussion (03/25/2020)**

FIO = Fiona; MEG = Megan

1 MEG: So, what are the assumptions there? Why might- because it says in  
 2 the Cult of Pedagogy article that ((*reading from the article*))  
 3 that's the paragraph that you were touching on, right?  
 4 FIO: yes

5 MEG: And Natalie, you brought up the point of coming from the  
 6 perspective of knowing what that experience is like for those  
 7 students. **And it's the question of, can a white educator know the**  
 8 **experience of those students?**  
 9 And then Fiona, your question is, **do you think you could do a**  
 10 **restorative justice circle well, if you had a class of all black**  
 11 **students?**  
 12 FIO: **Not necessary. Yes, I think, to a point.** I think I was just  
 13 wondering if the article was saying that certain school districts  
 14 are starting to implement this more like school districts from  
 15 less various backgrounds, possibly. I think that's what I was  
 16 kind of wondering a little bit, like, I think, cuz I know I've  
 17 done a couple in my class, but also with my own students, those  
 18 restorative justice practices. So I think I was just thinking  
 19 about that a little bit.  
 20 MEG: **Yeah, so maybe it's important to think about why schools decide**  
 21 **to have restorative justice circles. And if we figure out why**  
 22 **they decide to have them, then we can think about which schools**  
 23 **are the ones that are having them or which teachers are the ones**  
 24 **that are choosing to do them.**

On lines 7-8 and 9-11, I attempt to bring Natalie and Fiona's questions into focus together because they are related. On line 12, Fiona does give an answer, but it is somewhat of a non-answer. She says no and yes, then qualifies it with a "to a point." There is uncertainty in her answer and somewhat of an unwillingness to respond. She deflects and talks about the school districts' implementation policy instead of answering her own question of whether as a White teacher, she could effectively lead restorative justice circles. Overall, however, she is attempting to reflect on her positioning in the classroom and how her race and the race of her students are implicated, but it is perhaps from a stance of defensiveness.

On lines 20-24, I suggest that we dig deeper into the purposes behind the restorative justice circles instead of giving an absolute yes/no response. I also want Fiona to understand more deeply what restorative justice is and the role race plays in restorative justice in K-12 schools. In response to my prompt of why schools decide to have restorative justice circles, Eve, Fiona, and Natalie discuss the benefits: building better community, creating relationships, understand students better, and deescalate situations.

Not satisfied with the extent of their response and that they have not made an explicit connection to social justice, I restate the benefits they had shared and try asking another question: “What situations are the ones that lead to having to do restorative justice? It’s not every problem in the classroom leads to a restorative justice circle.” In asking this question, I learn that Fiona, Eve, and Natalie were not entirely clear on what a restorative justice circle is. They have had the opportunity to participate in SVSD’s professional development on restorative circles. My fieldnotes suggest why the teacher candidates lack this understanding. It can be interpreted that SVSD takes a less radical and more “sanitized” version of restorative justice. The structures are the focus rather than deeply understanding the underlying purpose, roots in indigenous practices, and connections to the carceral state and racial justice (fieldnotes, Spring 2020). After listening to Fiona, Eve, and Natalie share and compare experiences from their classrooms, I redirect the teacher candidates by providing a definition and brief history of restorative justice. By continuing to ask teacher candidates to externalize their understandings of restorative justice (why schools decide to implement restorative justice and what situations lead to restorative justice circles), I am able to see that they understood one of the *practices* of restorative justice – leading restorative justice circles, but not the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of restorative justice. Thus, the readings I selected and the dialogue we engaged in created a space for teacher candidates to talk more deeply about restorative justice, which raised important issues of race and the positioning of the teacher and students.

Later in the discussion, in Excerpt 5.3 below, I build off of a conversation on representation and increasing teacher diversity to ask what role White teachers have in diversifying the teacher workforce. In doing so, this inadvertently shifts the conversation from a

discussion of their own identity as White teachers to a discussion on how the teacher candidates believe they can increase representation in the classroom and among the teacher workforce.

**Excerpt 5.3 from Small Group Restorative Justice Discussion (03/25/2020)**

MEG = Megan, EVE = Eve, NAT = Natalie, TAY = Taylor

1 MEG: **So what can we do if you are a white teacher**, which, you know,  
 2 [...] I think we all identify as white, but I don't, I don't want  
 3 to say anything for anybody, but [...] what could we do?  
 4 NAT: Something that my mentor teacher did a lot in Black History  
 5 Month... [...]  
 6 EVE: And not saying that that is bad thing. I think that is awesome.  
 7 But even doing that, but throughout the entire school year too  
 8 TAY: I think one way to simply sum up what you are saying is or  
 9 thinking about it this way, **you can't diversify yourself. You are**  
 10 **a white female, you cannot make yourself a Black male [...]**  
 11 EVE: **Now, so as like teachers, how can we also get more people of**  
 12 **color into the field of education? How, what are we- is it- what**  
 13 **are things that we can do to help do that?**  
 14 NAT: That we can do as teachers?  
 15 EVE: Yeah, **I feel like, I guess not teaching your students to become**  
 16 **teachers but telling them that like, 'oh, teaching's awesome!'**  
 17 **'You should be a teacher, too!'** but like, what else can we do to...

In lines 9-10 in the above excerpt (5.3), we see Taylor recast what Natalie offers as an answer to my question of what White teachers can do to diversify the teaching workforce. Eve responds twice, first on lines 11-13 and then on lines 15-17 to clarify. She seems to only repeat the same question that was asked on lines 1-3. Eve is genuinely seeking an answer, but she cannot seem to come up with anything beyond promoting being a teacher in the classroom and knowing that what Natalie and her mentor teacher did during Black History Month should be year-round.

In the moment, the conversation seemed productive – teacher candidates were invested in talking about restorative justice but also their own identity, representation, and increasing teacher diversity. The conversation was immediately applicable to their teaching activity, as it centered around a classroom practice they had trainings on and experience being part of or leading. Furthermore, it revealed initial, unexamined conceptions the teacher candidates had around a classroom practice. However, there are much deeper more unresolved tensions about racial

identity that could be built upon in future conversations. This detailed example highlights the emerging ways Cohort 1 is recognizing their racial identity as teachers, but their thinking and reasoning is still in budding stages, making it ripe for development, though it was not followed up on after the conversation ended.

### ***Teaching “the Other”***

In this section, I demonstrate how Cohort 1’s focus on identity and bias was reflected in their teaching, planning, and reasoning about teaching for social justice. Eve and Fiona repeatedly attempted to honor their students’ linguistic and cultural diversity, with a range of outcomes. In their attempts to honor the diversity their students bring into the classroom, Eve and Fiona inadvertently essentialize identity groups and see their students’ identity and diversity as individual characteristics. I highlight my ongoing attempts to responsively mediate Fiona’s attempt to celebrate linguistic diversity, with little success.

**School Demographics.** Before exploring the ways in which Eve and Fiona focused on student diversity, it is important to note the differences in student diversity in their placements as well as the district. Some of the notable facts are in the list that follows<sup>34</sup>:

- Crossroads Elementary (Fiona’s placement) has three times the number of English Learners than Eve’s school, Bridgeview (17.6% and 5.5%, respectively).
- Crossroads and Bridgeview have higher-than-district averages of economically disadvantaged students (33.3% and 27.7%).
- Crossroads is the only elementary school in SVSD to have a homeless population as high as 2.9%. The other elementary schools average below 0.5%.

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<sup>34</sup> These are labels that the state’s department of education and school district use. They are not the way I would describe students with these labels or experiencing these conditions.

- The percent of students that receive special education services is approximately the same across the schools and the district's elementary schools (9-12%).
- In terms of race and ethnicity, the percent of enrollment for students who identify as Asian, Black, Hispanic, or belonging to two or more races is 41% at Crossroads, and 21.9% at Bridgeview. The district average is 21.4%.

Eve's placement, Bridgeview Elementary, mostly mirrors the school district with the exception of the number of "economically disadvantaged" students. On the other hand, Fiona's placement, Crossroads Elementary, includes students that represent more linguistic and racial diversity than the district – a characteristic frequently attributed to Crossroads.

**Eve and Fiona's Descriptions of Their Students.** Unique to Eve and Fiona was the ways in which they talked about their students. It was important to Eve and Fiona that they not only view their students in terms of their academic performance, but to recognize their identity and lived experiences. In doing so, they had what seemed like a hyper-awareness of and attention to their students' identities. At times, this manifested like a checklist for inclusion. During our initial interview, Fiona talks about her mentor teacher Elena's classroom library.

I know Elena has a very diverse library. every single kind of student is represented. and we were just book shopping because the district money [...] but now we're getting books [...] and that's so important. to have those kinds of representations

Fiona is proud that "every single kind of student is represented" and she values how important it is to have an inclusive classroom library. Later in the interview, she says that she is working to "be more understanding of those around me and making sure that I am thinking about every population when I'm putting out a lesson" (Interview 1). While there is a degree of hyperbole in Fiona's comments about "*every* single kind of student" and "thinking about *every* population,"

she does see her role as a teacher as one that needs to consider who all of her students are in relation to her own identity.

In debriefs, Fiona and Eve demonstrate this inclusion checklist almost literally. I asked Fiona to tell me about her students in our first debrief. She first pulls out a classroom roster with photos of students and launches into descriptions of her students one by one. In my second debrief with Eve after observing her lead a science lesson on electricity, she does something quite similar. She talks through her students one at a time: Student A, Student J, Student D (“we’re trying to get her an IEP at the moment”), Student R, Student C, Student B, Student D2, Student A, Student G, Student M, Student R2, Student V, Student A2, Student R3. Eve concludes her exhaustive list with “trying to think of anyone else...”

I sat patiently as Eve rattled off details about each of her students, and once she finished, I attempted to mediate Eve in thinking about her students in more dynamic, situation, and complex ways. See Excerpt 5.4 for our conversation.

#### **Excerpt 5.4 from Debrief 2 with Eve (02/28/2020)**

1 MEG: I love hearing the way people talk about their students. because  
 2 we all do it. **we all sort them and categorize them. and we hold**  
 3 **all these different pieces of information about them in our**  
 4 **heads.**  
 5 But yeah, it's the way we talk about and think about our  
 6 students. it's something that I've been interested in all  
 7 semester. that I didn't think I had as much of an interest in  
 8 until now.  
 9 EVE: **and now that you're talking about-** yeah, I think I always think  
 10 of that, so now I'm like 'huh' I do wonder about that a lot. yeah  
 11 MEG: and it changes, right? based on the time of day, based on the  
 12 activity, based on the content area, based on the task within the  
 13 content area, **and thinking about all the different assets and**  
 14 **things that students bring.** And you talking about the way this  
 15 science, the more hands-on phenomena-based science is bringing  
 16 out different qualities in different students  
 17 EVE: **with [Student J] and it shocks me because I remember him telling**  
 18 **me at the beginning of the year he's like 'I hate science. I**  
 19 **don't want to do science. it's my least favorite thing.'** and then  
 20 **you see him doing electricity and he's like totally enjoying it**

On lines 2-4, I summarize what I understand Eve to be doing in our debrief, but I position myself alongside Eve as someone who does the same thing through the use of the pronoun ‘we’. In doing so, I open a space for Eve and I to think together about the act of labeling and sorting students. She responds in line 9 by saying that because I raised the issue, she is able to think about it differently. I provide more concrete examples in lines 11 and 16 and directly relate it to the science lesson I observed her teach earlier that day. Then in lines 17-20, we see her incorporate this new way of thinking with a narrative and counternarrative of Student J. By opening the space for Eve to reason differently about her students and their identities, she was able to shift to a more dynamic and situational perspective on her students.

**Fiona’s Greetings During Morning Meeting.** Another way that Cohort 1’s hyper-awareness of student identity and diversity in the classroom materialized was in Fiona’s approach to celebrate linguistic diversity during Morning Meetings<sup>35</sup>. Fiona was largely responsible for planning and leading Morning Meetings when the study took place. She was inspired by one of the greetings suggested in the Morning Meeting manual – saying the morning greeting in another language. Fiona then began incorporating one new language every few weeks with her second-grade students. After I observed her during a Morning Meeting, she shared in our debrief that she had covered Spanish, Portuguese, Hawaiian, Russian, Arabic, Swahili, Chinese, German, and Greek. Fiona does this so that her students “pick up on the idea to respect others,” “learn about each other and our classmates,” and be exposed to the “diversity of

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<sup>35</sup> Morning Meetings are a practice from *The Responsive Classroom*. They are designed to “build a strong sense of community and set children up for success socially and academically” at the start of the day. Morning Meetings have four key components: greeting each other by name, sharing important events/information, a group activity (singing, dancing, playing a game), and reading/listening to a message shared by the teacher(s). Morning Meetings are a common practice in Spring Valley and the PDS.



languages.” At the same time, she worries that her students only see it as a “fun” activity. Fiona and I returned to her practices in Morning Meetings several times in observations and in debriefs, and I co-taught a Morning Meeting with her after co-planning our questions. We then looked through the transcript and data from co-teaching for an additional debrief. The conversations were fruitful. Fiona and I discussed various ways she could be more intentional in incorporating languages. I suggested shifting to the students’ perspective by asking “*what languages would they want to learn to say help in?*”, “*those are words we want them to say; what do they want to learn to say?*” and “*what would be meaningful for them?*” (Debriefs 2 and 3). In our co-teaching, we collected student data by asking the students to tell us what languages they would like to learn that’s new or learn or use more. Fiona used that data to choose which language she wanted to incorporate next.

Yet in the end, Fiona confirmed her goal, “I don't know if my goal is so much for them to be using them out of the classroom, but almost just to have an awareness that they're there” (Debrief 3, 02/25/2020). She resorts to treating linguistic diversity superficially through a checklist approach. For Fiona, it is enough to name languages and have students say “hello” in multiple languages during Morning Meeting. This section has only been a very brief and oversimplistic account of this phenomenon. The interactions and discussions between Fiona and I merit its own in-depth analysis beyond the scope of this chapter.

### **Insights into Cohort 1’s Development and My Attempts at Responsive Mediation**

Eve and Fiona come into our work together with individual histories, agency, and goals for the work together. They are not blank slates for me to simply transmit information or prompt for development. What is influential for Eve and Fiona is contingent, in part, on their thinking and agency. This is noted specifically for Eve and Fiona because they present an interesting

dynamic when paired together for analysis. While the two were part of the same four-person cohort supervised by Taylor, I interpreted Fiona to be an outsider in this group (fieldnotes, Spring 2020). The three other teacher candidates sat together for every Seminar and were seen as “the social justice ones.” A rumor circulated in Fall during Social Studies Methods that Fiona was not invited to Eve’s party and the class had to engage in a restorative circle that I left the room for<sup>36</sup>. Fiona was referred to as childish at times. Both her PDA and mentor teacher, Elena, noted her distinct struggles with Fiona’s reflections throughout the year. Elena shared that perhaps my work with Fiona could be an additional support to develop her abilities to reflect. This provides an insight into why my attempts at responsive mediation appeared more successful in data with Eve than Fiona.

Along these same lines, cohort 1 had just finished reading and discussing *White Fragility* (DiAngelo, 2018) at the end of the Fall semester, and this appears to have had an impact on Eve and Fiona’s attentiveness to racial identity and influenced the first finding. Both teacher candidates demonstrated reflexivity with their own racial identity that they bring into the classroom. I believe Fiona and Eve genuinely internalized the idea that race matters in the classroom and that there is privilege in being White. Although both note the importance of increasing the number of BIPOC teachers, Fiona’s concern about not being able to do things because she is White suggests she might feel that her job security at risk if increasing teacher representation is a focus. Their attention to their own race and the racial identity of teachers also extends to the students. They both want to recognize their “whole” students, identity and personality in addition to their academic skills. Despite their attempts to honor and celebrate their students’ identities, in practice, this results in essentializing and labeling their students

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<sup>36</sup> My status was still more of an outsider, and with consultation with other PDAs, I left the room so that the teacher candidates and PDAs could work to restore justice in a more trusting space.

superficially. In a debrief with Eve, I raise questions about the attendance policy and its award system (something that came up in the observation). In her initial response, she interprets attendance award systems to be inequitable because only some students are awarded while others don't have the chance. She attempts to advocate for the students not getting awarded and does not want them to feel badly. However, by the end of our debrief, she begins to see the system of attendance awards and the ideology it is built upon is flawed and we co-construct alternative visions of attendance awards.

These sorts of changes happened in almost all of my interactions with Eve. I responsively mediate such that by the end of each conversation, there were documented shifts in how she was interpreting classroom practices that were more socially just. In contrast with Fiona, my attempts at responsive mediation were not as successful. Though Fiona and I did benefit from being able to consistently talk about the same practice – her Morning Meetings – very little development happened over time. In both instances, repetition, consistency, and sustainability over time could have facilitated long-term development.

### **Cohort 2: Kayla and Matilda**

Kayla and Matilda were assigned to Greenland Elementary for their yearlong student teaching in the PDS. By being assigned to the same school building, they had similar experiences in student demographics, school-wide initiatives, administrative structures and supports, and overall school culture. Kayla was paired with a mentor teacher in a first-grade classroom, while Matilda was paired with a mentor teacher in a kindergarten classroom. Kayla's mentor teacher, Lydia, has been a partner in the PDS for approximately 20 years. In contrast, Matilda's mentor teacher, Alice, was new to the PDS for the 2019-2020 academic year. Additionally, they shared the same PDA – Cameron – who was one of their co-teachers for the teacher candidates' Social

Studies Methods course the previous semester. By having the same PDA, Kayla and Matilda received supervision from Cameron as described above and in previous chapters. I held five debriefs total with Kayla (n=3) and Matilda (n=2). Cameron was present for all except my first debrief with Matilda. This provided a particularly important insight into their development as well as an opportunity to collaborate with Cameron and learn from her expertise as a supervisor.

In the subsequent sections, I show two ways Matilda and Kayla demonstrate an emerging enactment of socially just teaching. The first is based on their evolving understandings of community and citizenship. Then, I link Kayla and Matilda's understanding of socially just teaching as taking action in "small ways" and "big ways" (using Kayla's words).

### **Socially Just Teaching as Developing Classroom Community and Citizenship**

Community is a nebulous, all-encompassing term that is used broadly in education. Because of this, it is often taken for granted and not unpacked, leaving the questions, *A community of whom? A community for what? A community that serves whom?* unanswered.

At Kayla and Matilda's student teaching site, Greenland Elementary, classroom community is valued by many teachers and administrators, as well as the PDS community. Through my fieldnotes, I interpret community and citizenship as something that is taken for granted. My fieldnotes indicate that it can be paired with classroom behavior expectations and a tool used for classroom management and discipline. It can also be performative and superficial; asking students to share about their personal lives and meanings, sitting at tables together, in circles on carpets, but stopping at that transactional level. Yet, this is my sense from fieldnotes and time in Greenland Elementary, SVSD, and the PDS partnership<sup>37</sup>. This is not meant to be a generalization or an indictment of the school or the school district. This analysis is included

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<sup>37</sup> The common practice of Morning Meetings from The Responsive Classroom curriculum is one such example.

because of the frequency, intentionality, and consistency with which Kayla and Matilda considered the role and value of community. This is evident in observation debriefs, 1-on-1 meetings, weekly reflections, and inquiries. Although their commitment to growing a classroom community and democratic citizenship is a salient feature of their stance towards becoming socially just teachers, an understanding of classroom community and citizenship in line with a social justice perspective is in its emergent stages.

In my supervision, I recognized Cohort 2's value of community and citizenship and attempted to mediate their development towards how a socially just teacher might conceptualize "community". An intentional focus on classroom community and citizenship can instill emergent ideals of communal living through decolonization and a rejection of oppressive hierarchical structures in favor of more shared participation in a society and mutual aid. In this sense, goals of classroom community and citizenship can align with the practices of a socially just teacher.

Kayla and Matilda's development are captured in the data in two ways. First, Kayla and Matilda both explicitly and frequently orient to community and citizenship in ways that prioritize the individual over the community, though there is evidence of a change in their planning and teaching. I highlight where change is taken up and the role of my responsive mediation in facilitating such developmental change. And at other times, their teaching practices and talk about teaching is unknowingly tied to community and citizenship and through explicit responsive mediation to strengthen the tie.

### ***Prioritizing the Individual Citizen Over the Community***

Matilda and Kayla's practices for building classroom community and citizenship initially prioritize the individual citizen over the community. By this, I mean that the beneficiary and responsibility of actions is directed almost solely to the individual. As a result of my responsive

mediation, Matilda and Kayla demonstrate very early indicators of a shift away from this ideology in their planning and implementation of their next lesson. I will provide an example from each teacher candidate.

**(Re)Defining Activism for Kindergarteners.** Matilda's inquiry (*How can I use purposeful read-alouds to help my students become global citizens through an awareness of injustice and an activist stance?*) prioritizes the individual over the community at the beginning of the semester. As stated in our initial interview, one of Matilda's stated goals has been to develop global citizens.

#### **Excerpt 5.5 from Debrief 1 (02/20/2020)**

MATILDA: originally my inquiry was focused on **creating global citizens**, but now I feel like the direction I'm going is more of like awareness of injustice and activism. so then it came up that **maybe that's part of becoming a global citizen**. and so **what parts do you need to be aware of or do you need to know about activism to become a global citizen?** now it's **'become global citizens through an awareness of injustices and an activism stance'** [...] so we're gonna have the pre-interviews on Monday and just talking about some of the questions. **it starts with 'what's a community?'** then it gets into injustices, like 'have you ever seen something unfair? tell me about it. what have people done?' [...] 'what would you do?' and then my last two questions are what is an activist and are you an activist?

In Excerpt 5.5, Matilda ties personal responsibility to being a global citizen – asking individuals what they need to know and be aware of. Her focus appears to be on changing individuals' efforts. Not that these are not important actions in a movement for activism, but the onus of responsibility is each individual actor. Each person does their part: if you see something, say something. Bringing collective voices together, or perhaps if Matilda had asked, how can we work together as global citizens to do [something], the perspective of responsibility would be different.

In late March and April, Matilda begins to work on her two choice boards<sup>38</sup> to complete her inquiry. Her first choice board is titled “Justice” and her second is titled “Activism” (see Appendix D for her two choice boards).

In her Justice choice board, she asks her students to write about “something unfair that has happened to you.” The read-aloud, *Henry Keeps Score*, and associated math word problems and writing activities reinforce the notion that being unfair as “when one person has more than another person.” When compared to an explanation of unfair as “when one group receives more than another group at the expense of the other groups,” we can more easily see how Matilda’s attempt at linking fairness and justice is focused on individuals being compared to one another rather than seeing a group, or a larger more systematic view of fairness. Because Matilda is working with kindergarteners, she is being mindful of the language she uses and attempts to make things as easily digestible as possible. Yet, in doing so, she removes (or perhaps does not have an understanding of) justice through a structural perspective and reduces it to the impact on individual versus individual.

Between finishing her first choice board and conceptualizing her second, Activism, Matilda was struggling with making activism meaningful for her students while also holding to her goal of “creating global citizens.” Matilda and I met via Zoom to work on her choice board planning together. We talked about being part of a community, not being selfish, coexisting, helping one another. Part of our co-planning time was spent trying to find an appropriate picture book for a read-aloud. When evaluating picture books for read alouds, I read a portion of *What Can A Citizen Do?* by Dave Eggers (2018) and offer a critique as shown in Excerpt 5.6.

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<sup>38</sup> When the school district switched to remote learning for COVID-19, the immediate solution was to create optional “choice boards” which were grids of 6-9 menu options for the students to choose for instruction each week. Each grade level worked together to determine what learning options would be included on the choice boards.

### Excerpt 5.6 from Co-planning Meeting (04/24/2020)

MEG = Megan, MAT = Matilda

- 1 MEG: I found one book that I was going to suggest. And then I looked  
 2 at some of the sample pages. And I ended up not liking it. So  
 3 it's called *What Can a Citizen Do?* And the things in there, I  
 4 like, but it only shows one perspective, which is what do I do as  
 5 an individual. And it's like you got that same thing of, I can  
 6 recycle, day in and day out.  
 7 MAT: **And like, that's great, but it needs to be more than that.**  
 8 MEG: [...] yeah, I want kids to do all of those things. But I don't  
 9 want to reinforce that perspective of that's the only thing you  
 10 do.

Later in the meeting, we discuss building and sustaining a community. Matilda uses student data from her previous teaching and takes it up as “maybe it’s something about how communities solve conflict” and “maybe it’s not helping others, maybe it’s just caring about others” (Co-Planning Meeting, 04/24/2020).

After our co-planning meeting, Matilda shares with me her completed choice board on activism. In her second choice board, she explains to her students that to be an activist, if you see a problem or injustice, you have to help, tell other people, do something to make it better. She also writes about being an activist as “caring about other people.” In that same choice board, in her introductory teaching video, she explains to her students that “activists help their communities or help the world” and shows examples of how their class worked together all year to raise awareness, seek out injustices, and make a difference for others.

This marks a shift in Matilda’s teaching practices that intentionally incorporates my responsive mediation from our co-planning meeting for the Activism choice board. While Matilda still displays her way of thinking when developing her Justice choice board, she has demonstrated an attempt to bring her understanding of global citizenship and activism beyond the benefit and responsibility of the individual to a more shared community. This shows a shift in her reasoning thinking and enactment of socially just teaching.



**Questioning Who is Responsible for Recycling.** Evidence of initially prioritizing the individual over the community was also evident in their planning and instruction for other content areas. In planning her unit on recycling, Kayla responds (See Excerpt 5.7) to Cameron and I asking her what she wants students to learn/know as a result of experiencing her recycling unit.

**Excerpt 5.7 from Debrief 3 (03/06/2020)**

MEG = Megan; KAY = Kayla; CAM = Cameron

1 CAM: what do you want them to learn? [...]  
 2 MEG: so what do you want them to know?  
 3 KAY: what recycling does for us. why it is so important to  
 4 recycle. especially because they're growing up, and when they're  
 5 older, we want them- and I think like this could even go back to  
 6 being a responsible citizen which is what every teacher's goal  
 7 is- **to make sure that their students are responsible citizens**  
 8 **when they're all grown up. so, I think just thinking about that**  
 9 **and how they can impact the world as they get older.** (Debrief 3,  
 10 03/06/2020)

In Excerpt 5.7, and in particular lines 7-9, we see that for Kayla, the purpose of teaching recycling is to instill good, responsible citizenship values. She does see the importance of having an impact on the world, and this is reiterated several weeks later when we meet again, but with a slight shift. In our continued discussion, I build off of Kayla's stated frustration of being limited by remote learning and the use of choice boards during the pandemic. I offer brainstormed ideas, such as:

"I'm wondering like if they're at home working on this inquiry and thinking about recycling. Like what if they dug through their trash and their recycling and sorted and organized or like kept tally marks of what they're throwing away?" (Meeting 1, 03/32/2020)

"that kind of connects to the products that they're buying. And what sorts of things those companies are doing." (Meeting 1, 03/32/2020)

"if you could link it to the corporations, the companies and the products, and having them think about it in terms of a lifestyle and the types of things that were doing. That it's like 'yexs,

it's great to recycle and everyone should do it. And reusing and reducing, all of the Rs but, we're recycling *after* we've already used those products.' So it's 'do we also need to change the way we use products?'" (Meeting 1, 03/32/2020)

Kayla and I continue to brainstorm ideas and make concrete her beliefs about responsible citizenship and advocacy. By the end of our conversation, as a result of my responsive mediation, she externalized in the moment one of her plans for teaching.

"Or even if they have help with their parents, they could even look up certain companies. Like if they have a lot of a certain plastic or recyclable item, they could look it up and they could also maybe research what that company is doing to be more sustainable. Because I know like Coca-Cola, they've changed the way that their bottles are made, the shape of them so they so that they are smaller, and they also get the most amount of liquid that they can put in there. So I think that would be cool to think of it in that way as well." (Meeting 1, 03/32/2020)

Like in the example above with Matilda, Kayla is doing more than talking out loud. She is externalizing her newly forming, in the moment understanding of taking a more structural approach to the responsibility for recycling. We see her come up with the idea of asking students to look up company's sustainability plans. She then integrates previous knowledge she had from the Coca-Cola company's advertising of more sustainable, "eco-friendly" bottles. While not the argument I would make, we do see how Kayla is attempting to plan for instruction that goes beyond individual responsibility.

Through these two examples of teaching practice and planning, we see that although Kayla and Matilda believe citizenship and community development as valuable and make connections to social justice, they both initially prioritize the individual citizen over the community. Through responsive mediation, there are moments that teacher candidates seem to take up a more socially just understanding of citizenship and community. This suggests that with sustained interaction and discussion, reconceptualization of what it means to be a socially just teacher who values community is possible.

### *Unknowingly (Mis)Aligning Teaching Practices to Community for Social Justice*

While Kayla and Matilda both discuss citizenship explicitly, there are moments in debriefs and in their written and oral weekly reflections that the connection back to community is not explicit but is at the potential, ripening stages of development. Through responsive mediation, I, and in conjunction with Cameron (unplanned), attempt to provoke the teacher candidates' development of seeing their classroom community as a space to foster shared participation in a more egalitarian, communal society. I will share two examples, the first of which is an unsuccessful attempt at responsively mediating, and the second is a more successful attempt.

**Misalignment Between Classroom Jobs and Community.** After observing Kayla, Cameron and I meet in a conference room to debrief. I bring up a very typical classroom practice that I observed Kayla lead at the start of the observation: selecting and assigning classroom jobs (e.g., line leader, chair stacker, paper collector, board eraser). In bringing this practice into the debrief, the intent was for the three of us to problematize the practice of selecting classroom jobs. Yet, in this excerpt, you will see that it is primarily Cameron and I engaged in the discussion.

#### **Excerpt 5.8 from Debrief 1 (02/03/2020)**

MEG = Megan, KAY = Kayla, CAM = Cameron

- 1 MEG: **thinking about social justice and what it means to have a**
- 2 **job and be a productive member of society [...]**
- 3 KAY: Yeah
- 4 MEG: [...] it always interests me whenever we think about **first**
- 5 **graders having jobs already and the hidden message behind like**
- 6 **what a job is [...]** are all jobs equal? in the classroom all those
- 7 **jobs are equal, right? They all have value.** and then whenever we
- 8 get out into the real world [...] not all the jobs are all equal.
- 9 [...]
- 10 KAY: Yeah, I'm kind of in the same boat with you. I don't
- 11 know. **I just know that it's something that Mrs. Edwards does.**
- 12 CAM: [...] it's been taught in the past with social studies, right?
- 13 So what is job? ... basic economics, choices, if kids know what
- 14 their parents' jobs are, what kind of different jobs, what do you

15 do, responsibilities, right? and then getting paid for a job  
 16 versus not. [...]  
 17 CAM: And I think the jobs in the classroom tend to be more of  
 18 you know, **'we need each other'**  
 19 MEG: community help  
 20 CAM: right. **community help that we need for our classroom to thrive**  
 21 **and function, we all need to work together**  
 22 MEG: **we all need to play our part to help each other**  
 23 CAM: right? So, you know, it would interesting to ask how it's  
 24 introduced and that kind of thing [...]  
 25 MEG: **it's so important to have in the classroom, but it doesn't**  
 26 **reflect the way we think about jobs outside the classroom**  
 27 KAY: mm-hmm  
 28 MEG: it's like this balance of like we know that jobs and  
 29 responsibilities are important. and that as a team we all and  
 30 that as a community we all need to function together. but what  
 31 connections do students make [...]  
 32 MEG: we know that we need community, and we focus on  
 33 community building, and we know how important that is. and they  
 34 all value that, but yeah at some point that goes away.  
 35 CAM: I'm interested in, right, why that happens, right?

In this excerpt (5.8), I bring up my noticing and fieldnote jottings from the observation of classroom jobs. I open on lines 1-2 to say that I see a link between social justice and classroom jobs. On lines 4-8 I make that link more explicit by stating that not all jobs are equal. On line 11, we see Kayla's response that suggests it is an unquestioned, unexamined practice. Re-reading this transcript, this would have been an excellent opportunity to ask Kayla to perhaps speculate why her mentor teacher does it and have her talk through what role or function it has in the classroom. This suggests a missed opportunity for Kayla to externalize her understandings and for me to identify a potential for opening a ZPD.

Instead, Cameron and I were so wrapped up in thinking through the idea together – which led to the development of an intermental development zone, or IDZ, (Mercer, 2000) for the two of us – Kayla played the role of a more passive participant. This was a new conversation for Cameron and I and one that we were thinking through together for the first time. We wondered about the idea that classroom jobs can be understood ideologically as either a) a source of community collaboration and shared need or b) the materialization of neoliberalism that

promotes students' individual responsibility, being a productive member of society and having worth as tied to jobs/labor, and that certain jobs are more desirable than others, already reinforcing the notion that there is a labor hierarchy. In doing so, we were "thinking out loud," and building off of one another such that it did not provide an entry point for Kayla. While Kayla predominately marks her agreement with "mhm," and "yeah" throughout, we do not get to see Kayla's thinking around the conversation. The talk of the importance of community and citizenship was repeatedly raised in our conversations; however, the materialization of community through the practice of classroom jobs was not revisited.

**Alignment Between Problem-Solving Fishbowl and Community.** In a similar example, Cameron and I are talking to Matilda during a debrief about the problem-solving fishbowl activity we observed her lead and how it compliments her inquiry (Excerpt 5.9). In the debrief, prompt Matilda to think about injustices and problem-solving differently. In doing so, Cameron and I co-mediate Matilda as she makes a new connection between problem-solving and her semester-long inquiry about her kindergarten students being activists.

**Excerpt 5.9 from Debrief 2 (03/06/2020)**

MEG = Megan, MAT = Matilda, CAM = Cameron

1 MEG: it'll be interesting to see how much of their answers are  
 2 about themselves versus about the other or the group or the  
 3 community  
 4 MAT: Yeah  
 5 MEG: ...like I'm treated unfairly whenever this happens to me  
 6 versus when these things happen to others  
 7 MAT: yeah, [...] and that could, 'thinking about the fishbowl'  
 8 could be an important like prompting question too. Yeah. As when  
 9 I said like 'tell me about a time when you saw something,' they  
 10 were like, 'uh, I don't know.' So like, 'well maybe something  
 11 happened to you, maybe something happened to a friend, on the  
 12 playground, at home,' [...] **'maybe something you've seen in a**  
 13 **book.'**

In this exchange, Matilda immediately provides an answer to my initial question. She reflects on a previous teaching experience to do so, *and* Matilda verbalizes what she might say to

her students to get them to think beyond themselves. She keeps the example grounded in the precise activity we were talking about. Cameron, as seen in Excerpt 5.10, takes up Matilda's suggestion of "maybe something you've seen in a book" (Excerpt 5.9) to build on my initial prompting and more explicitly help Matilda see the connections to students advocating at a community level rather than based on personal, individual reasons.

**Excerpt 5.10 from Debrief 2 (03/06/2020)**

MEG = Megan, MAT = Matilda, CAM = Cameron

- 1 CAM: Yeah. I bet you could definitely think about that with  
 2 characters in a book, right? And so some that will have like this  
 3 is their individual problem, but now look this is the problem of  
 4 a community, right? there's *Ima Gene Takes a Stand*, and they're  
 5 going to cut down a tree close the historical society and she's  
 6 really upset about it. So she individually does something, but  
 7 then it prompts others to do something as well. but so if they  
 8 could you know, you help them, scaffold it to see that [...]   
 9 unjust, and go to that next- so how can how can they advocate for  
 10 their classmate? [...] so it would be interesting if any of this  
 11 can lead them to say 'here's something you can do,' we want them  
 12 to be assertive and stand up for themselves. but maybe=  
 13 MAT: =here's  
 14 something we can do to help [...]  
 15 MEG: and does it just affect you? or does it affect other people  
 16 too?  
 17 MAT: I wonder if even when I'm doing these like more explicit  
 18 lessons for my inquiry, like maybe that week, I take one of our  
 19 problems and I kind of direct the fishbowl a little bit more. and  
 20 like ask some of those questions

In Excerpts 5.9 and 5.10, by reflecting on and planning for changes to her instruction, Matilda recognizes the value of her fishbowl activity and building on it to discuss injustices and problem solving. By making plans to adapt her instruction and incorporate the questions the three of us collectively asked, Matilda is attempting to enact socially just teaching that conceptualizes community as mutual aid and shared activism for a better world. It is likely that Matilda was able to incorporate the ideas from the debrief due to her practices already being

aligned with a more socially just conceptualization of community. Mediation might have been more targeted at her growth point with less cognitive/emotional dissonance to overcome.

### **Socially Just Teaching in “Small Ways and Big Ways”**

Thus far, I have shown how Kayla and Matilda have similar developmental points in the places and spaces outside of social studies that they incorporate socially just teaching content and the ways in which they enact socially just teaching through an understanding of community and citizenship. In this final section, I compare one way that Kayla and Matilda conceptualize socially just teaching differently and the implications for their developmental trajectories.

#### ***Kayla’s Understanding of a Socially Just Teacher***

Kayla sees socially just teaching is a “state of mind” in using “different lenses” throughout the day. In Kayla’s words, this could also be seen as enacting socially just teaching “in small ways”:

“my hope is that I will become more aware about what social justice is. **in small ways and big ways.** and maybe possibly make an impact this year on my students, but if not, I could still be an activist later on in life [...] for it. yeah like if it doesn't happen this year, I could at least think about it in my head and plan it and find some people that can help me” (Initial Interview)

In her final interview, Kayla extended her idea of “small ways and big ways” with the phrases “big elaborate conversation” and “just... a small conversation.” She made a direct connection between her work and Matilda’s, citing Matilda’s inquiry as big and elaborate. She says:

it really depends [...] it could also be with like what's happening globally in the world. And I also feel like it could just be something very tiny. It doesn't have to be a **big elaborate conversation.** It could just be an introduction and a **small conversation** on what their thoughts are. [...] I feel like it could be like an inquiry type thing. I don't know. **Like I feel like Matilda’s could totally be tied into inquiry with them reading a book and then analyzing like what they've learned and how they feel about it and stuff like that.** (Final Interview)

Not only does Kayla extend her description of small vs big ways to enact socially just teaching, but she also reimagines how Matilda's inquiry work in developing global citizens with an activist stance could be something "small." Kayla uses the word "small" indicates something more personalized or local and something she feels more comfortable doing. Later, Kayla talks about how much she admires Matilda's inquiry, but ultimately does not see how she could take such a "big" step in activism.

For Kayla, social justice being something "small" means taking more time to think about social justice, continue to learn more, and work towards developing a "state of mind" for socially just teaching. She says:

"Having that state of mind through everything you do and the classroom and outside of the classroom and not just- So state of mind. One, I feel like you kind of have to develop it for it to be a state of mind and two it would be something that's ongoing. So it's not only just a state of mind during one part of the day; it's the whole entire part of it." (Initial Interview)

Thinking of socially just teaching as a state of mind and through different lenses manifests in various ways throughout the semester with Kayla. In teaching observations, debriefs, and one-on-one meetings, Kayla is attuned and responsive to her students' beliefs, experience, and values. This is particularly interesting because she often does with curricular content that is assumed to be more "objective" or "neutral" or in content where someone might question "what does that have to do with equity, social justice, being culturally responsive, etc.?" Examples of this include answers to morning meeting questions (Debrief 1), sandwiches (Debrief 2), cultural artifacts students drew upon to design math equation "quilts" (Debrief 2), and a "me on the map" activity (Debrief 3). In order for teacher candidates to begin to shift their thinking towards more socially just teaching, they must disrupt the notion that their students have

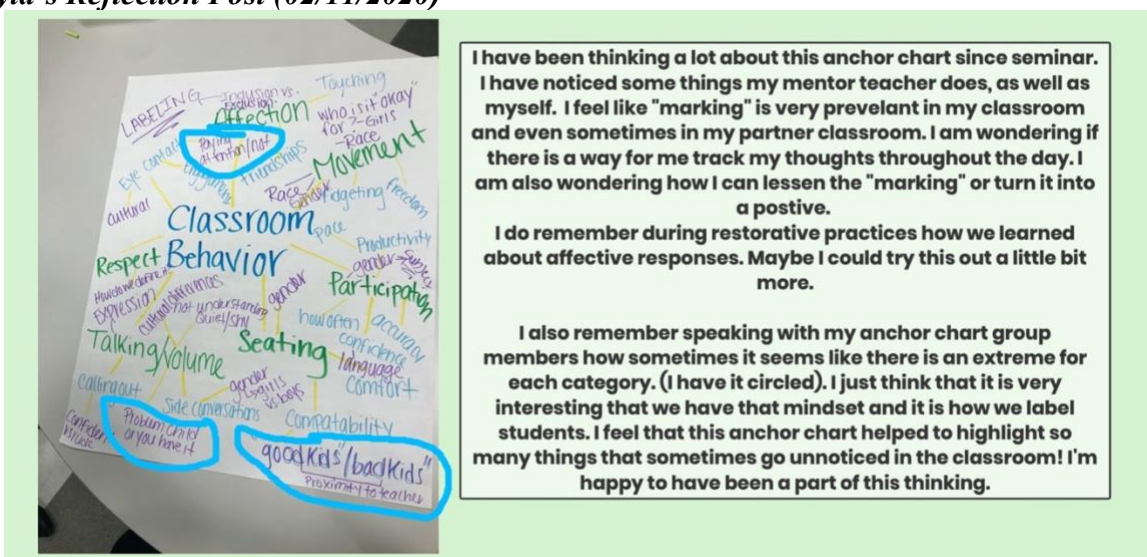


the same experiences as they do, and that the differences in experiences lead to inequities based on race, gender, sexuality, and other identity markers.

The desire for this shift in thinking is evident in Kayla's reflection (see Figure 5.2) after Lesson 2 in Seminar (Detailed in Chapter 4). Kayla's group discussed classroom behavior from the lenses of different vs unjust while making connections back to identity markers such as race, gender, and sexuality.

**Figure 5.2**

***Kayla's Reflection Post (02/11/2020)***



In Kayla's reflection, we see that she is taking up the discussion of classroom behavior in relation to equity. She circles "paying attention or not," "problem child or you have it," and "good kids / bad kids." She describes this as "marking," and it is a behavior that she has seen her mentor teacher do often, as well as herself. While not directly saying it, she is implying that this marking is often negative and perhaps punitive and disciplinary for those that are not paying attention, the bad kids, or the problem child. Moreover, she reflects on the "mindset" which parallels her talk of a "stance" or "state of mind" for socially just teaching. She sees the mindset of labeling students in "extreme" binaries as a problem for her classroom and teaching.

At the same time, she does not speak to race and gender, two dominant identity groups represented on the group's poster. This further speaks to how Kayla is enacting her understanding of socially just teaching. In our time together, she rarely addressed how students are treated differently by their teachers, schools, and society according to race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, and other identity groups. Instead, Kayla focuses on changes teachers can make to respond to the needs of their students and to not unintentionally cause harm.

In sum, the data show that Kayla's development to becoming a socially just teacher has hinged on her orientation to community and citizenship and having a certain state of mind and ability to see through different lenses. For Kayla, continuing to see how different lenses can show systemic injustices in the everyday act of schooling will be instrumental for her to continue to develop into a socially just teacher. She does not dismiss advocacy and "big steps," as important and necessary for social justice, but she does not believe she is confidently there *yet*.

### ***Matilda's Understanding of a Socially Just Teacher***

Matilda, on the other hand, saw being a socially just teacher as being an activist and teaching her students to be activists. She sees it as a response to injustice and as problem-solving. It is unclear from the data to the degree in which Matilda is attempting to preemptively address root causes or systemic level injustices. Instead, her focus is on conflict resolution, as evident in her fishbowl problem-solving activity. An activity that is proud of, brought in from another training, and wants to continue to use. In Seminar, during my third lesson (02/19/2020), Matilda shows a more nuanced understanding of conflict resolution. After Parker finishes reading *A Normal Pig*, by K-Fai Steele (2019), we facilitate a whole-group discussion around the themes of the book. Matilda responds to a question I pose to the group after a comment made by Sam, another teacher candidate.

**Excerpt 5.11 from Whole-Group Discussion in Lesson 3 (02/19/2020)**

EVE = Eve, SAM = Sam, MEG = Megan, MAT = Matilda, TAY = Taylor

1 **EVE:** And then it's us learning that we have to accept others for their  
 2 differences<sup>39</sup>. You don't have to accept yourself, but you should  
 3 love yourself I would rather say.  
 4 **SAM:** Can I push on that thought? Like if the pig did not accept and  
 5 decide to take, absorb their [the dominant group's] culture and  
 6 kind of not accept their [own] culture. But since the pig was  
 7 like 'I'm proud of my culture. I'm going to continue bringing  
 8 this lunch to school' and then the other students are accepting  
 9 that and being confident with that. So, I wonder if the egg  
 10 before the chicken.  
 11 **MEG:** Does that mean that the person that's being left out or  
 12 marginalized or picked on is the person that, or pig, that has to  
 13 advocate for themselves in order for everyone else in that  
 14 classroom to accept that pig?  
 15 **MAT:** I'm thinking of like in my own classroom right now. there's one  
 16 student who, his speech is not great. And **I don't even think he**  
 17 **would know to advocate for himself because he doesn't see any**  
 18 **issues, but the other kids do. So kind of going back to that, is**  
 19 **that his responsibility to stand up for himself when I don't**  
 20 **think he's really aware of it.**  
 21 **TAY:** What does that mean if you are aware though? Does that mean you  
 22 should still be the one advocating or that other people should  
 23 advocate for him?  
 24 **MAT:** **I think both. I think we should want our students to be able to**  
 25 **advocate for themselves, but it shouldn't be expected that they**  
 26 **are the only person who's going to advocate for a whole group of**  
 27 **people**

Matilda's responses on lines 16-20 and again on lines 24-27 provide further evidence of her stance of seeking out injustices and advocating for others. It also reveals that Matilda holds a complex understanding of who is responsible for advocating. She dismissed Sam's idea that by loving yourself you will get others to accept you. She does not see that as a form of activism. Instead, she believes the other students or herself should take responsibility in advocating. At the same time, Matilda holds the same positions as her students in evaluating the student's speech as

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<sup>39</sup> Supports the finding with Eve in Cohort 1 that she understands cultural and linguistic diversity as "accepting others for their differences"

“not great” (line 16). Looking at only lines 15-20 and 24-27, we could argue that there is complacency. She factually presents the student’s speech as not great.

While she sees activism as things that “global citizens” do in response injustices, it is unclear what she believes her responsibility is in responding. Nor is there evidence in the data that Matilda is taking the time to understand why inequalities exist, what her role she plays. In this sense, we can see the value of Kayla’s attempt to see social justice as a mindset or state of being. It is uniquely tied to her and what she does.

### **Insights into Cohort 2’s Development and My Attempts at Responsive Mediation**

Kayla and Matilda both demonstrated development in enacting socially just teaching through a focus on community and citizenship. Kayla and Matilda also each highlight that there are “small” and “big” forms of activism as a teacher, and there are benefits and limitations to teach. Connecting to the literature on internal and external work in social justice might be a benefit for them. My mediation was perhaps more fruitful with Kayla and Matilda as we linked our social justice work to their lessons before and after teaching and they both connected their social justice work with their inquiries (which is covered in more detail in Chapter 6). Integrating their semester-long inquiries with social justice provided an ongoing goal with concrete steps to work towards in our time together.

Perhaps one of the prominent differences in my observations and debriefs with Cohort 2 was the frequency at which their PDA Cameron was present. As stated above, she was present for five of the six observations and we were mostly aligned in our thinking and questioning during the debriefs. This was not intentional; our schedules allowed for it and with the teacher candidates being at the same school, the possibility of overlapping was greater. Our alignment as PDAs (one formal, one informal) can mirror research that documents when mentor teachers and

supervisors are on the same page (AACTE, 2018; Bullough Jr., & Draper, 2004; Clarke, 2014), the teacher candidates' growth and learning has far better outcomes. In our case, Kayla and Matilda are hearing a consistent message from us and do not need to try to please multiple parties.

### **Cohort 3: Natalie**

Natalie was placed at Meadows Elementary for her yearlong student teaching in the PDS. She was paired with Harriet, a third-grade teacher with 31 years of teaching experience and has been in the PDS as a mentor teacher for nearly 25 years. Natalie's PDA was River – one of the co-teachers for the teacher candidates' Social Studies Methods course the previous semester. River was responsible for the same supervisory practices as described above<sup>40</sup>. River was present for two of the three observations and one of the two debriefs.

For Natalie, the SVSD social studies curriculum, aspects of the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum, and grade level practices in ability grouping (within the classroom for ELA and across the grade level for Math), served instrumental in Natalie's development in becoming a socially just teacher. We see Natalie negotiate with the embedded assumptions and the treatment of "the Other" in the curriculum. In her negotiations, she is beginning to demonstrate some socially just teaching practices and awareness and reflection on socially just teaching. Additionally, it became evident that Natalie was very aware of U.S. news and policy, as she is a regular and frequent consumer of news media. Yet when pressed on her awareness and attention to the news, she only incipiently recognizes its influence in the classroom and the relationship

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<sup>40</sup> i.e., weekly teacher candidate cohort meetings; feedback on lesson plans and teaching observations; responses to their bi-weekly reflections; exposure to River's regular reflections; assignment feedback, including their semester-long inquiries; and general support and advice

between school and society. Both of these developmental trajectories for Natalie will be explored in the sections that follow.

### **Skepticism of “Heroes and Holidays” Curriculum**

The term “heroes and holidays” was popularized as a result of Banks’ (1993) explication of the first of four approaches of multicultural education, The Contributions Approach. This approach is characterized by the insertion of discrete superficial, “cultural” elements (hence the holidays and heroes label) without making any structural changes to the curriculum. In the PDS, curriculum analysis is common practice, primarily in the Fall Social Studies Methods and Spring Seminar. One of the four essential questions guiding the Spring Seminar was specifically about curriculum: “How do teacher leaders plan instruction in ways that embody their image as curriculum makers who negotiate and advocate for things that matter?” Natalie experienced multiple curriculum analysis tasks related to Indigenous People’s Day, Thanksgiving, “The Explorers,” and other similar unit topics in Social Studies Methods and was aware of the Spring Seminar’s essential question.

### ***Reaction to the Social Studies Curriculum***

At the time of the study, SVSD’s social studies curriculum has not been revised in at least a decade, and the materials and lessons that accompany the curriculum have not been updated or modified at a district level. For third grade, there are three controversial units: Japan, Festival of the Arts, and Africa. The treatment of Japan and Africa in these units, as well as the White, Western Eurocentric approach to the Festival of the Arts curriculum has been justifiably scrutinized. The Japan and Africa units, in particular, have sparked frustration and concern with parents in the community. A third grader in SVSD complained to his mother, a friend of mine, that “they didn’t even talk about the people when we learned about Africa.” (C. Taheri, personal

communication, 2019). The PDAs were aware of the problematic curricular units; they considered using the Japan unit for a curricular analysis task during Seminar in Spring 2020, but it was replaced with something better suited for the task.

Natalie, as a new teacher candidate, was immersed in this long-standing curriculum with a mentor teacher that had taught the units since they were first launched. At the start of the Japan unit, Natalie came to me for advice. She started by sharing what had been done so far: a Google Earth Satellite finding of Japan, discussing the main islands, and reading a book of a child from the US that traveled to Japan and what he saw/experienced. As Natalie was explaining, I knew that sharing just one perspective of the American kid (presumably White) visiting Japan was centering White American voices instead of a Japanese child's voice, but I wanted Natalie to continue sharing what her class had done before offering mediation. At that point, Natalie got very quiet and in a hushed tone asked me "do you think it's okay to wear a kimono in class for the unit?" (fieldnotes, 12/13/2019). I said I did not have a definitive yes/no on cultural appropriation, but we talked about the purpose, the messages sent/received, intent vs. impact. I asked what era of Japanese history or modern day was being discussed since kimono styles changed over time and across locations, that it would be out of place in many parts of Japan today, that kimonos are not considered "everyday" clothing. Natalie agreed that she did not want to wear it, but it was clear she needed confirmation. I worked with her to come up with alternatives to share with her mentor teacher: what if the kimono(s) were on a clothesline or mannequin or just hanging in the room? What if that had multiple fabrics from different kimonos with different prints and they could do an investigation/inquiry about the kimono itself? In January, Natalie and I revisited the kimono conversation in the initial interview (Excerpt 5.12)

**Excerpt 5.12 from Initial Interview**

MEG = Megan; NAT = Natalie

1 NAT: I think I would be able to determine like that doesn't seem right  
 2 or that's unfair. I don't know if I would exactly be able to say  
 3 'that's discrimination because of this reason. Or for this, you  
 4 know, whatever it may be'. **So yeah, I think I could tell if I**  
 5 **felt like something was unfair but I don't know if I could**  
 6 **exactly get into the details of it.**  
 7 MEG: It would be like a gut reaction  
 8 NAT: yeah  
 9 MEG: **like you knew the kimono thing was something to think about**  
 10 NAT: yeah  
 11 MEG: But didn't know exactly. so the way it was presented to me, you  
 12 were like 'there's something, but I don't know what to do with  
 13 this exactly yet'  
 14 NAT: Yeah, it just didn't feel right to me because I knew. Like, my  
 15 mentor teacher had good intentions with it, but I also knew that,  
 16 I had heard, you know, Japanese people saying that that was  
 17 something that was offensive to them. And I didn't really know  
 18 how to bring that up to my mentor teacher without stepping on her  
 19 toes. So, it's kind of an uncomfortable situation for me, but I  
 20 just would not have felt comfortable wearing it. It just wouldn't  
 21 have felt right to me.

In Excerpt 5.12, in line 9, I connect what Natalie is saying to our previous conversation about wearing a kimono in order to concretize her response. She recalls hearing from others that cultural appropriation was an issue to be mindful of, and she valued the opinions and beliefs of the Japanese people she heard from and deferred to their judgment (lines 16-17). And with my mediation, she was able to connect it to being a socially just teacher. And my advice in the Fall semester was another piece of confirming evidence for Natalie that she should decline the offer from her mentor teacher to wear a kimono.

However, we see in the Excerpt (5.12) that Natalie was still not quite able to articulate *why* it would be considered cultural appropriation and *why* it was an issue of power and oppression. Yet, as the supervisor, I also did not take the time to explain this to Natalie or ask further probing questions to understand the extent to which she knew about cultural appropriation. This was a missed developmental opportunity on my part. Furthermore, we see that she is apologetic for and forgiving of her mentor teacher (lines 14-15) because of her “good



intentions.” While can see that she is still in the early stages of understanding cultural appropriation and that she did not take the opportunity to discuss it with her mentor teacher and third-grade students, her action was admirable; she did not wear the kimono and she told her mentor teacher as such.

*Critical Analysis of How Historic Black American Figures are Positioned as White-Washed Heroes in the Classroom*

During the Fall, in Social Studies Methods, Natalie was exposed to readings from the co-teachers, Cameron and River (Natalie’s PDA), that made her reevaluate what she had learned about Black Americans during her schooling experience. In a written reflection (11/21/2019), she reacts to learning a more accurate, less White-washed account of who Rosa Parks was.

**Excerpt 5.13 from Natalie’s Reflection (11/21/2019)**

1        These revelations caused me to think deeply about **why I had been**  
 2        **taught these inaccuracies for so long? [...] Had it just been**  
 3        **mistakes that had been passed down for years, or was is an**  
 4        **intentional action to paint Parks in a different light in an**  
 5        **effort to discredit her?** I tend to think it must be the latter.  
 6        It also made me think are there other inaccuracies that I am  
 7        unaware of that I might be passing down to my students? Obviously  
 8        this would be unintentional, as it was for the teachers who  
 9        presented me with false information about Rosa Parks and the  
 10       civil rights movement. It is a bit of an overwhelming feeling to  
 11       have, feeling like there is so much that I always believed to be  
 12       true that I now need to rethink. **What I can do is find more**  
 13       **research from anti-bias resources that will allow me to view**  
 14       **history in an accurate light, so that I can do the same for my**  
 15       **students.** When we are not taught the whole truth, we believe  
 16       common misconceptions that sugarcoat things or paint history in a  
 17       better light. But if we want our students to know the truth about  
 18       our history so that they can prevent it from repeating itself, we  
 19       have to make sure that we are teaching accurate information.

In Excerpt 5.13 above, we see that Natalie is reflecting on her unlearning and relearning of the history of Rosa Parks. In lines 1-5, she asks why she was taught incorrectly, then in lines 6-10 she begins to wonder what else she has learned inaccurate information about. After

expressing worry in lines 10-12, she begins to express an action plan (lines 12-15): looking for anti-bias resources and making a commitment to teach accurate histories to her students.

Yet, this new commitment does not necessarily transfer to her teaching practice immediately. Because many of my observations of Natalie's teaching occurred during Black History Month, there was opportunity for Natalie to expand on the plan she begins to form in her reflection in excerpt 5.13 above. In particular, during observation 3 (03/05/2020), River and I ask Natalie to reflect on wrapping up Black History Month. We ask about their "Notable Black Americans" project in which the students researched and wrote biographical information and accompanying illustrations/visuals on a person of their choosing. Natalie confirms that it focuses almost entirely on achievements of Black men and women from the past, typically heterosexual and Christian, and she mentions that slavery was only discussed once (fieldnotes, 03/05/2020). River and I continued to discuss the heroes and holidays treatment with Natalie, and she seemed to understand the concerns we were raising (fieldnotes, 03/05/2020).

Neither River nor I brought up the lessons in Social Studies Methods (in which River was a co-teacher and I was a participant observer). In Social Studies Methods, Natalie was provided curriculum analysis tools in the form of strategies, questions, resources, and guides. In introducing those tools, the hope would be that Natalie could use them in her teaching practice. This was an opportunity for River and me, as supervisors in this observation, to reintroduce those tools for Natalie to reason with and reflect on the classroom practices she was engaging in. This serves as a stark reminder that the connection between teacher education/preparation coursework and supervising teacher candidates in their teaching practice is the responsibility of the supervisor to guide the teacher candidate to making that connection if the teacher candidate is developmentally unable to do so independently.

### *Negotiating How to Celebrate Holidays and Be Inclusive*

The third way Natalie demonstrates her developing understanding and enactment of socially just teaching by being skeptical of “heroes and holidays” curriculum is her awareness and reflection on how to celebrate holidays that honor students’ backgrounds, identities, and religious beliefs yet is inclusive at the same time. She reflects on how her mentor teacher approached 9/11, how Meadows Elementary (her school building) celebrated Halloween compared to her partner school (Bridgeview), how to frame Christmas, and regional differences in holidays like St. Patrick’s Day and Valentine’s Day. Regarding Halloween in particular, Natalie compares Meadows Elementary to Bridgeview Elementary and shares why she decided to spend the day at Meadows rather than Bridgeview – she thought the Halloween celebrations “sounded a lot more fun at Meadows then [sic] Bridgeview” (Natalie reflection, 11/01/2019). She then asks questions about the role of religious freedom/expression in a classroom. In doing so, she makes an unexpected and peculiar connection to gay marriage (See Excerpt 5.14).

#### **Excerpt 5.14 from Written Reflection (11/01/2019)**

1        While I respect all cultures, beliefs, and everyone’s right to  
 2        celebrate or not celebrate a holiday, I started to think this  
 3        week about **at what point does protecting one students’ beliefs**  
 4        **begin to infringe on another student’s right to celebrate and**  
 5        **enjoy a special day for them.** The students at Meadows enjoyed  
 6        Halloween so much, that it made me a little sad for the students  
 7        at Bridgeview who do not get to have as big of a celebration.  
 8        Having the whole school involved and having parents attend helped  
 9        everyone feel connected and helped build that sense of community  
 10       within all students [...]  
 11       This just caused me to think how sticky can these types of  
 12       situations can get. **For example, what if an extremely**  
 13       **conservative Christian family at your school said that same sex**  
 14       **marriage was offensive to them and they did not even want their**  
 15       **child seeing same sex couples? What would you do then, especially**  
 16       **when you have same sex families in your school and you want them**  
 17       **to feel welcomed, but you have to respect that family’s religious**  
 18       **beliefs?** Again, I am placing no judgment on either school, but  
 19       the different levels of celebration that went on caused me to

20 think deeply about issues of religious freedom in school and how  
21 complicated they can get.

There is a lot that can be discussed and analyzed in this excerpt (5.14), but the two aspects that I wish to focus on are the questions Natalie poses in lines 3-5 and 12-18. Natalie asks in lines 3-5 about balancing students' rights and beliefs. She is attempting to see "both sides" and wants all students to be happy and fulfilled – the Halloween celebrators can enjoy their day and those that do not participate in such celebrations because of religious beliefs can also be happy by not being/feeling obligated to participate. In lines 12-18 she also asks a question about religious beliefs and protections and "same sex couples/families." She seems to err on the side of the "same sex couples/families," but does not make a decision either way. She also does not yet seem to be able to think through possible solutions and outcomes, historical understandings, the policies of separation of church and state, religious freedom, protections for LGBT+ members, or other critical issues related to her questions. Later, in our final interview, we see more of her thinking about Halloween and how she compares it to Christmas (Excerpt 5.15 below).

**Excerpt 5.15 from Final Interview**  
**NAT = Natalie; MEG = Megan**

1 NAT: right. Yeah, sure. And something that just popped up to my mind  
2 was like, you know, the holidays, making it a winter thing  
3 instead of just Christmas.  
4 MEG: yeah  
5 NAT: we still do Halloween now. **But I don't know. Halloween's a little**  
6 **different to me**  
7 MEG: yeah, it's become less of a religious holiday.  
8 NAT: like I don't associate it with, which I mean I guess if your  
9 religion doesn't support it, **but it's not like you're promoting**  
10 **one, you know, holiday from a specific religion.**

When asked to expand more on her understanding of holidays and celebrations in school, Natalie seems to readily accept replacing Christmas with "Winter," and while it is certainly possible that winter-themed celebrations are Christmas-in-disguise, Natalie is at least aware that

she should not center Christmas. She does seem to continue to experience cognitive dissonance with Halloween since on lines 5 and 8-10 she is voicing her uncertainty about whether Halloween is promoting a religion. Equally interesting to Natalie's skepticism and developing ability to think critically about holidays from a social justice perspective, her examples of holidays (St. Patrick's Day, Valentine's Day, Christmas, and Halloween) and experiences of the ways in which they are celebrated are still steeped in Whiteness and in Western, Christianity-based holidays. If I had recognized this in the moment, I might have asked a prompting question about holidays and celebrations from other religious and cultural groups. It is possible that she is enacting the same "heroes and holidays" approach she was skeptical of in social studies and for Black History Month and this could have been an opportunity to provide the right responsive mediation to lead to a moment of cognitive/emotional dissonance for Natalie.

### **The Potential to Bring in Awareness of U.S. Current Events and Politics**

Natalie spends a great deal of time in consuming content from popular news outlets. There is also a relative ease to which Natalie incorporates the content in small group settings in Seminar and in particular, our one-on-one conversations. Political news talking points were interspersed throughout nearly every meeting with Natalie. Her informal, offhand comments during small groups in seminar, indicated to me her high levels of attention to U.S. news and popular media stories. Throughout our one-on-one meetings and our final interview, Natalie repeatedly made reference to timely and relevant talking points in the media that primarily related to COVID-19, but more broadly related to news and policy, typically centered on the U.S. In our meetings, we bounced around from topic to topic comparing what each of us had heard and thought about the topic. Topics included: Greta Gerwig's critique of the Academy Awards for sexism in Best Director nominations, the daily news briefings with New York

Governor Andrew Cuomo, then-President Trump's tweets in the National Archives, the potential for a recession, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis's leadership failure during COVID-19. In her venting about how the U.S. has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, Natalie makes frequent references in disdain towards citizens preferences of individual freedoms and states' rights.

Excerpt 5.16 below is Natalie's response after a frustrated discussion of seeing people on beaches, going on vacations, etc.

**Excerpt 5.16 from 1-on-1 Meeting (03/24/2020)**

NAT = Natalie; MEG = Megan

- 1 NAT: Yeah, I think it shows how **strong people are in their beliefs**
- 2 **with states' rights and with individual freedom and they're not**
- 3 **willing to give that up.**
- 4 MEG: Yeah
- 5 NAT: Like I saw a clip, I think it was, I think, was the Florida
- 6 lieutenant governor. I think he was on some show on Fox and **he**
- 7 **was like 'You know, like us 70 plus people.' He's like, 'we're**
- 8 **fine. Don't worry.'** basically insinuating **'we'll just die so the**
- 9 **economy doesn't.'** I was like oh my god.
- 10 MEG: ... Yeah, we do value our individual freedoms so much.
- 11 NAT: Mmhmm
- 12 MEG: **And we see that in school too**
- 13 NAT: Mmhmm. I don't know.
- 14 MEG: I just, I wonder what the world is going to look like afterwards.
- 15 NAT: Yeah, I do too.
- 16 MEG: What do we change?
- 17 NAT: I saw an article. It was like, during stuff like this, **everyone**
- 18 **becomes a socialist because it was like everyone sees why we need**
- 19 **government to do things for us.** Yeah, so that'll be interesting.

In our conversations, Natalie frequently commented about how upset she was at the selfishness of others during the pandemic. In Excerpt 5.16, we see Natalie connect their defiance of COVID-19 restrictions (e.g., gathering in large groups, going to restaurants, partying on beaches, and attending other non-essential super-spreader events) to individual freedoms and states' rights. She is scornful of these decisions and behaviors and in fact furthers this by mockingly commenting, "we'll [70+ years old Floridians] just die so the economy doesn't." The frustration is clear. At the same time, it is notable that in lines 17-19, Natalie comments that she

read that everyone “becomes a socialist” during times of great economic and political uncertainty/upheaval, so she finds it “interesting” to think about. She does not strongly indicate her position and even hedges the line to distance herself from it – it was “an article she saw.”

Additionally, on line 12, I attempt to make the bridge from external politics in general or COVID-19-related to the classroom by saying, “And we see that in school, too” yet it is not taken up more than an “mhmm.” While the “mhmm” *could potentially* express agreement, because I do not respond to her in a way that could further the conversation and surface her understanding of how political beliefs are enacted and reproduced in the classroom, it is unclear what her understanding is in that moment and whether or not this could be a moment that could lead to cognitive/emotional dissonance and a growth point for Natalie.

While the above interaction (Excerpt 5.16) was a missed opportunity, by engaging in these conversations, I was able to create a space where two educators could talk about politics without the fear typically associated with “talking about politics” inside of a school building. I was aware of my unstated position of power as a university-based supervisor in our relationship; thus, in our meetings and final interview, I do not introduce news and political talking points. Instead, Natalie raises each topic herself and I expand on the topics, add questions, give suggestions, etc. This mediating act provides Natalie with the opportunity to see that political conversations can be welcome between educators and not something to shy away from.

To provide another model and plant the seed that Natalie could also engage in these discussions with her mentor teacher, I asked Natalie (1-on-1 meeting, 04/07/2020) if she ever talked with her mentor teacher about politics. Natalie shared with me that she does, that it came up slowly, she felt safe talking about politics, and that she “had gotten the vibe” that her mentor teacher, Harriet, despised then-President Trump. Natalie makes an extension to Harriet’s

religious beliefs and comments how open she is about them. I use that statement to ask how Harriet brings it into the classroom and/or talks to her students about her religious and political beliefs and practices and how Natalie might see herself bringing her own identity and beliefs into the classroom. Natalie then makes reference back to holidays and bringing religion into the classroom in December or “when they [the kids] talk about Christmas” (1-on-1 meeting, 04/07/2020). While I was attempting to reinforce with Natalie that talking politics with her mentor teacher should not be discouraged or avoided, she framed the conversations with her mentor teacher about shared beliefs in political parties/party affiliation. She does this again when prompted about politics in the classroom (See Excerpt 5.17 below).

**Excerpt 5.17 from One-on-One Meeting (04/07/2020)**

NAT = Natalie; MEG = Megan

- 1 MEG: So then what role do you think politics has in the classroom?  
 2 NAT: **Oh, I think it has a huge role.** And I think that's something  
 3 that's frustrating to me sometimes when we watch the debates or  
 4 stuff like that. Like they asked them about health care like  
 5 every single debate and everyone gets the same exact answer. And  
 6 you're like, well, **why don't you ask them a question about**  
 7 **school?**  
 8 MEG: Mm hmm  
 9 NAT: So yeah, I think it's huge. Especially even with something like  
 10 this. Like, okay, if you're in a- **if you're in a state with a**  
 11 **Democratic governor, you're probably closed. If you're in a**  
 12 **Republican state, you're probably going to school and you could**  
 13 **potentially be getting sick. Even looking at charter schools and**  
 14 **vouchers. like funding. Even like, even having a Department of**  
 15 **Education** is like a topic now. I feel like a lot of people want  
 16 to cut it. So yeah, I think it has control.

In this excerpt (5.16), we see that Natalie believe the role politics has in the classroom is through federal and state legislation. She again presents the binary of the two major political parties in the U.S. and current talking points: presidential debates, school closures due to COVID-19, charter school vouchers and funding, and the idea of a Department of Education. Local politics and school boards and superintendents are rarely implicated in her talk of politics.



The bidirectionality of influence of politics and classrooms is also absent from the conversation. In another missed opportunity, if I had asked Natalie what she believes the word “politics” to include or entail, it might have provided the chance to create a moment of cognitive/emotional dissonance.

### **Insights into Cohort 3’s Development and My Attempts at Responsive Mediation**

Natalie and I engaged in “difficult conversations.” We talked about current political events that were on her mind as she brought them into our conversations. She sought out my advice in thinking through aspects of socially just teaching. She was critical of her school’s treatment of Japan and Africa in social studies as well as the treatment of Black Americans during Black History Month. I argue that this evidence of Natalie beginning to enact some of the practices of a socially just teacher.

Nonetheless, Natalie’s development towards becoming a socially just teacher was less visible in the available data than I had hoped. Our time together during debriefs, 1-on-1 meetings, and interviews, as well as my observations were scattered and lacked consistency. As someone fulfilling some of the functions of a supervisor for Natalie, I could have reviewed my notes or data before and after each interaction so that we could set more specific goals and more intentionally spend our time together. While our time together provided key insights into how Natalie is enacting socially just teaching practices – some as a result of my mediation, some from her PDA and mentor teacher, from the PDS curriculum in Fall and Spring, and other mediational influences – her development towards a more socially just teacher was not expansive or deepened. I missed opportunities for additional, sustained mediation. There is much potential for Natalie to link her interest and consumption of U.S. politics and current events with the classroom practices of a socially just teacher.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an answer to the second research question and its sub-question. Regarding the research question, *in what ways do the PDS teacher candidates enact socially just teaching*, when grouping teacher candidates by cohorts, we see the emergent ways in which they are developing in their reasoning and in their practices of socially just teaching. For cohort 1, teachers' and students' identity and bias were a focal point, and in practice, this often took a superficial or performative – desire to complete a checklist – approach. For cohort 2, community and citizenship became mediating concepts in their development, and they each demonstrated a half of the dialectical unity of the theory and practice work (state of mind and activism) required for socially just teaching. Cohort 3 demonstrated how a teacher candidate or teacher's awareness of U.S. news and politics does not always explicitly permeate the school, but is influential, nonetheless. Cohort 3 also demonstrated the importance of critically analyzing curriculum for social justice. Regarding the sub-question, *How was this enactment influenced by the researcher's responsive mediation?*, this answer is more complex. Not all of my attempts at responsive mediation were successful. Shifts in thinking and practice were noted throughout, and many of these successes were because the prompts and questions were targeted and specific, were concrete, and a ZPD was successfully opened up in our discussions. I noted missed opportunities for this to occur and recognized attempts that were unsuccessful. Further, the findings presented in this chapter have substantial implications for the role and contributions of the supervisor during clinical field experiences. Though these implications are discussed in detail in Chapter 7, this chapter lends support to the argument that teacher education does matter (Johnson & Golombek, 2018). The next chapter provides an analysis of the teacher candidates' activity system and what shaped their development on a macro-level.

## CHAPTER 6

### Mediating Influences in the Teacher Candidates' Activity System

This final analysis chapter examines what happens when an additional object of activity – *becoming a socially just teacher* – is introduced into a PDS partnership that has primarily oriented to the development of an inquiry stance and teacher leadership as the objects of activity. The two previous analysis chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) investigated my practices as a teacher educator and supervisor, as well as the development of five teacher candidates in the 2019-2020 PDS program. For this chapter, I employed an activity theoretical analysis (Leont'ev, 1978/8; Engeström, 1987, 2015) to further contextualize and theorize the teaching, supervising, and development that occurred. In doing so, the chapter addresses the third research question, *in what ways does the PDS activity system mediate teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching?*

To answer this question, the totality of data collected for this study was included for analysis of the teacher candidates' activity system of the MSU-SVSD PDS partnership<sup>41</sup>. These data were then sorted using Engeström's (1987) components of an activity system (subject, object, mediating artifacts, rules, community, and division of labor)<sup>42</sup>. Each component served as a thematic code. Employing a microgenetic analysis (Cross, 2010; see Chapter 3), I identified the salient aspects for each component and identified contradictions in the activity system among and within the components. In my analysis, I also constructed triangular models of the activity system which appear throughout the chapter.

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<sup>41</sup> This includes 1) extensive fieldnotes taken in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 during my time in the PDS; 2) interviews with six PDAs, the five primary participant teacher candidates, and their mentor teachers; 3) observations of teacher candidates' teaching and debriefs; 4) instruction and materials from the Spring Seminar, including teacher candidates' work; 5) one-one-one meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic; 6) teacher candidates' bi-weekly reflections; and 7) PDA meeting materials.

<sup>42</sup> This was described in detail in Chapter 2.

## Chapter Outline

This chapter begins with an overview of each component of the PDS activity system (i.e., *subject, mediating artifacts, object, rules, community, and division of labor*). Following, the chapter dives more deeply into relevant primary and secondary contradictions<sup>43</sup> in the activity system for learning to become a socially just teacher organized around two themes: 1) facets of good teaching are in competition with one another and 2) lack of a shared understanding of social justice. The purpose in organizing the contradictions around themes was to provide a more sophisticated understanding of the teacher candidates' activity system and the ways in which the activity system mediated teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching. Table 6.2 includes the two themes their associated contradictions, and what influence the contradiction had on teacher candidates' development. Data excerpts, document analysis, and anecdotes from fieldnotes are used to illustrate the contradictions and are not meant to be exhaustive. The chapter ends with a suggestion from the data to address and resolve the contradictions through the potential to draw on the activity system's rules and division of labor to develop an integrated, unifying concept to mediate teacher candidates' activity in the PDS activity system.

### Mid-Atlantic State University-Spring Valley School District PDS Activity System

This chapter presents the activity system from the perspective of the primary participant teacher candidates (see Figure 6.1). It does not represent the perspective of every PDS partner. The activity system configured through other groups of teacher candidates, other teacher candidate cohorts, or various combinations of PDAs, mentor teachers, and/or partner classroom teachers across different years would yield a different activity system in that they may not be participating in the same activity.

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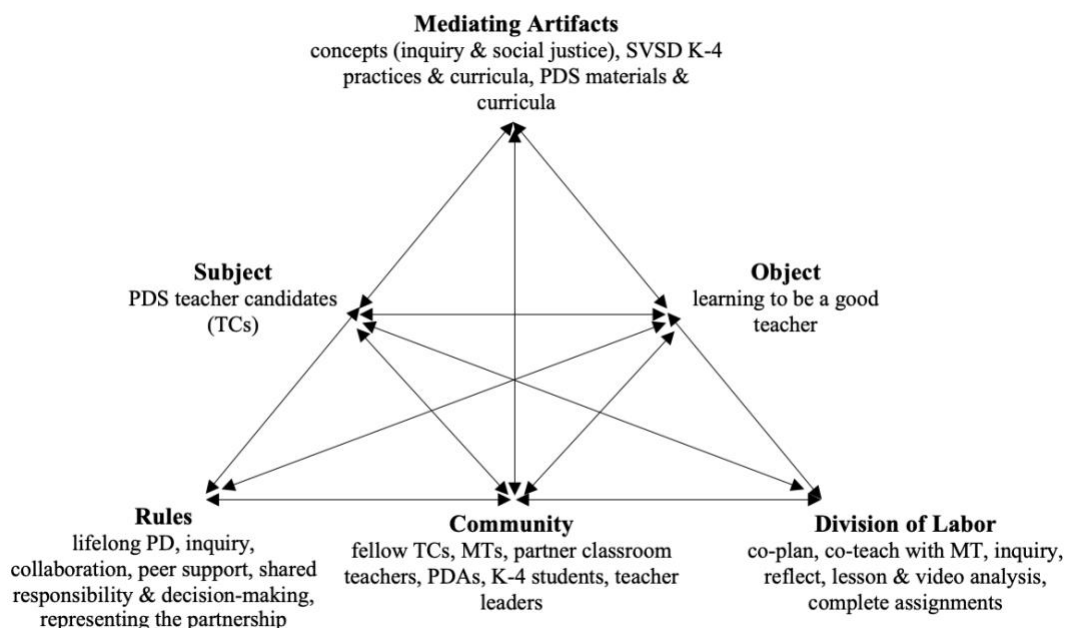
<sup>43</sup> As defined more extensively in Chapter 2, contradictions in activity theory are the driving force of transformation for qualitatively new activity.

## Subjects

The five primary participants – Eve, Fiona, Kayla, Matilda, and Natalie – self-selected into this study. In fact, on Kayla's signed consent form, she wrote “help me define this [social justice] more!” Each of them expressed interest in learning to be a socially just teacher and discussed it being something that was relatively new to them in their teacher development trajectory. In our initial interview, Eve commented that during Social Studies Methods, she became energized about social justice: “After Cameron’s and River’s class last semester, I’m just really big into it right now, not that I shouldn’t always be into it, but right now I’m ready to go and I just want to keep learning about it” (Initial Interview).

**Figure 6.1**

### *Activity System of MSU-SVSD Professional Development School*



Common among the teacher candidates was a strong belief that they had a lot more to learn about social justice. They felt that they could recognize “big” instances of injustices or inequities, giving examples of such egregious harms against minoritized and oppressed

students. Eve shared how a previous teacher commented to her that a young Black child was on a path to crime and imprisonment (Initial Interview). The teacher candidates wanted to know how they could stop these things from happening – for themselves and colleagues – while also learning how to recognize and respond to more nuanced or obfuscated injustices.

It is also important to call attention to the fact that the teacher candidates are all White women. This is something that they are keenly aware of, as evidenced by the instances when they position themselves against “the other.” They describe their communities similarly – as lacking “diversity”.

With the exception of Natalie, the teacher candidates accurately perceive the world as “bigger” than their hometowns, that there is much more diversity in the world, and that they do not want their students to have monocultural experiences similar to their own. Matilda commented that her students (and by extension, Kayla’s) live in “a little bubble of Greenland Elementary” (Matilda, Initial Interview). Fiona echoes this sentiment in her comparison of her student teaching placement, Crossroads Elementary, a school where “nobody is the same” (Initial Interview). She reflects, “I was almost surprised to a point because it's so much within one school but then nothing in the others” (Initial Interview).

In conjunction with recognizing the lack of racial diversity in their hometowns, they express concerns about “teaching the other.” Matilda takes it up as a challenge, as something that she can learn to do better.

growing up in all White school and then teaching in a classroom that's all-White kids. I am concerned that next year if I'm not, because the areas I'm thinking of going to [other states], that's not going to be the demographic. so I'm worried about what am I going to do in that situation. so I want to learn like as much about myself and how I would react and how I can just, I don't know, just learning about, preparing myself basically to go into that situation because I feel like right now I would definitely say a hundred things in one day and then I'd look back on and be

like, 'oh my gosh, why did I say that?' yeah, so just being able to be more aware and conscious in everything. (Matilda, Initial Interview)

In contrast, Kayla is more intimidated and fearful of “the other.” In comparing her placement at Greenland Elementary to her partner classroom placement at Crossroads Elementary, she reflects “my partner classroom is a very big change for me. And it kind of makes me a little bit scared sometimes too because there is so much diversity in there,” (Initial Interview). When asked to elaborate, she states:

I've just never been in front of that much diversity, I guess. Like the first day I was there. I was like, 'oh my, I don't even know what to do.' [...] with everybody speaking a different language and I don't know, to me, I just think that's a little bit hard because I don't know any other languages. [...] so I think, just myself, the way I grew up, it just has not prepared me for that, I guess. And that's why I'm a little scared about it and I feel like if I were to be placed in a school like that, I'd want to be a paraprofessional or a classroom aide, just so that I can dip my feet in the water a little bit and then be able to take that into my future classroom. (Kayla, Initial Interview)

Through their teacher education program and personal experiences, they have come to exoticize “the other” (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In doing so, they reinforce the dichotomy of White as dominant and normative, and BIPOC as non-dominant and defined in opposition to the White dominant group (Atwell et. al., 2010). The teacher candidates believe they should be culturally responsive, yet despite their best intentions, they end up marginalizing historically oppressed groups. Kayla takes it a step further and articulates a *fear* of teaching “the other.” Research in teacher education has documented the racist and harmful trend of othering BIPOC students (Dyches & Boyd, 2017), and has since tried to undo the damage caused, but the lasting effects are still present.

## Object of Activity

The five primary participants saw the object of their activity system as *learning to be a good teacher*. Fiona describes it as:

right now as an intern I really just want to learn and grow and absorb and take up as much as I can because what better experience am I gonna have? it's why you agree to do everything because you want to learn and grow and yeah, all these experiences are gonna shape who you are. and I think that's really important. (Fiona, Initial Interview)

The teacher candidates were oriented towards learning as much as they could so that they could be “a good teacher.” This materialized as the five teacher candidates consistently sought out additional advice and insights. They stayed behind after class for additional questions and advice. As an example, Matilda emailed me to ask if we could meet so that she could talk through an upcoming lesson and get my feedback/advice: “I am really struggling with a choice board with an activism theme. I would love to get any ideas you have” (Matilda, personal communication, 04/24/2020).

This was also the case for Natalie. In my observations during Social Studies Methods and Seminar, observations of her teaching, debriefs, one-on-one meetings, written reflections, and initial and final interviews, it became clear that Natalie is a person who wants to learn as much as possible about teaching. Her weekly reflections are incredibly detailed and are focused on Natalie learning, step-by-step, how to enact certain teaching practices, comparing similar teaching practices across school sites (e.g., Morning Meetings in her classroom and her partner classroom). Natalie predominately focuses on “getting it right” with the prescribed curriculum, materials, and practices rather than focusing on incorporating her own curriculum or critically analyzing what has been prescribed for her. For her inquiry, she was exploring “whole-brain teaching” for teaching spelling and phonics and sought out an opportunity, organized by her



PDA, River, to observe and meet another teacher in the district who had expertise in whole-brain teaching.

Teacher candidates joined book clubs, attended district-level initiatives, and participated in PLCs in which their mentor teachers were members. Learning to be a good teacher was supported by a particularly strong focus on examining “problems of practice” within the PDS. Their assignments in Social Studies Methods, for instance, tended to be positioned as opportunities for learning and exploration – for inquiring into the community, the school, and the curriculum, less about demonstrating or proving what they have already learned. For seminar, they brought in classroom data to interrogate assessment and differentiation strategies. They frequently engaged in conferring protocols to inquire, reflect, and learn from one another. During a debrief with Fiona, instead of pretending that she understood what my feedback and advice was to her, she asked me to co-teach the lesson with her so that she could better understand what I was questioning and advising.

### **Mediating Artifacts**

Activity theory recognizes multiple forms of mediating artifacts: tools and signs (i.e., psychological tools) (Wertsch, 1985). that mediate how the subject orients to the object of activity. Mediating artifacts for the teacher candidates in this study can be sorted into three categories: concepts supported in the PDS that guided teacher candidates towards the object of activity, the materials of Seminar and of supervising student teaching, and the materials and practices of the school district’s K-4 curriculum.

One of two concepts that serves as a mediating artifact for the teacher candidates is inquiry. Inquiry is introduced to them in the Fall semester in a variety of ways and in the Spring,

during Jumpstart<sup>44</sup>, teacher candidates begin their “great wondering brainstorm.” Because of the entrenched nature of inquiry and the emphasis on developing an inquiry stance, teacher candidates begin to use inquiry as a way to think about the phenomenon in their classroom.

This is demonstrated in a self-contained Zoom chat conversation through text (see Excerpt 6.1 below) during the first Seminar meeting after the announcement of the switch to online teaching due to COVID-19. In Zoom chat feature, the teacher candidates turn to inquiry to attempt to make sense of what was happening in the switch to remote teaching while an oral conversation about expectations for student teaching moving forward (e.g., lesson planning reflections, lesson analysis, observations, sharing schedules) is simultaneously taking place.

### **Excerpt 6.1**

#### **Self-contained Conversation in the Chat (03/18/2020)**

- 1 17:09:06 *From Anna:* I wonder if we could do a group inquiry about this [COVID / switch to
- 2 remote learning and teaching] experience... I'm just thinking.
- 3 17:09:18 *From Megan:* LOVE that idea, Anna!!!
- 4 17:09:54 *From Megan:* Maybe different inquiry groups, too based on our interests and needs!
- 5 17:10:14 *From Eve:* That would be really cool!
- 6 17:10:16 *From Anna:* I think a lot of our inquiries had similar topics, so that might be really
- 7 cool
- 8 17:10:28 *From Kayla:* Let's do it!
- 9 17:10:44 *From Eve:* And everyone sharing what we have learned already and giving each other
- 10 ideas on how we can continue that inquiry?
- 11 17:11:16 *From Jordan:* I love that idea! We will learn more about advocacy, technology,
- 12 virtual instruction, student needs, just to name a few.
- 13 17:11:54 *From Megan:* Social justice and equity are HUGE right now - more on some of our
- 14 minds than ever! I would love to inquire into that more!
- 15 17:11:57 *From Anna:* Because truthfully, our essential questions will still fit
- 16 17:12:01 *From Kayla:* Maybe we can talk about this before ending our seminar
- 17 17:12:03 *From Anna:* MEGAN I AM SCREAMING YES
- 18 17:13:11 *From Parker:* SQUEAL!!!
- 19 17:14:28 *From Kayla:* I am wondering if we could all choose a category or topic underneath it
- 20 and maybe work together to answer our wondering...

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<sup>44</sup> A full day event of coming together before the start of the spring semester/return to the classroom aimed to build community, reorient to the work, reinvigorate, and launch the start of the semester. There are community building events, logistical matters are addressed, instructional and reflective time, and goal-setting.

In lines 1-2, we see Anna start the conversation by suggesting that we, as a group, inquire into what we are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggestion is picked up on and expanded by me, Eve, Kayla, and Jordan (a PDA). Parker, another PDA, expresses her enthusiasm as well. As Eve and Kayla offer suggestions on what might be possible and helpful with a group inquiry, Jordan and I offer broad topics to start shaping how the teacher candidates are thinking about inquiry (lines 11-14). Of particular interest in line 15 is Anna's justification for doing a group inquiry "truthfully, our essential questions will still fit." This statement supports the impact of the essential questions as guiding the teacher candidates learning to teach as described in the object of activity above. And here, we see that the course outline/syllabus (another mediating artifact discussed below) is influencing Anna's thinking – for her, the group inquiry is aligned with the essential questions<sup>45</sup> (see Table 6.1 below), thereby keeping the teacher candidates on track to be able to answer the questions that make them "a good teacher."

The second concept that serves as a mediating artifact is the teacher candidates' developing concept of social justice. Their enactment of socially just teaching and (potential) development was discussed in-depth in Chapter 5. Worth noting here is the teacher candidates' reported understanding of social justice as being equitable and fair, taking an intersectional approach (i.e., "not only race"), and "being aware" of biases and diversity (Initial and Final Interviews), and what data analysis revealed about their activity: cohorts 1) took up bias, diversity, and identity; 2) understood community and citizenship from a socially just perspective; 3) enacted socially just teaching beyond social studies; 4) recognized problems within the curriculum and 5) attempted to bring in awareness of U.S. politics, current events, and pop culture. Much of this is evident throughout the data, particularly in the second Seminar lesson, as

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<sup>45</sup> Essential questions were the "goals" in which the Spring Seminar were organized around. The process for developing them was detailed in Chapter 4.

teacher candidates struggled to move beyond recognizing and celebrating differences to asking about structural inequalities. They focused primarily on awareness raising and addressing bias and stereotypes and made early progress in community, curriculum-making, and considering the role of U.S. politics.

The materials directly tied to student teaching requirements also served as mediating artifacts for teacher candidates learning to be good teachers. For Seminar, this included the syllabus with course outline and essential questions (See Table 6.1), assignments, materials, and readings. Assignments included practitioner inquiry (i.e., engaging in the process of inquiry and writing up and presenting on an inquiry), weekly reflections and feedback from PDAs, and an ongoing teaching platform (a required assignment similar to an extended teaching philosophy). Readings and materials were dependent on the activities and learning focus for Seminar each week. The content and materials for my six Seminar lessons, as elaborated upon Chapter 4 also served as mediating artifacts. The only required text was the third edition of Nancy Dana's and Diane Yendol-Hoppey's text (2014), *The Reflective Educator's Guide to Classroom Research: Learning to Teach and Teaching to Learn through Practitioner Inquiry*. In addition, PDAs incorporated their own resources and materials, including book club selections, either specific to their teacher candidates or to their entire cohort. As an example, Taylor included a prompt for the teacher candidates' weekly reflection to use if they were struggling to write a reflection. The prompt was "The way I see myself in relation to teaching for social justice is ... This week, I will commit to ... (learning more, reflecting, sharing, wondering, panning for, interacting with...)." In addition to suggested reflection prompts, other mediating artifacts related to requirements for student teaching in the PDS included the MSU lesson plan template and lesson analysis prompts.

Table 6.1

*Essential Questions and Goals for Seminar*

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*Essential Questions*

- 1. In what ways does an evolving understanding of my beliefs and identity, in relation to my community and larger social structures, contribute to my development as a teacher leader? [identity]
- 2. How do teacher leaders plan instruction in ways that embody their image as curriculum makers who negotiate and advocate for things that matter? [curriculum]
- 3. How does my development as a teacher leader relate to an emergent understanding of teaching for social justice as one that consistently works toward the eradication of inequalities in and of public schooling? [social justice]
- 4. How does my evolving inquiry-stance relate to my development as a teacher leader? [inquiry]

*Goals*

- 1. When connecting with potential employers, how do teacher leaders demonstrate their knowledge of instruction, professionalism, and curriculum? How do teachers demonstrate their leadership when connecting with potential employers?
  - 2. In what ways do teacher leaders address problems of practice and collaborate with other educators?
- 

At the same time, the K-4 curriculum in the Spring Valley School District (SVSD) served as a mediating artifact. Teacher candidates were influenced by curricular materials and resources, scope and sequences, and the curricular practices commonplace to the district. This included the Morning Meeting curricula from *The Responsive Classroom*, the math curriculum, and the science and social studies curricula. Reading and writing, or ELA curriculum, was rarely addressed with the exception of Natalie. And this aligns with the finding in the previous chapter (Chapter 5) that Natalie was attentive to and critical of curriculum that took a superficial, “heroes and holidays” approach to multicultural education. In addition to curriculum, the school and district-wide practices, including schoolwide behavior plans and ability grouping in grades 3 and up, served as mediating artifacts.

## Rules

The teacher candidates were expected to develop professionally alongside one another. This partly includes taking an inquiry stance to professional learning. This also entailed contributing ideas, support, advice, and suggestions while in Seminar, teacher candidate meetings, and in one-on-ones with their PDAs. For much of Seminar, teacher candidates collaborated alongside PDAs in different configurations, but were expected to be active participants. Peer support was also a norm. They were expected to support, uplift, praise, and challenge one another. Teacher candidates commonly conferred with one another, engaged in protocols that positioned them in ways that they were expected to provide feedback to one another. Teacher candidates also learned that there was a norm in the PDS to solicit input from as many partners as possible, including K-4 students. It was clear that there was never one person making all of the decisions. To be a teacher candidate in the PDS meant understanding the norm for shared responsibility and decision-making. These rules are manifest in the norm setting that occurs at the start of each Fall methods course and again in the Spring Seminar as teacher candidates share in establishing agreed-upon norms for their class.

Additionally, PDS teacher candidates were expected to be “the face” of the partnership. Kindness, enthusiasm, and positivity, as well as forms of professionalism, were behaviors expected of teacher candidates while in their school buildings. When problems arose in their school buildings or perhaps with their mentor teacher, the teacher candidates knew to turn to their PDA to work with them to address the problem. Matilda, for example, struggled with her mentor teacher Alice, a first-time mentor teacher in the PDS. She frequently turned to her PDA, Cameron, as a confidant and as someone who she felt could better represent the PDS.

## Community

The teacher candidates' community is wide-reaching within the PDS and SVSD. Eve, Fiona, Kayla, Matilda, and Natalie are part of a PDS community with seven other teacher candidates – for a total of 12 teacher candidates partnered each with a mentor teacher and a partner classroom teacher (24 SVSD classroom teachers). Teacher candidates spend the vast majority of their professional time with their mentor teacher and their K-4 students. Four out of five days of the week are spent in their classroom with their mentor teacher and students. Included in this are paraprofessionals and grade-level co-teachers. Teacher candidates noted collaborations with other teachers, administrators, and specialists within their building (e.g., technology coaches and instructional coaches).

The teacher candidates are also assigned a supervising PDAs (Taylor, Cameron, or River) and teacher candidate cohorts – each cohort contained four teacher candidates. In their school building, they each have at least one other teacher candidate from their cohort present. One day of the week, teacher candidates spend time in a different school building; they are part of their partner mentor teachers' classrooms with their K-4 students.

Additionally, teacher educators and non-supervising PDAs that serve as co-teachers for a Fall methods course and co-planned and co-taught the Spring Seminar. For this study, that includes Parker, Billie, Jordan, and me. There were other teacher educators in Fall methods courses, two SVSD teachers from Crossroads Elementary co-teach Science Methods and a MSU faculty member co-teachers Math Methods, but they do not appear in the data.

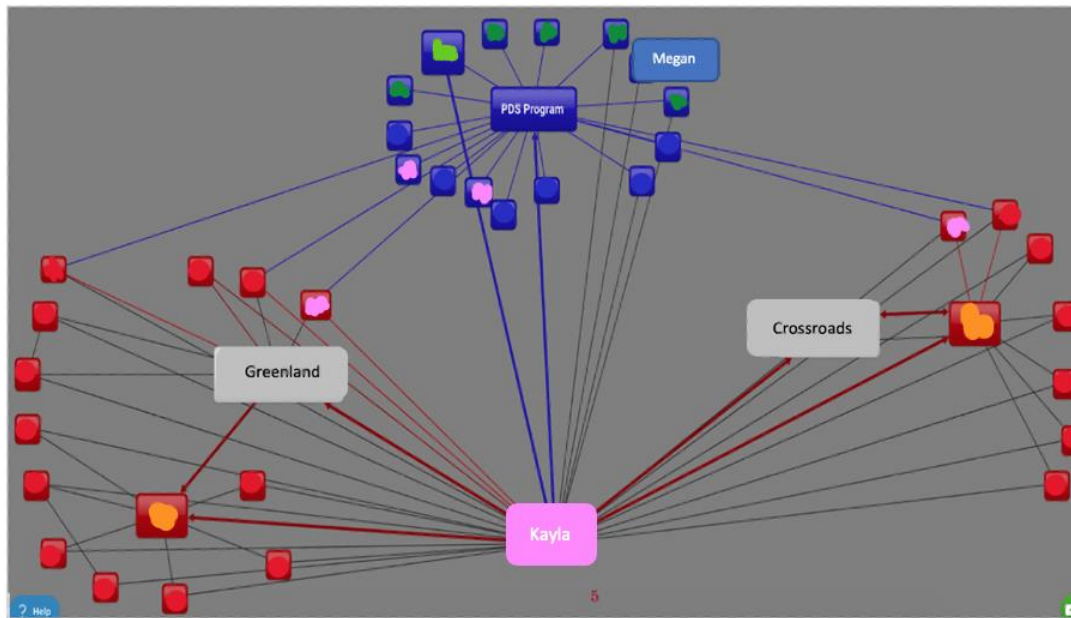
Finally, countless K-4 students, classroom teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, district coaches, and others can be considered partners in the PDS. For example, the teacher

educators/PDAs brought in “teacher leaders” from SVSD and MSU that were part of the PDS community, some of which are alum or retired partners.

As one step in her practitioner inquiry, Kayla attempted to map her professional community. In Seminar 3 (01/29/2020), I conferred with Kayla during part 1 of an inquiry data collection workshop and suggested that a social network analysis might be fruitful for her data collection as part of her inquiry and showed her a few examples online. Kayla took up this idea, and in Figure 6.2, a screenshot of one of Kayla’s presentation slides for her inquiry, we can see Kayla’s attempt at mapping her professional community through her understanding of social network analysis.

**Figure 6.2**

***Kayla’s Visual Representation of Her Professional Community***



*Anonymized. Red = those considered exclusive to the two school communities; Blue = those considered exclusive to the PDS space; Orange = mentor teacher and partner classroom teacher; Dark Green = PDAs; Light Green = PDA (Cameron); Pink = primary teacher candidate participants*

The figure provides insight into how Kayla sees her professional community. Her fellow teacher candidates that are assigned to Greenland and Crossroads Elementary are positioned in



both the PDS and the school building space. The other teacher candidates and PDAs, including myself, are positioned within the PDS community. She sees her mentor teacher and partner classroom teacher (orange) and PDA (light green) as her strongest connections. While I am not using Engeström's (2001) constellation of activity systems, there is evidence that the work in a PDS community might be well-suited for that approach.

### **Division of Labor**

In their classrooms, the teacher candidates' primary responsibilities were to 1) construct lesson plans, 2) meet and plan regularly with their mentor teacher, 3) co-teach with their mentor teacher, 4) assess students' progress, and 5) work alongside their mentor teacher to fulfill all other duties and responsibilities of being a teacher in SVSD. In keeping with the MSU-SVSD PDS model, teacher candidates are not expected to fully "take-over" a class. Instead, they co-teach with their mentors in a variety of ways, e.g., mentor modeling, one lead/one guide, synchronous team teaching, station teaching, parallel teaching, and alternative teaching (Titus, 2016). For the PDS, co-teaching models provide "a structure to think more critically about the needs of students and teachers within the classroom" (Titus, 2016). Titus and Badiali (2010) contend that co-teaching is a preferred pedagogical practice in PDS settings because it puts "students first," it replaces the traditional takeover model of student teaching in which student teachers are left to "sink or swim," and it has documented teacher candidates' abilities to better collaborate with colleagues.

For Seminar, which is co-planned and co-taught by PDAs, the teacher candidates were expected to bring their problems of practice, participate in and contribute during Seminar practices, and complete any assigned readings and assignments. By the end of the Spring semester, teacher candidates have a completed teaching platform. In addition, teacher candidates

reflect weekly using the same website SVSD uses with students (Seesaw). Reflections can be written text, visual representations, or videos. One required form of reflection is reflection on video-recorded classroom teaching. Their PDA responds to and comments on their weekly reflections. They also work on their inquiry throughout the Spring Semester, starting with developing their wonderings in January. In addition, teacher candidates are expected to incorporate feedback in their future planning and teaching from their mentor teacher and PDAs. At times this feedback is in conflict, and it is the teacher candidates' responsibility to reconcile any competing or divergent feedback.

### **Contradictions in the Activity System**

In an activity theoretical analysis, after characterizing the components of an activity system, the focus shifts to identifying contradictions. Contradictions are “historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems” that both “generate disturbances and conflicts, but also innovative attempts to change the activity” (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). Therefore, in this section I will detail contradictions in the activity system so that in the subsequent section, I can suggest possibilities for overcoming the contradictions.

In this section, I identify two prevailing themes that encapsulate primary and secondary contradictions within and across the components the activity system as it relates to socially just teaching. See Table 6.2. The first draws on a primary and a secondary contradiction that arose through competing priorities within the teacher candidates' object of activity and the mediating artifacts of social justice and inquiry. The second speaks to the influence of differing conceptualizations of socially just teaching and addresses one primary and two secondary contradictions. This is not meant to be an exhaustive analysis of all present contradictions at each

of the four levels, but instead I focus on reporting the contradictions directly relevant for understanding the teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching.

**Table 6.2**

<i><b>Contradictions that Influence Teacher Candidates' Development as Socially Just Teachers</b></i>		
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Contradictions</i>	<i>Influence on Teacher Candidates' Development</i>
Facets of Good Teaching are in Competition with One Another	1. Primary Contradiction within the Object of Activity	facets of good teaching are siloed
	2. Secondary Contradiction between Mediating Artifacts and Object of Activity	inquiry and social justice can be incompatible
Lack of a Shared Understanding of Social Justice	3. Primary Contradiction within Community	PDAs' work with teacher candidates creates mixed messages
	4. Secondary Contradiction between Community and Mediating Artifacts	understanding of social justice influences which materials are selected
	5. Secondary Contradiction between Community and Object of Activity	Role of PDAs and mentor teachers in mediating (or not) teacher candidates

### **Facets of Good Teaching are in Competition with One Another**

As stated above, the teacher candidates oriented to the PDS as an opportunity in which they could learn how to teach. This is the driving motive for their time in the PDS. Because of their position within this particular activity system, they conceptualize being a good teacher in ways that are clearly influenced, or mediated, by the activity system.

In her initial interview, Natalie says

I'm excited to learn more about what I'm doing and am I doing good things or am I unintentionally doing bad things? because I feel like when you learn in your classes, like 'oh you should do this, this, this. don't do that.' it's hard if you're not actually teaching to take it all in. so I'm excited to be able to reflect as I'm teaching and learn more. (Initial Interview)

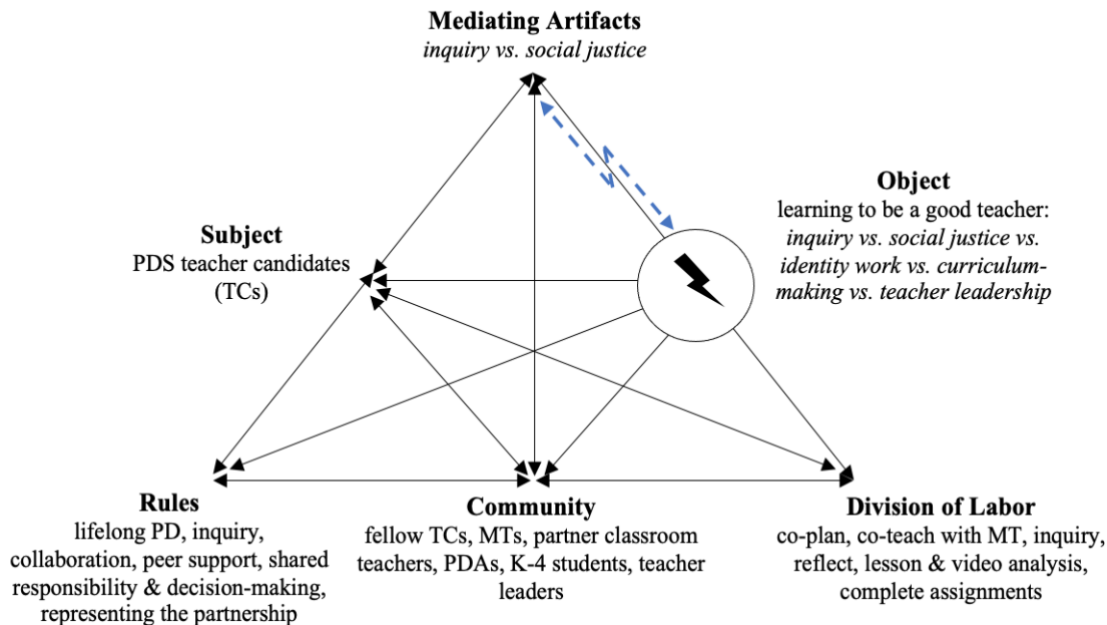
Natalie appears to need reassurance that what she is doing is right/good. She thinks she has an idea of what to do in the classroom based on her teacher education coursework up to her time in the PDS, but as she says, "it's hard if you're not actually teaching." Thus, for Natalie – as well as

the other teacher candidates – the PDS is a space where she can really focus on learning to be a good teacher by applying what she has been taught in coursework, as well as reflect and grow.

At the same time, the PDS promotes at least six distinct ways to be a good teacher, one of which directly addresses socially just teaching: 1) understand how their beliefs and identity relate to their self, community, and larger social structures; 2) plan instruction that embodies their image as a curriculum-maker who negotiates and advocates for things that matter; 3) teach for social justice so that they consistently work towards eradicating inequalities in and of public schooling; 4) develop and embody an inquiry stance; 5) develop into a teacher leader; and 6) address problems of practice and collaborate with other educators.

**Figure 6.3**

***Primary and Secondary Contradictions That Put the PDS Facets of Good Teaching in Competition with One Another***



***Contraction 1. Primary Contradiction within the Object of Activity: Facets of Good Teaching are Siloed***

The teacher candidates orient towards these facets of good teaching, yet in ways that are often siloed and fragmented, which can result in competing priorities (See Figure 6.3). An inquiry stance, socially just teaching, curriculum-making, and identity work are encapsulated under the umbrella of teacher leadership, and teacher leadership is also viewed as an isolated facet of good teaching. The primary contradiction is not that these facets of good teaching are not compatible or contradict one another, but that they compete for attention and focus as the teacher candidates participate in their activity of learning to be good teachers. As Jordan puts it in our interview, “the way equity has been framed in the PDS for too long has been just another bullet point. It's on the list. It's important, but it's one bullet point and I would like to see it be some sort of an integrating frame for all the work that we do” (Jordan, Interview, 06/03/2020).

Seeing not only “equity” or social justice as a bullet point item to cover in Seminar, but also inquiry, curriculum-making, identity work, and teacher leadership is evident in the way the PDAs (myself included) planned for the Spring Seminar. Over several weeks of big picture co-planning for Seminar, the PDAs populated the calendar with activities, tasks, and assignments. We began to distinguish these calendar items by their relation to a specific essential question or goal. Parker filled in the activities related to inquiry, as well as the amount of time needed, based on previous semester calendars and her expertise in supporting students throughout a semester in developing their inquiries. As the inquiry activities were added, my six lessons were added to the calendar with the times required for each lesson. From there, teacher leader time slots were filled in and other activities were filled in, some based on mentor teacher requests in previous semesters, others based on teacher candidates’ current needs and what has been successful in the

past. The intent was to weave together multiple curricular strands, yet in practice, the calendar became compartmentalized – “this is inquiry time,” “this is social justice time,” “this is the time to hear/learn from a teacher leader.” This compartmentalization can lead to deprioritizing one facet for the sake of another and/or missed opportunities for integrating these facets of good teaching.

Models of teacher leaders are a good example of such missed opportunities. At the start of nearly every Seminar, “teacher leaders” from SVSD or MSU are invited to share something they are working on for 15-20 minutes. Teacher leaders are identified by PDAs, typically because they are recognized for doing something noteworthy or represent a unique perspective.

For Seminar 2, Matilda’s mentor teacher Alice was invited as a model of a teacher leader to share about her work with using technology to engage students. During her talk, she casually remarks that “students from Russian families didn’t sign consent forms...” I documented the remark in my fieldnotes, and it was not addressed by the teacher candidates nor the PDAs. It is unclear whether or not the statement was realized and what implications it might carry. Instead, it was a time to learn from a teacher leader and engage with an example of teacher leadership and use of educational technology, not a time to problematize sweeping generalizations or stop perpetuating stereotypes. In other words, modeling teacher leadership was prioritized at the expense of developing into a socially just teacher, thus exemplifying the primary contradiction within the object of activity.

In another example, in Seminar 3, a long-standing member of the PDS, who has since retired, was invited to talk to the teacher candidates about teacher leadership. This teacher leader, Ed<sup>46</sup>, reported on alumni stories of teacher leadership after graduating from the PDS. Before

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<sup>46</sup> pseudonym

sharing one particularly powerful example from alumni, Ed prefaced it by asking if anyone knew about Baltimore, MD and what happened in 2015. The room was silent. Fiona eventually speaks up to say that she heard there were riots. Ed quickly retorted that it could be considered protests or riots depending on language and perspective. He then asked her to share what else she knew. Fiona said she did not know much, but that she only remembered seeing photos of cars on fire. Ed then told the story of the murder of Freddie Gray by Baltimore police and Fiona audibly gasped, indicating it was perhaps her first time hearing this story. Ed went on to say that many of the alumni he speaks to believe that in the first or second year as teachers they cannot talk about politics. But he wanted to reassure them that they could. On the slides, he had a quote from the PDS alumnus – a model of teacher leadership – that read: “I had my kids write peaceful protest songs in reaction to the events taking place in their city. These are a few of my favorite lines...” (Fieldnotes, 01/29/2020). This conversation had the potential to be quite impactful and be a developmental opportunity for many of the teacher candidates, especially given that Fiona seemed unfamiliar with the news. Instead, the moment passed as the focus was on demonstrating teacher leadership, not on socially just teaching, though Ed had such a powerful example that PDAs and teacher candidates could have continued the conversation and make explicit the linkage between the two.

As a final example, during my first debrief with Natalie (Excerpt 6.2), we talked extensively about her phonics lesson in which students were divided into high, middle, and low ability groups (labeled green, yellow, and red). Ability grouping is a district-wide practice beginning in third grade in the Spring Valley School District. As mentioned above, practices and curriculum in the district serve as mediating artifacts for teacher candidates, and this includes ability grouping. The role and influence of ability grouping also exemplifies a secondary

contradiction between mediating artifacts and the object of activity, as ability grouping is often not an equitable practice in public schooling. In response to questions that I asked and interest that I showed in discussing ability grouping, Natalie selected three of her students' phonics work folders, one from each group (red, yellow, and green). We then reviewed a sample of student writing from each of the respective groups. In talking through each sample, I attempted guide her through a critical examination of the ways in which students were sorted, the fixed nature of the groups, and the intended/unintended outcomes of being sorted. Ability grouping and tracking in schools has a long-documented history of reinforcing class stratifications and limiting the opportunities available to minoritized, BIPOC students (Peterson, 1998). By asking Natalie to explore this with me, I hoped to create opportunities to link being a socially just teacher as one that interrogates inequitable school practices and policies such as ability group.

During the debrief, Natalie shares that her inquiry is “probably going to be looking at – because I'm seeing some transfer into the writing, but not a whole lot – if I can use whole brain teaching as a way to get them to do it because I think movement could be helpful for them. one for transfer and two possibly for engagement” (Observation Debrief, 02/06/2020). I recognized the potential for Natalie to inquire into an inequitable school practice.

#### **Excerpt 6.2 from Debrief 1 with Natalie (02/06/2020)**

Meg = Megan; NAT = Natalie

- 1 MEG: I think your inquiry could evolve. and be really, really cool.
- 2 just thinking about it. That's a social justice take on it
- 3 NAT: **I really liked the activity we did last night. I learned a lot,**
- 4 **but I've never done something like that**
- 5 MEG: right? because we all talk about we want all of these differences
- 6 in the classroom. we want students that have different cultural
- 7 backgrounds, that eat different foods, that celebrate different
- 8 holidays, that look different, that act in different ways, have
- 9 different hobbies. **but whenever that gets brought into the**
- 10 **school, we tend to value certain aspects over others**
- 11 and some kids, **I bet what could be really cool is thinking about**
- 12 **your red, yellow, green groups. thinking about what hobbies are**
- 13 **the red, yellow, green group. what are the parents' occupations?**



14        **what the language uses of those different groups? what the**  
 15        **different classroom behaviors are. and seeing if there is some**  
 16        **sort of identifiable pattern**

On lines 1-2, I suggest that Natalie’s inquiry could evolve to incorporate some of what we were discussing, which I understood to be moving towards being a socially just teacher.

Upon hearing me say “social justice” on line 2, Natalie immediately shifts to reflecting on the lesson in Seminar the previous day. She associates learning about being a socially just teacher with the lesson from Seminar, but not to her current inquiry wondering which we were actively talking about. Because of their siloed nature, learning how to inquire and learning to become a socially just teacher are in direct competition and only one can be focused on at a time. Should Natalie orient towards learning to teach with an inquiry stance or learning to teach as a socially just teacher? As I discuss in the next section, inquiry and social justice can be in opposition of each other.

***Contradiction 2. Secondary Contradiction between Mediating Artifact and Object of Activity:  
 The Seemingly Incompatibility of Inquiry and Social Justice***

Practitioner inquiry, as a concept, involves the systematic, intentional study into one’s own practice with the purpose of improving classroom practice. It serves as a tool for professional development and tends to have a local impact. In the PDS, practitioner inquiry is heavily supported throughout the year. Teacher candidates begin with developing their wonderings, then making a research plan, they “find their findings” through data analysis, and share their inquiry findings at the end of the year and in incremental stages throughout. Practitioner inquiry can ask incredibly important questions about the classroom and institutional policies. Fieldnotes document an instance of an SVSD classroom teacher inquiring into their classroom practice such that they found a SVSD-promoted book club book, *Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children in School* incompatible with the district’s Positive

Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model. On the other hand, this teacher did not feel comfortable enough sharing the findings of this inquiry because they were a new teacher. It is possible for practitioner inquiry to ask questions for social justice. Matilda and Anna are two examples of this, but not all PDS teacher candidates are able to do this, and they are not always mediated to be able to do so. Like Natalie, who distanced social justice from inquiry when I tried to link them in Excerpt 6.2 above, other teacher candidates are not mediated to see the compatibility, and I believe, necessity between the two.

During Seminar 1, the teacher candidates were tasked with a consulting protocol with PDAs to further develop their inquiry wonderings. I worked with Grace for several minutes. In that time, I learned that “Grace is worried her 3 ESL students (all 3 Chinese girls) are not as included in the classroom community. She wants to think about ways that they can be included.” (Fieldnotes, 01/15/2020). We discussed possibilities of why this might be: receiving pull-out ESL instruction, placed in the same groups, transportation (shared bus time), after-school activities, neighborhoods where they live and play, perceived racial and linguistic differences or deficits, etc. I left to work with another teacher candidate, and by the end of class, Grace had written “*How can I find opportunities to be inclusive and build community across groups?*” as her inquiry wondering. It is also in line with the data in Chapter 5 for Cohort 2 that Cameron is her PDA and worked with her to develop her wondering as well.

In contrast, I overheard a conversation with Jenna and another PDA. I jotted the following in my fieldnotes: “Jenna is worried that her ESL students in her partner classroom are isolating themselves from the others and that that isn’t helpful for a classroom community. Isolating by shared language background. She wants them to see it is important to be part of the community” (Fieldnotes, 01/15/2020). Jenna’s inquiry wondering by the end of seminar was “*In*

*what ways can I use technology as a tool to enhance instruction and increase engagement?”*

While I do not have data to speak to how Jenna transformed her initial concern to her wondering, it is possible to note the ideological differences in how Grace and Jenna perceive a similar problem of practice and how they use inquiry to learn more about the problem and improve their classroom practice. As it is presented, Jenna takes a deficit perspective to her ESL students’ involvement and engagement in the classroom, while Grace seeks to understand more about inclusivity and her responsibility in doing so.

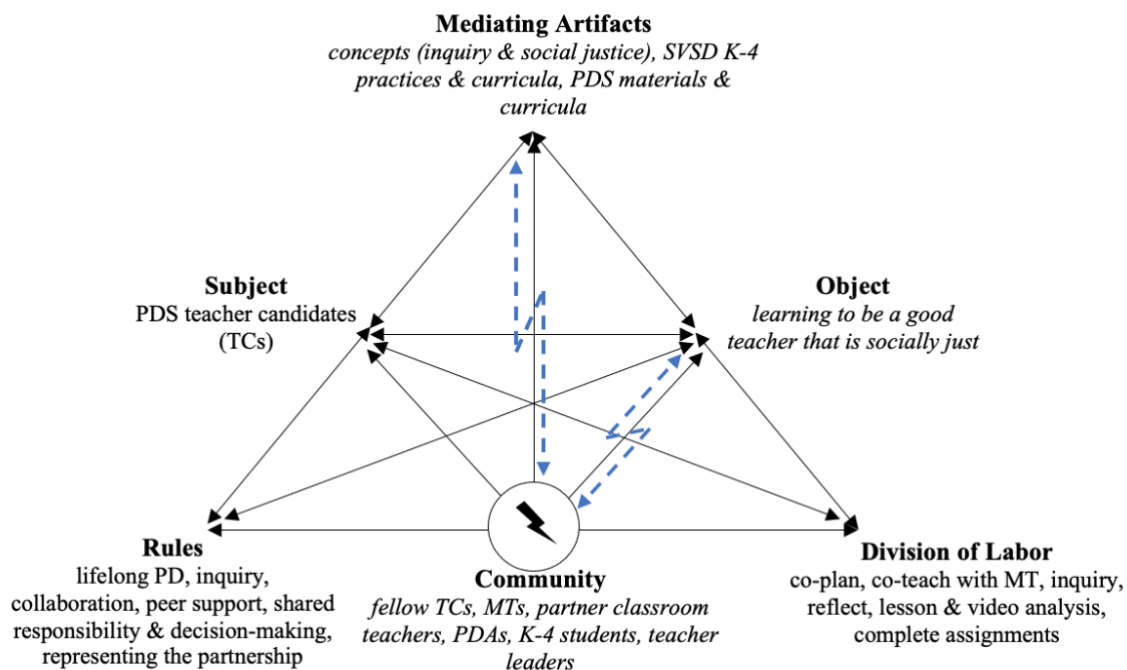
I share these two examples because it highlights the potential for social justice and inquiry to be compatible in the case of Grace and the potential for inquiry to be a project for Jenna (one she is routinely praised for once COVID-19 changes the educational landscape). Additionally, by PDAs utilizing Dana and Yendol-Hoppey’s (2014) practitioner inquiry text as a course material for Seminar, this incompatibility may remain. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey’s (2014) text offers a guide to readers as they begin brainstorming their wonderings. They refer to eight inquiry “passions”: 1) helping an individual child, 2) desire to improve or enrich curriculum, 3) focus on developing content knowledge, 4) desire to improve or experiment with teaching strategies and teaching techniques, 5) desire to explore the relationship between your beliefs and your classroom practice, 6) the intersection of your personal and professional identities, 7) advocating social justice, and 8) focus on understanding the teaching and learning context. If advocating for social justice is only one of eight passions for inquiry, where does that leave the purpose for the other seven? Implications in Chapter 7 offer a possibility for re-imagining Dana and Yendol-Hoppey’s (2014) inquiry passions so that they are all compatible with and *inquire for social justice*.

## Lack of a Shared Understanding of Social Justice

This section focuses more closely on one of the ways teacher candidates oriented to learning to be good teachers: the development of socially just teaching such that they can work towards eradicating inequalities in and of schooling. Three related contradictions emerge within and among the community, mediating artifacts, and the teacher candidates' object of activity (See Figure 6.4). These contradictions all impact the interpretation of social justice taken up by the teacher candidates. Without an overarching conceptualization of social justice and what it looks like in practice, the teacher candidates have competing visions of socially just teaching, mixed metaphors, and a lack of clarity on what it means to be a socially just teacher.

**Figure 6.4**

*Primary and Secondary Contradictions in the Activity System That Lead to the Lack of a Shared Understanding of and Commitment towards Social Justice*



### ***Contradiction 3. Primary Contradiction within Community: Mixed Messages of Social Justice***

One primary contradiction arises from within the PDA group of the community. The Seminar structure is mainly comprised of small groups facilitated by the PDAs or the teacher candidates in workshops with one another. The thinking and development that occurs in each small group is partially dependent on the facilitator for that group. Varying degrees of skill and areas of expertise exist in each group, and each PDA approaches the role of facilitating in groups differently. While such variety can be beneficial, when community members offer contrasting advice, it is up to the teacher candidates to make sense of it.

In my first lesson in seminar, for example, when groups are sharing out what they discussed, Grace says “So we talked about, well we kind of struggled with the definitions, so we talked a lot about social justice and how that's different from equality and equity. So like the bottom one, we talked about outcomes can be different, but then does that make them unfair or unjust” (Seminar 2, 01/22/2020). One of the members in Grace’s group was Jordan, a PDA who self-reported feeling unwelcomed in social justice spaces and much prefers to be in the space of those that do equity work (Interview, 06/03/2020). By being positioned as an authority as a PDA, if Jordan expresses reticence to discuss social justice or steers the conversation in a different direction, the outcomes in that group might be notably different than others. While a discussion on the differences in terminology may be fruitful, we have to recognize that our practices within an activity system have effects greater than oneself.

Other times the primary contradiction within the PDA community is evident in the PDAs’ use of metaphors. In a two-part lesson on differentiation, PDA Billie used a ladder metaphor to discuss grouping students based on their performance on a particular task. While there was a lot of talk of creating more equitable practices and opportunities for students and

using their performance on a task to determine the supports that they needed instead of bias or past impressions of students, the ladder metaphor creates an image that not all PDAs may fully embrace.

In Excerpt 6.3 below, I attempt to use Billie's ladder metaphor in a debrief with Natalie and begin to question it on lines 14-17.

**Excerpt 6.3 from Debrief 1 with Natalie (02/06/2020)**

MEG = Megan; NAT = Natalie

- 1 MEG: and it goes back to whenever Billie was talking about
- 2 differentiation, where it's like how do you move students up that
- 3 ladder? knowing that some are working with these materials? And
- 4 some with these here? ((gesturing))
- 5 [...]
- 6 MEG: It's- right, whenever I read that green one like the kid with the
- 7 Audi that went to the dealer that you know drove to [nearby city]
- 8 and read books and ate [local "fine dining" restaurant] and his
- 9 home life and background, it gets accepted in school and it
- 10 pushes him further and further. whenever he could read for four
- 11 hours on the way to [nearby city] versus another kid that doesn't
- 12 have four hours of dedicated time to read.
- 13 [...]
- 14 MEG: **You know, and the purpose of schooling is to make sure by the end**
- 15 **everyone's here, or is the purpose of schooling by the end, that**
- 16 **it's, right, like everyone moves up but we still have people**
- 17 **higher than others, and how do we-? Is that okay?**
- 18 NAT: a lot to think about

After Natalie says she has a lot to think about, she is immediately pulled back into the classroom as students are returning from their daily "special area class", in this class STEM enrichment<sup>47</sup>. While I began to problematize the ladder, I did not offer a counter metaphor for differentiation and the practices of ability grouping. In line with a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical approach, I might have offered the metaphor of a garden. At the same time, throughout the conversation, Natalie's statements aligned with the ladder metaphor, suggesting that much more time would be needed to address the inequities of ability grouping and tracking

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<sup>47</sup> Other special area classes include art, music, library, and physical education/health.

with Natalie. It was my hope that we could work through this with her inquiry, but COVID-19 put restrictions on her inquiry, and she was unable to carry through with it. Thus, this specific instantiation of the primary contradiction within the community remained unresolved.

***Contradiction 4. Secondary Contradiction between Community and Mediating Artifacts:***

***Material Selection and Use***

Members of the community have a direct impact on which mediating artifacts are incorporated within the activity system and influence the teacher candidates' activity, thereby revealing a related secondary contradiction between the community and the mediating artifacts. Mediating artifacts are reviewed, selected, and considered by PDAs, teacher candidates, mentor teachers, and all partners in a PDS. They do not exist in a vacuum. When it comes to creating curricula and assigned readings and selecting materials for Methods courses and Spring Seminar, the perspectives of the community members are at play. At the same time, the teacher candidates who are asked to engage with specific materials have the agency to interpret the materials based on their own perspectives, as well. At times, there is strong alignment between the mediating artifacts (e.g., course readings and materials) selected for methods courses and Seminar, and at other times, there can be vastly different interpretations of selected materials. PDAs and the teacher candidates they supervise agree upon books for teacher candidate cohort "book clubs." In the 2019-2020 PDS program, all of the selected books centered equity, which supports the teacher candidates' motive to learn to be a socially just teacher. In Fall, Taylor's teacher candidates read *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo (2018), and in the spring, they began reading Ibram X. Kendi's (2019) book *How to Be an Antiracist*. Eve compares the two in our final interview.

White Fragility just makes it seem that there's no hope for us. That we can't just- it seems like there's nothing we can do to be, to not be racist as White people. We can't be racist or we

can only be racist, but then he saying it's either you're going to be racist or anti-racist. it's very interesting to see his perspective [...] they were just contradicting each other, but I like this more [...] it's easier to read and you see we have hope to be anti-racist teachers and people in general (Eve, Final Interview)

Eve understands that both books are attempts at creating racial equality and the role of White people in doing so, and she recognizes the different approaches for which the authors advocate. Eve ultimately prefers Kendi's text over DiAngelo's. At the same time, Cameron and her teacher candidate cohort choose a different book club text, reading Carla Shalaby's 2017 book, *Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School*. This creates a different opportunity for understanding racial equality and the themes in the book are in direct conflict with the school district's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system. Including a variety of texts that tackle racial equity in schooling is a welcomed and important practice, but the extent to which the teacher candidates had a framing or consistent lens with which to engage in the texts is the question. How Eve was able to make sense of the books she read with her cohort beyond what she stated in our final interview is not found in the data. A guiding frame of developing socially just teaching practices and a shared object to move towards.

In the example of book club selections, the PDAs and teacher candidates were not radically opposed to the content or to each other's interpretation. They do present different opportunities which can allow for a contradiction in whose perspective or understanding of social justice the teacher candidates are mediated towards. Yet deep, ideological differences in community members can be found when selecting mediating artifacts.



In an interview with PDA Jordan, *The 1619 Project* (Hannah-Jones et al., 2019)<sup>48</sup> was brought up. Perhaps not known to Jordan at the time, the first podcast episode for the project, “The Fight for a True Democracy” (Hannah-Jones, 2019), was one of the assigned “readings” for Social Studies Methods for the November 5 class that covered how to teach slavery. Cameron and River paired that text with two other readings: 1) *Learning for Justice*’s (formerly *Teaching Tolerance*) framework for teaching slavery in K-5 and 2) a recent story on a White teacher who led her fifth-graders through a racist slavery simulation of a slave auction. The lesson was a particularly powerful one for the teacher candidates and led to a lot of reflection and question-asking on how to teach slavery. The podcast episode served as background information and content for the teacher candidates as they worked through strategies for teaching about slavery in the U.S. Cameron, perhaps more strongly than River, aligned with Hannah-Jones’ narrative of the founding of America in the episode. At the same time, Jordan reflects on ideological differences with *The 1619 Project*.

I've had a hard time with the 1619 project. [...] although there have been questions about the factual accuracy of some of the pieces, I don't care. I'm talking about narratives of our country, right. And speaking as a citizen, and a- yeah, I'll openly say I'm still firmly committed to this narrative of America as 'it as a bold ideal, but a deeply flawed experiment.'

I still believe in America. I'm still there [...] I think we are an exceptional country. I think the founding ideals, I think they're on solid ground, but they have, in many ways, they have excluded most people for most of our history. But that doesn't mean that the ideal isn't still a good one. (Jordan, Interview, 06/03/2020)

While Jordan’s reflection is full of content worthy of discussion (particularly the nod towards American exceptionalism), what is of note is the ideological stance in opposition of the

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<sup>48</sup> “*The 1619 Project* is an ongoing initiative from The New York Times Magazine that began in August 2019, the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery. It aims to reframe the country’s history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative.”

“narrative of America.” Jordan rejects the premise of *The 1619 Project*, which River and Cameron had explicitly shared with the teacher candidates and potentially served as a mediating artifact in their development of socially just teaching. As stated previously, it is not expected or even possible for all members in an activity system to share the same ideological beliefs or perspectives; however, when they remain obscured or are not accounted for and run counter to mediating artifacts that are intended to shape the subjects’ (i.e., the teacher candidates’) object of activity, in this case, learning to be a good teacher that is socially just, contradictions arise in the activity system that must be resolved. I point to several potential ways to resolve the contradictions in the final section of this chapter.

***Contradiction 5. Secondary Contradiction Between Community and the Object of Activity:***

***The Role of PDAs and Mentor Teachers in Mediating Teacher Candidates***

The contradictions discussed so far are implicated in the final contradiction to be addressed, that of the teacher candidates’ community and object. The community in the teacher candidates’ PDS activity system mediate the teacher candidates’ object of learning to be a good teacher, and more specifically, developing as a socially just teacher, in varying ways. At times, these variations are community members participating in different goal-oriented actions in the same activity. For instance, Cameron mediates teacher candidates’ ability to critique nationalistic, White-centered curriculum (e.g., Columbus Day, Thanksgiving, etc.) found on popular teacher-sharing websites in a Social Studies Methods lesson one week, and in another week, River mediates the teacher candidates in their selection of appropriate read-alouds for September 11. Both actions are in service of the same object of activity – curriculum analysis to select socially just materials.

However, at other times, the same or different goal-oriented actions are mediating towards a different activity, which creates a secondary contradiction in the activity system.

Matilda's reflection during our final interview exemplifies this well.

with my mentor [Alice] I think that I got the feeling that she was a little bit uncomfortable with some of the things I was doing. And so we just like didn't really talk about it. I just did my inquiry, and she just did her thing and just kind of coexisted

with the other interns [...] Anna, and I talked about it quite a bit since we had kind of inquiries that lined up a little bit, but our definitions are probably pretty similar. [...] I feel like I focused a lot on activism and social justice and that piece of 'I'm teaching my kids to be socially just', versus my own personal self being socially just. Obviously I tried to be equitable and fair in my classroom, but she took social justice in the classroom as her own identity, whereas I took it as something to teach. (Matilda, Final Interview)

Matilda believes that her mentor teacher was not able to provide her the support or mediation that she needed to develop in her inquiry or her socially just teaching. Her mentor teacher, Alice, is part of the activity system and participates within the same rules and division of labor, yet she is not contributing to Matilda's motive to learn to be a good teacher – and what that entails in the PDS. Thus, the contradiction between community and object as Alice is not participating in the same activity as Matilda and her fellow teacher candidates, like Anna, who Matilda also refers to in the above statement. Matilda recognizes that while Anna and her may be carrying out different goal-directed actions, they are taking part in the same activity and are both learning to be more socially just teachers.

**Different Actions, Same Activity.** In this section, I highlight how two PDAs, Cameron and Billie, mediate the teacher candidates towards the same activity, but through taking different actions. The reason for selecting Billie and Cameron is that they are both positioned as “social justice experts.” In an interview with Kayla's mentor, Lydia, she reported that Cameron is one of

her sources of information on equity and social justice, “she's got a lot of resources she has sent, and she's done this with Kayla too, she'll send us podcasts or resources to check into” (Lydia, Interview, 01/28/2020). Part of my personal ability to be welcomed into the PDS community more broadly and for my work to be supported was because of the work Billie and Cameron were already doing and the relationships I had formed with them.

For Billie, any work in social justice has to start with personal identity development, “I feel like that is a big part of my, ‘how I see myself in relation to equity.’ Yeah, so much of it is internal personal work that needs to be done” (Billie, Interview, 05/28/2020). Later in the interview, she says, “And so I think that my idea of equity right now is that I want to work towards those structural changes, and my little piece of that is working with individuals on locating themselves and understanding who they are in relation to inequities” (Billie, Interview, 05/28/2020). I interpret Billie’s actions in the activity system as mediating the teacher candidates’ relational and situational understanding of their identity so that they can meet their intended object of learning to be a good teacher who teaches in socially just ways.

Cameron has more of an eclectic approach to socially just teaching. Over her tenure in the PDS, she has collaborated with many colleagues and has accumulated an extensive collection of resources on socially just teaching. While at times these resources seem to be in conflict with one another, Cameron is representative of this amassing of beliefs and practices that inform her goal-oriented practices. In our interview, Cameron talks about how she was first drawn to the “cultural competency” strand in the PDS, and how over time it has shifted to be conceptualized as cultural responsiveness, equity, social justice, etc. While Cameron is too humble to say so, she is one of the reasons for such a change. She reflects on the equity committees and professional reading groups in which she is part, her role in keeping herself accountable, creating inclusive

syllabi, and doing identity work. She also talks about helping her teacher candidates develop voice and freedom form connections, community, and relationships that matter. Cameron is a self-proclaimed “news junkie” (a problematic term, yet, I recognize the importance of using Cameron’s words) and always has the latest podcast or reading on social justice. Cameron has the most outwardly focus on environmental justice of the PDAs and in my talk with Cameron about Kayla’s recycling unit, we both discussed the importance of going beyond “reduce, reuse, recycle” as a “good thing citizens can do” to a more activist and advocacy stance. Thus, like Billie, they both participate in the same activity, but through different actions, which Cameron’s seemingly more eclectic than Billie’s.

And while this is recognizable in an activity theoretical data analysis, it is perhaps not always visible to the teacher candidates. When this understanding of Billie’s and Cameron’s division of labor and the actions they are taking are not recognized by the subjects (the teacher candidates’) as complementary parts of mediating their (teacher candidates’) development of socially just teaching, the potential for a secondary contradiction between community and object can emerge for the teacher candidates. They must be able to reconcile and piece together what feel like equally important yet competing trajectories. Chapter 5 highlighted the different ways in which the teacher candidates demonstrated development towards being socially just: Fiona and Eve took up bias, diversity, and identity; Kayla and Matilda made progress in understanding community and citizenship from a socially just perspective and enacted socially just teaching beyond social studies; and Natalie recognized problems within the curriculum and attempted to bring in her awareness of U.S. politics, current events, and pop culture. Matilda’s remarks above note her interpretation of how her mentor teacher did not mediate her development and her belief that she and Anna, another teacher candidate, were attempting to meet the same object, but

through different actions. Similarly, Kayla saw links between her own developmental trajectory and Matilda's by considering them to be "big ways and small ways." Kayla and Matilda's insights are important for understanding how they have internalized understandings of socially just teaching while participating in the same activity system.

**Same Actions, Different Activities.** At the same time, when there are ideological differences in social justice / being a socially just teacher, secondary contradictions between community and object become more significant. Because the PDAs and number of teacher candidates were relatively small in number, there was less variance in the ideological differences. Though that does not mean there were no differences. On the one hand, Jordan, for example, espouses an understanding of justice though the classic liberal conception of individualistic rights while I espouse a more socialist conception of human rights. An analysis at this level is beyond the scope of this chapter, however, and will be reserved for future writings.

More commonly, the secondary contradiction between community and object arises based on where those in the community align themselves. Although many partners in the PDS throughout the years have attempted to conceptualize it as a third space (Clark et al., 2005), partners in the PDS eventually draw their lineage to either the university (MSU) or their school or school district (SVSD). Partners in the PDS must answer to their own institutions, regardless of the time they spend in the PDS. And the policies in these institutions mediate partners' thinking. assimilation

One instantiation of this is the school district's adoption of a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports model (PBIS)<sup>49</sup>. It is a policy that is mostly accepted without scrutiny

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<sup>49</sup> PBIS is purported to be an inclusive model of positive behavior support, as outlined in the IDEA. It is meant to establish positive norms for all students. Yet studies show (e.g., Bornstein, 2017), it continues the school-to-prison pipeline, reinforces classed, White norms, harms neurodivergent students, and forces compliance through coercion.

among the teacher candidates; is looked at either positively, neutrally (“it is what it is”), or with some reservations (e.g., it may go against their “gut” feelings or classroom environment) with the mentor teachers; and it is mostly seen neutrally or negatively among the PDAs. As part of small group work during Seminar – lesson 5 – one of the groups inquired into the PBIS model, guided by four discussion questions<sup>50</sup>: 1) *What is the initiative [PBIS]?*, 2) *What root causes of inequalities does it address?*, 3) *What are the benefits of implementing the initiative?*, and 4) *What are its limitations?*.

The group members included three teacher candidates – Mandy, Ellen, and Grace – and three PDAs – Cameron, Parker, and myself. Throughout the conversation, it became clear that Mandy, Ellen, and Grace had not considered the purpose, goals, or outcomes of a PBIS model until this conversation (See Excerpt 6.4). After about 10 minutes of the teacher candidates comparing how their schools and mentor teachers implement PBIS, Parker prompts the teacher candidates to think more critically (lines 3-5). Ellen and Mandy’s responses (lines 7-9 and lines 11, 15-16) indicate that there is nothing to be critical of with a PBIS model, and that the only possible concern is that it does not reward the “good students” all the time. If it is not working, to Mandy, it must be the dynamic of the group.

#### **Excerpt 6.4 Small Group Discussion Problematizing PBIS**

PAR = Parker; ELL = Ellen; MAN = Mandy

- 1 PAR: looking at that first column, what symptoms and or root causes of
- 2 inequality does it address. I just, because it sounds like it's
- 3 going fairly well in your classes, but **I wonder if you could help**
- 4 **us think through why a teacher would wonder if it was working**
- 5 **well for her students or not.**
- 6 ELL: Well, I think that kind of goes back to what me and Mandy were
- 7 saying about how it only seems to affect certain students. **it**
- 8 **kind of can exclude the students that always behave well but**
- 9 **don't get rewarded**
- 10 MAN: I feel like it might not work for a class or a teacher
- 11 specifically **based on the group of students that she has.** Maybe

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<sup>50</sup> This lesson is covered more in-depth in Chapter 4.

12       they're not motivated by those kinds of things that you  
 13       originally implement, and it might be trial and error that you  
 14       have to change it up. Or maybe you modify your school's version  
 15       of PBIS to fit your group better. **But it might be like the**  
 16       **dynamic of the group.** It's a little tricky.

Later, Mandy adds that she believes the goal of a PBIS model is to “be cognizant of a positive classroom environment” because “it's causing the outlook to shift towards school as a safe place” and “school is, you know, an accepting place.” (Lesson 5, 3/30/2020). This sentiment is representative of all three teacher candidates’ responses throughout. PBIS as a structure is not questioned. And even with Parker, Cameron, and I adding counterexamples, prompting questions, and alternative scenarios, Mandy, Ellen, and Grace continued to support the model. Mandy at the end did say that she would “like to think about this [conversation] a little bit more” and that her “mind is really racing right now” (Lesson 5, 3/30/2020). However, this is as far as it goes.

Because the PDS has identified that one facet of a good teacher is to work towards eliminating inequalities in and of schooling, calling PBIS into question as an inequitable structure in schooling is a necessary component. In this example, we see that the PDAs recognize the importance of questioning structures in schooling that can lead to inequitable outcomes, and the teacher candidates are open and willing to engage in this discussion as they are motivated to learn to be good teachers, as defined by the PDS activity system. However, the narrative of the mentor teachers and school communities as well as their own lived experiences and grander narratives of schooling have more strongly influenced teacher candidates’ understanding of PBIS.

This example highlights a tension that commonly occurred in the teacher candidates’ activity system. Because it neither truly resides in MSU or SVSD activity systems, it allows partners to think about their work in different ways. And this can lead to contradictions within



the activity system. In this case, it reveals a secondary contradiction between community and object.<sup>51</sup>

### **Potentials to Resolve Contradictions in the Activity System**

The primary and secondary contradictions detailed in this chapter illustrate the competing priorities in the teacher candidates' object of activity as well as the differing conceptions of social justice that are mediating teacher candidates' activity. To resolve the contradictions related to being a socially just teacher, I offer the following based on data collected in this study: utilize the strength of the rules and division of labor within the activity system to reconcile the opposing priorities in learning to teach and conceptions of socially just teaching.

First, the community could rely on the strength of the rules and division of labor within the system, specifically, the rules in the activity system that encompass lifelong learning, inquiry, collaboration, and peer support, and the division of labor that emphasizes co-planning and inquiry. These embedded features contain norms, behaviors, and expectations that not only allow, but promote such conversation to happen. It is through this shift of focus and intentionality in co-planning, that community in the activity system can work together to build a unifying theme and complementary perspective in learning to be a teacher that is socially just and not in competition with other facets of learning to teach.

Matilda experienced less of the tension in competing priorities in social justice, inquiry, identity, curriculum-making, and teacher leadership, particularly with social justice and inquiry. In my first debrief with Matilda, it was clear that she was able to merge her inquiry stance with her motive of becoming a socially just teacher to “shape [her] teacher beliefs”

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<sup>51</sup> Structures in the separate SVSD and MSU activity systems, or “neighboring activity systems” have the potential to reveal a quaternary contradiction instead of a secondary contradiction, but some of those structure/practices (e.g., PBIS, grit/growth mindset, ability grouping, etc.) must be recognized as in contradiction to the components of the activity system. At present, they are beginning to be superficially questioned.

(Debrief, 02/20/2020). In talking about her inquiry, which was centered on the wondering “How can I use purposeful read-alouds to help my students become global citizens through an awareness of injustice and an activist stance?”, Matilda reflects, “I know I’ve written down my beliefs about how I feel but now that I’m actually doing this. I’m like, okay, this is what I want my classroom to be. I know that this is what I want. Yeah, that’s been really powerful for me. (Matilda, Debrief, 02/20/2020). Matilda is certainly not the only teacher candidate to experience this; Anna and Kayla were also able to overcome some of the competing priorities. Kayla reflects in the final Seminar that as a result of engaging in her inquiry, she has “developed new interests, such as social justice, and specifically thinking about the social justice lenses and how they affect me as a teacher” (Seminar 15, 04/29/2020). Other teacher candidates, however, were less able to do so. Sam, a teacher candidate in Seminar, but not a primary participant, struggled all semester with her inquiry because she and her mentor teacher had vastly different priorities. I believe that perhaps a unifying concept could resolve this contradiction.

Surprisingly, the concept of advocacy was salient across several interviews with PDAs and in my fieldnotes. Taylor, Parker, Cameron, and Billie spoke in numerous ways about advocacy being at the center of the work. Taylor, who is also the K-4 PDS Coordinator, explains the value of advocacy and its link to the purpose of public education in our interview (05/27/2020) as follows.

this all stems from the advocacy piece. In order to advocate for yourself and for your students, you need to know what you're advocating for.

So I also want them to know what they should be advocating for and I hope what they take away from the PDS is that they should be advocating for social justice. For equitable teaching practices and for practices that help their students continue to - maybe not continue to but start to - understand their own identities and develop those identities, so that they are successfully able to help their students understand the importance of advocacy.

then those students know what is valuable to them and what they want to go out and advocate for. So, if it is for racial issues, or if it is for sexuality issues, or economic issues. [...] And those are the things that they want to advocate for. I guess I just want them to help build good human beings.

The thing is, is not everybody would say that that's the goal of education.

What Taylor offers is a unifying vision of why identity work and social just work matter. In place of teacher candidates being positioned to learn to be good teachers who complete checklist-style ways of doing so, they could be positioned to learn to be teachers who advocate through multiple possible pathways. At the same time, I do not want advocacy to be another term added to the list of social justice, equity, identity, inquiry, and so on. Through the community's work together, they must work to answer, *Advocating for what and to what end?*

Taylor's and my time together in our interview served as a space to brainstorm possibilities and dream big about advocacy. Parker and I had a similar exchange, and during our time together, she brainstormed a way to teach inquiry and equity through a class on classroom learning environments and unite the community within the activity system, resolving one of the primary and secondary contradictions discussed in this chapter.

Now I'm just dreaming, but part of that is that there's a professional development component that goes for teachers in the district at the same time. So it's intentionally built in a way for preservice teachers and in-service teachers to learn together and whether that's an undergrad class, grad class, or it's professional development for volunteers, whatever. That's what I would love to see happen and I don't think that's out of the realm of something that's a possibility. (Parker, Interview, 06/01/2020)

Parker is drawing on the rules, community, and division of labor to imagine something new. It is impossible to predict whether this suggestion could resolve a contradiction in the teacher candidates' activity system but does have potential. There is great possibility in the ideas that

Parker and Taylor have put forward to begin the work in resolving the contradictions in learning to become a socially just teacher.

The three components of the activity system that are present in the contradictions are community, mediating artifact, and community. Essentially, the ways in which social justice and inquiry are perceived, valued, and materialized in and among the community in the teacher candidates' activity system.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided an answer to the third research question, *in what ways does the PDS activity system mediate teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching*, by identifying the components of the teacher candidates' activity system and discussed two primary and three secondary contradictions. These contradictions highlight the multiple ways in which teacher candidates' development into socially just teachers was constrained. In order for teacher candidates to meet their object of learning to be a good teacher, the facets of being a good teacher must not be competing for priority. Practitioner inquiry and social justice must not be seen as incompatible and (inadvertently) reinforced as an either/or option. Furthermore, a clear concept of social justice must be put forward so that teacher candidates are left with more than searching in different directions or having unanswered questions about how to develop more socially just teaching practices. The data suggest that advocacy could be such a concept to bring inquiry and social justice together, as well as find a shared understanding of social justice that allows for multiple, differing actions towards the same object of activity: advocacy. Drawing on the rules and division of labor for collaboration, co-planning, and lifelong learning within the activity system, resolving these contradictions is possible.

## CHAPTER 7

### Discussion and Implications

This chapter concludes the study. First it discusses the results of the study. Then I consider both the theoretical and practical implications for the study in reference to the literature on social justice as a theme in teacher education, Cultural Historical Activity Theory, and practitioner inquiry. Implications include the need to value and support the clinical supervisor and the need for teacher education programs to take a critical stance in teacher education that supports teacher candidates' abilities to uncover ideologies and addresses power and oppression at a structural level. Limitations of the study are then briefly outlined. The chapter ends with a discussion of future directions.

### Discussion

#### The Role of Inquiry-Based Teaching in Teacher Education Coursework

The first research, *how is socially just teaching materialized through the practices of an intervention focused on social justice in a teacher education Seminar course*, asks for a descriptive analysis of the practices. Teacher candidates engaged in inquiry-based practices that were student-driven with the co-teachers as support/facilitators. My teacher educator practices emphasized question-asking rather than information-giving, knowledge construction based on dialogue, creating personal meaning, and post-lesson reflection and change/shift of self/practice. More specifically, this looked like whole-group and small-group discussions comprised the vast majority of the practices. Many of these discusses were text-based. In four of the lessons, teacher candidates were asked to write or list personal meanings of social justice or identify inequities. Many of the lessons provided opportunities to make connections to their teaching and teaching practice, as well as their identity.

The inquiry-based teaching approach provided teacher candidates with the space and opportunity to begin to ask different questions and inquire into their practices in different ways. In doing so, the hope was that I could create moments of cognitive/emotional dissonance so that the teacher candidates could reason in new ways and develop a stance of socially just teaching that questions the everyday assumptions and systems of oppression that are taken for granted, seen as the only option, or feel immovable.

### **Situational Nature of Enacting Socially Just Teaching in Emergent Ways**

In this study, each of the primary participant teacher candidates demonstrated potentialities in socially just teaching. By grouping the teacher candidates into cohorts, I could identify themes that extended isolated incidences. These themes are influenced by their building placement, their PDA, and the mediating artifacts the PDAs include in the cohort. Partially due to the fact that I did not provide a concept of social justice for teacher candidates to orient their activity to (Research Question 1), the ways in which teacher candidates enacted socially just teaching was varying. Additionally, the findings underscore the notion that there is not a static or absolute descriptor of a “socially just teacher.” It is not a title one is awarded at the end of the school year. While all five of the teacher candidates – Eve, Fiona, Kayla, Matilda, and Natalie – demonstrated their reasoning and externalized understandings of social justice, attempted to integrate those ideas into their teaching activity, and were able to reflect and recognize instances afterwards, all of this was done in *emergent* ways. Cohort 1, Eve and Fiona, demonstrated the importance of attending to racial, gender, and linguistic identity, bias, and positionality in the classroom. They reflected on their own selves and identities of teachers, yet for their students, the goal was simply to celebrate the “diversity” students bring to the classroom. In Cohort 2, Kayla and Matilda both established their goals toward developing classroom community and

citizenship. At the same time, the ways in which they attempted to do this prioritized individualization, and their attempts were both aligned and misaligned, suggesting the need for a more developed, articulated, and shared understanding of community and citizenship. Kayla also rightly points out that she and Matilda orient to social justice in two ways. Kayla orients to social justice through using different lenses as a state of mind for social justice. Meanwhile, Matilda supports students in a more external, outward way of developing students' activist stance. Finally, Natalie, in Cohort 3, established her development in linking curriculum analysis to social justice through her skepticism of curriculum that was reminiscent of a "heroes and holidays" approach (Banks, 1993). In our talks outside of her classroom, she showed her awareness of U.S. current events and politics, suggesting that she is an active consumer of news, but does not readily link it to her classroom practices. Taken together, the three cohorts highlight the multiple pathways in which teacher candidates can develop initial or emerging socially just teaching practices.

### **The Role of Responsive Mediation in Supervision**

All five primary participant teacher candidates shifted their thinking and socially just teaching practices. This shifting was variable, however. For Eve, it was present in her thinking and externalization of socially just teaching practices during our debriefs. In this sense, the moments were self-contained and lacked change over time. Fiona and I were able to focus on a central classroom practice of hers: integrating multiple ways of greeting students during Morning Meeting. In spite of this consistency, I was unable to responsively mediate in such a way that Fiona saw beyond her control of incorporating named languages superficially, and oftentimes inaccurately, in her teaching practices. When functioning as a supervisor with Kayla and Matilda in Cohort 2, however, I was able to responsively mediate their understandings of community and

extension to systemic and structural change such that they took up my mediation and made an effort to incorporate it into their teaching. Several factors were beneficial in this case: a shared school building, a PDA (Cameron) that was consistently present at my debriefs and shared similar perspectives on socially just teaching, and the ways in which they connected social justice and community development to their inquiries. With Cohort 3, Natalie and I were engaged in fascinating conversations of U.S. politics and current events. This provided insights into how she might perceive socially just teaching, yet my influence on her development was not as impactful as I had hoped. There were missed opportunities for sustained mediation on my part despite the vast potential for her development.

### **Learning to Be a Socially Just Teacher as a Shared Object of Activity**

An activity theoretical analysis, including the identification of contradictions within the activity system provided an answer to the third research question, *in what ways does the PDS activity system mediate teacher candidates' development of socially just teaching?* Teacher candidates' development into socially just teachers was constrained in several ways. First, the facets of good teaching, as purported by the MSU-SVSD PDS, are in competition with one another. This resulted in a primary contradiction within the object of activity (learning to be a good teacher) and a secondary contradiction between mediating artifacts and the object of activity. In both cases, their object of activity was compartmentalized and siloed – being a good teacher for some teacher candidates was choosing either developing socially just teaching *or* developing an inquiry stance. The fragmentation in the mediating artifacts led to an incompatibility between the two central concepts – practitioner inquiry and social justice. A reconceptualization of the ways in which practitioner inquiry can be in service of social justice and social justice can be found in practitioner inquiry is required.



The second way teacher candidates were constrained in the activity system was due to a lack of shared understanding of social justice. This manifested in one primary contradiction within the community in which teacher candidates received mixed messages from community members on social justice and its aims without an orienting basis to ameliorate the differences. The lack of understanding also manifested in two secondary contradictions: between community and mediating artifacts and between community and object of activity. In each of these contradictions, the members of the community influence what materials and mediating artifacts are selected and the degree to which they understand and orient towards social justice. Because community members do not have a shared understanding of social justice, the teacher candidates were constrained in their development. While not discussed in the findings, power dynamics among mentor teachers, PDAs, and teacher candidates can have an influence on whose understanding of social justice is taken up (Breault, 2014; Bullough Jr., & Draper, 2004; Schroeder, 2020). Fortunately, the data suggest that an exploration of the concept of advocacy as an orienting basis for inquiry and social justice might be a first step in resolving these contradictions.

## **Implications**

### **Theoretical Implications**

#### ***Activity Theory***

As noted in the literature review, Activity Theory is taken up more often as an a-political way of documenting organizations or organizational change. Engeström's (1987) triangles for the structure of human activity are more commonly used as a heuristic than a way of theorizing human activity within the political economic system of capitalism. The findings in this study demonstrate that Activity Theory can be a fruitful method for systematically studying and

transforming teacher education programs, in particular PDS partnerships. Instead of discretely listing all of the contradictions in the order that they appear from primary to quaternary, the findings in this dissertation suggest that by organizing them around themes to identify more interconnected contradictions, a clearer path forward towards transformation is possible. Roth (2010) argues that activism might be a potential motive, or object, to replace the traditional object of learning in schools. The findings in this study reveal that advocacy is also a possibility. This shows that it is possible to begin to conceptualize the institutional act of schooling beyond the school building itself and begin to understand deeper societal influences and macro-level activity.

### ***Practitioner Inquiry***

The findings in this study highlight the possibility for practitioner inquiry to be compatible with the aims of social justice. It does in fact share a lineage with Carr & Kemmis (1993) critical action research. What Carr and Kemmis proposed is more radical and liberatory than how action research is often referred to today. Even more removed is practitioner inquiry, or the systematic, intentional investigation by educators into their own teaching or professional practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Educators as asked to see practitioner inquiry as ““a worldview, a habit of mind, a dynamic and fluid way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice that carries across the course of the professional career” (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009, p. 113). To embody this habit of mind, educators consistently go through cyclical processes of identifying a question or problem to ask, systematically generate and collect data, analyze the data, take action, and share with others. Common in PDS partnerships is Dana and Yendol-Hoppey’s (2014) text. Their text begins with asking the readers to brainstorm their wonderings in relation to eight inquiry “passions.” Passion

seven is “advocating social justice.” One implication from the study suggests that if PDS partnerships continue to use this text, they should re-imagine the passions to each advance social justice and incorporate a more structural basis of inquiry instead of the individual focus. Perhaps Kayla’s and Matilda’s inquiry wonderings, which were already very strong, could have had a more social justice orientation from the beginning. Because practitioner inquiry is hyper-localized to concrete, specific classroom practices, it can be a great complement to understanding the macro-cultural, ideological levels at which humans participate in activity.

Yet, in order for this to happen, it must be intentional. Price & Valli (2005) document five tensions in the process and pedagogy of action research by analyzing teacher candidates’ experiences with inquiry if we seek to help teacher candidates become “change agents.” The five tensions they suggest are: individual and institutional change, action and understanding, support and challenge, passion and reason, and regulation and emancipation. These tensions are evident in Schroeder (2020). Schroeder conducted a study of 30 pre-service teachers’ inquiry papers and found three pitfalls practitioner inquiries can fall into. She argues that accountability culture in education, teacher candidates’ lack of power in the classroom, and deficit thinking left unchallenged by instructors are contributed to the teacher candidates developing weak inquiries. If practitioner inquiry is to continue to be a central component, recognizing power and social justice in the service of advocating for students and teachers must be front and center.

### **Practical Implications**

When Cameron and I debriefed with teacher candidates together, it was clear that we were on the same page. Having unified supervisors, teacher educators, and mentor teachers can potentially result in much more powerful learning outcomes. Cameron and I were able to build off of one another in complimentary ways. The counter to this, however, is when supervisors,

teacher educators, and/or mentor teachers are not on the same page. Thus, one practical implication is to continue to build shared understandings and work towards common goals. Another related implication is that who the supervisor is and what they value matters. They have a strong influence on the teacher candidates' development. Continuing to support the professional development of supervisors is a must if we want to develop strong teacher candidates. Supervision in teacher education has been repeatedly undervalued in the university given the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to supervise effectively (Burns & Badiali, 2016). In addition, those that fulfill the role and function of a supervisor are often graduate students or retired classroom teachers serving in adjunct positions with little formal training in supervision (Burns, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey, 2016). This study highlights the importance of the university supervisor and that they hold a uniquely powerful role in bridging theory and research and offering more targeted support to teacher candidates.

The findings also support Gorski's (2009) and Gorski and Dalton's (2019) call for teacher education programs to evaluate their syllabi using a typology that suggest whether the work teacher candidates are being asked to do is conservative, liberal, or critical. Gorski and Dalton (2019) list equitable and just school reflection and social transformation reflection in their critical category. They suggest that at the social transformation level, it might look like "connection between oppression and anti-oppression in schools and outside schools" and "incorporation of forward-leaning reflection related to continued needs for development as social justice advocates. (p. 7). These were the most challenging aspect of asking teacher candidates to problematize current, unexamined or taken-for-granted policies was the amount of internalized dispositions that needed to be addressed. Much of the intense work was around developing a critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). A one-and-done approach to question previously

unquestioned structures in schooling is not sufficient. This should be the purpose, or center, for developing socially just teachers. Unpacking ideologies is crucial if we are asking our teacher candidates to enact social justice and advocate for their students. Only through complete systemic transformation can we be on a path free from oppression. Admittedly, this is difficult when teacher educators are beholden to institutions of higher education that are increasingly functioning as for-profit businesses and that rigidly cling to their White, patriarchal forms of power in maintaining class distinctions among faculty ranks.

### **Limitations**

The findings and implications show contributions to the literature and to practice for teacher educators and supervisors. Yet we must also consider the limitations of the study, some avoidable and some unavoidable. One obvious limitation to this study that was quite unpredictable and unavoidable is the impact of COVID-19 on the study design. The number of anticipated observations and debriefs went from at least six to no more than two, except in special circumstances. The fewer number of observations and debriefs resulted in fewer opportunities to see the teacher candidates' socially just teaching in activity. At the same time, both COVID-19 and the reduced number of observations also impacted the longitudinal and sustained component of the study design. Lines of inquiry and potential growth points that could have developed over the course of the semester were unable to be continued as the teacher candidates and their mentor teachers had to make drastic changes to their teaching for the duration of the school year.

Additionally, the disruption from COVID-19 significantly decreased the amount of input and collaboration possible from mentor teachers. Several mentor teachers were able to be present

during debriefs, and I had opportunities to talk to them privately during observation periods, but with the switch to remote instruction, it was not feasible for me to continue that work.

Moreover, I also view the fact that I did not intentionally plan in the research design time spent engaging and working with the K-4 students in the classrooms for which the teacher candidates are responsible. As stated in my introduction, my study was in service of marginalized P—16 students, yet they were only a secondary concern. Their voices were not centered, and their stories were only brought in when teacher candidates found them relevant. The problem-posing I attempted in teacher education coursework and enacting supervisory functions was with teacher candidates and not students. From a Freirean perspective, it could be argued that what resulted is analogous to attempting ask oppressors to understand the social and material conditions of the oppressed and seek to enact change at the level of the oppressor. I regret this deeply.

### **Future Directions**

With the above limitations in mind, there are several directions in which I would like to take this work. First, there is so much data and findings that I chose not to include in this dissertation to refine a more manageable scope for a lofty dissertation. One particular finding spoke to the pivot that teacher candidates, teachers, and teacher educators made during COVID-19. The talk around equity certainly changed. PDAs were interviewed just days after the murder of George Floyd. Asking questions about the change in focus and understanding of equity with data collected in-the-moment will be a viable area to study. Exploring and reporting on the ideologies present in the data is an immediate next step, hopefully in conjunction with my participants and collaborators.

Moreover, I continue to see myself as a teacher-researcher-activist who understands research as active change in material and social conditions while simultaneously studying the change at multiple levels and with multiple stakeholders. In future scholarship, I will more intentionally plan for roles and perspectives of students, particularly marginalized students, as well as mentor teachers. In teacher preparation programs, data suggests the distinct need to better integrate connections to policy and institutional level decision-making. In ways that this is being done with understanding, evaluating, and critiquing curriculum, I see this being possible with other policies and mandates. One specific instance of this is classroom and school-wide behavior plans and policies.

Strengthening the links between teacher education and supervision is also crucial, as well as continuing to advocate for the importance of well-supported clinical supervision in teacher preparation. The supervisor is the bridge between the school and the university, and enacting change includes that both institutions work together. I was presenting at a large national conference earlier today and there was a question that came through the chat asking if it is better to “front-load” talks about social justice in teacher preparation programs “before they get to field experiences” or wait until during clinical field experiences. There is still much to do in linking coursework and practical experience and unpacking the demands of each.

Furthermore, I seek to engage with the community and work with collaborative teams. An area for me to explore in this respect is that of grassroots organizing, solidarity and mutual aid movements, and abolitionist scholarship. There is a need to go beyond the school itself and integrate a more macro-level to work toward a shared vision of structural and material change.

## Appendix A

### March Email to Transition from Observations to 1-on-1 Remote Meetings

[Personalized Text]

*Similarly, I am wondering if you are interested in a 1-on-1 meeting through Zoom for approximately 30 minutes each week over the next three weeks?*

I have summarized what our Seminar lessons have covered so far, as well as what we have talked about in our debriefs after your teaching.

individual – culture  
 school – society  
 different – unjust  
 celebrate – advocate/enact change

We wrote out our initial definitions of social justice; I introduced the above lenses to you; we discussed the differences between cultural differences and injustice through examples of hair, language, classroom behaviors, hobbies, and academic competence; we discussed what “normal” means and related that to the concept of habitus; we revisited habitus by talking about what annoys us; we talked through societal level privileges and only just began to link them back to the classroom and our habitus.

In our debriefs, we have talked about [Insert specific debrief info for each intern].

**Based on this info, we can decide together on what you want to learn more about over the next few weeks. If there is a particular area you want to focus on, we can go that route. If you are unsure or open to any/all suggestions, I can share some additional ideas and we can brainstorm where we want our conversations to go. I imagine this might be me sharing a light reading a few days before we meet, then logging in to Zoom for 30-ish minutes to discuss.**



## Appendix B

### Interview Protocols

#### **INTERN & MENTOR TEACHER Interview One Protocol**

The following is a list of anticipated interview questions for student interns and mentor teachers. Follow-up questions are not included since answers cannot be anticipated. Additionally, not all questions will apply to every participant, and each participant has the right to refuse to answer the questions.

Interviews will be audio-recorded using a digital recorder and uploaded to MSU Box within 24 hours of the interview. Interviews will be transcribed throughout the data collection process. Each interview will take approximately 20 minutes.

Interview 1 serves as a “baseline” interview and asks participants about their background, beliefs, and experiences with social justice and teaching. Interview 2 will use the same questions, but follow-up questions will depend on the answers and experiences previously provided.

#### **Questions:**

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- 1) Can you say a little about your background, educational history, teaching experience, etc. up to this point?
- 2) What are some of your teaching goals/aspirations currently and/or in the future? -OR- Describe an ideal classroom and/or school.
- 3) For interns: As someone “new” to teaching, what are some of your top concerns?
- 4) For interns: What made you decide to participate in this study/work together?
- 5) How do you define social justice? What’s the first thing that pops in your mind?
  - a. What has influenced your definition? Where does your definition of social justice come from?
  - b. For mentor teachers: How has your understanding changed over time?
- 6) What role do teachers have when it comes to social justice?
- 7) Talk about a time when discrimination or inequalities was/were present in a classroom you were in (as a student, intern, teacher, observer, etc.).
- 8) If matters of injustice were happening in your school or your classroom, under what circumstances would you feel confident you would recognize it?
  - a. And if so, in what ways might you act on it (or not)? Why?
- 9) For mentor teachers: What would you hope your intern learns about socially just teaching? In what ways has she demonstrated this already?
- 10) For mentor teachers: When and how is social justice discussed within the PDS?
- 11) For mentor teachers: What has been the goal/plan historically to integrate/teach concepts like cultural competence, diversity, equity, social justice, etc. into the PDS “curriculum”? In what ways have you seen success?
- 12) What questions do you have for me? → Hopes/fears in our work together?

## INTERN Interview Two Protocol

The following is a list of anticipated interview questions for student interns. Follow-up questions are not included since answers cannot be anticipated. Additionally, not all questions will apply to every participant, and each participant has the right to refuse to answer the questions.

Interviews will be audio-recorded using a digital recorder and uploaded to MSU Box within 24 hours of the interview. Interviews will be transcribed throughout the data collection process. Each interview will take approximately 20 minutes.

Interview 1 serves as a “baseline” interview and asks participants about their background, beliefs, and experiences with social justice and teaching. Interview 2 will use most of the same questions, but follow-up questions will depend on the answers and experiences previously provided. In interview 2, I will share with the interns their original definitions of social justice

### Questions:

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- 1) Read how you defined social justice in our first interview. [show original definition]
  - a. How do you understand what you originally said?
  - b. What is still true?
  - c. What might you question or change?
- 2) Talk about a time over the past semester when discrimination or inequalities was/were present in a classroom you were in (as a student, intern, teacher, observer, etc.).
- 3) If matters of injustice were happening in your school or your classroom, under what circumstances would you feel confident you would recognize it?
  - a. And if so, in what ways might you act on it (or not)? Why?
- 4) What role do teachers have when it comes to social justice?
- 5) Where is your social justice journey taking you next? What are some goals or aspects you want to improve on or focus on?

**PDA's Interview Protocol**

The following is a list of modified interview questions for professional development associates. Use each question to launch a story/conversation and follow it to its end. Follow-up questions are not included since answers cannot be anticipated. Additionally, not all questions will apply to every participant, and each participant has the right to refuse to answer the questions.

Interviews will be audio-recorded using a digital recorder and uploaded to MSU Box within 24 hours of the interview. Interviews will be transcribed throughout the data collection process. Each interview will take approximately 20 minutes.

**Questions:**

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- 1) Can you describe your role and involvement in the PDS?
- 2) What has been your equity journey? From initial conception to where you are currently. Tell stories along the way.
- 3) What has been the goal/plan historically to integrate/teach concepts related to social justice into the PDS?
- 4) What do you want for the interns and the PDS? What would you hope your intern learns about socially just teaching?

**Appendix C**  
Privilege for Sale Card Sort

I can expect to be paid equitably for the work I do.	I can have a job without having co-workers suspect that I got it because of my perceived race or gender.	If I rise to prominence in an organization/role, no one will assume it is because I “slept my way to the top”.	I can use public restrooms or facilities (e.g., locker rooms, changing rooms) without anxiety or fear of verbal abuse, physical intimidation, or arrest.	I can generally work comfortably (or walk down a public street) without the fear of sexual harassment.
I can generally walk alone at night without the fear of being raped or otherwise harmed.	I don’t have to fear interactions with police officers due to my <i>race/nationality/gender/sexuality</i> .	I can go shopping alone most of the time, fairly confident that I will not be followed, harassed, or suspected of shoplifting because of my perceived <i>race or faith</i> .	I can travel to any part of the U.S. and know my religion will be accepted & safe, and I will have access to religious spaces to practice my faith, without fear of violence or threats.	I can engage in kissing, hugging, and/or being affectionate in public without threat or punishment.
Politicians do not pander to issues related to my identity, view me as a single-issue voter, or view my identity groups through a deficit lens (e.g. Black voters only care about X, women only care about X).	I can reasonably assume that I will not be denied services at a hospital, bank, or other institution because the staff does not believe the gender marker on my ID card to match my gender identity.	I can reasonably assume that your ability to acquire a job, rent an apartment, or secure a loan will not be denied on the basis of your gender identity/expression or perceived race.	I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.	I can turn to forms of media (TV, books, movies) and see people of my <i>race/gender/faith/sexuality/language background</i> widely represented in non-limiting, non-stereotyped, positive role models.

I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.	I can choose make-up products or bandages in “flesh” color and have them more-or-less match my skin.	I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children’s magazines featuring people of my race.	I can easily find stores that carry items that enable me to practice my faith and celebrate religious holidays.	Without special effort, my children will have a multitude of teachers who share your identity ( <i>race, gender, sexuality, faith, language background</i> ).
My gender is an option on a form and there are pronouns that represent me.	If I am straight and decide to have children with my partner, I can assume this will not negatively affect my career – or possibility of being hired.	I can celebrate my marriage(s) with my family, friends, and coworkers.	I have access to multiple family planning options (e.g. being a foster parent or adopting children) and can raise children without worrying about people rejecting my children because of my sexuality.	I can do well in a challenging situation / be polite, gentle, or peaceful without being called a credit to my <i>race/gender/faith</i> or an “exception” to my <i>race/gender/faith</i> .
I am never asked to speak for all the people of one of my identity groups.	I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their <i>race/language background/faith/sexuality/nationality</i> .	My identity isn’t used as a defining aspect (e.g., people won’t think of me as their “gay” or “Black” friend).	I can go home from most meetings of organizations that I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.	I’m not expected to spend excessive amounts of money on grooming, style, and appearance to fit in, while making less money.

## Appendix D

### Matilda's Two Choice Boards: Justice and Activism

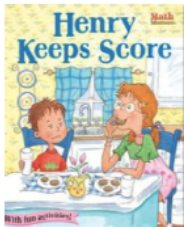




[MATILDA'S]



The Week of April 20<sup>th</sup>

Choice Board

Start here!

<p><b>Read Aloud</b></p> <p>Read <a href="#">Henry Keeps Score</a> with [MATILDA]. This book will begin our week of learning about fairness and justice.</p> 	<p><b>Math</b></p> <p>Sometimes things are unfair when one person has more than another person. Use your math manipulatives to create a story problem about an unfair time. <a href="#">Watch Miss [MATILDA'S] example!</a></p> <p><i>Extension: Include a way to make the story fair.</i></p> <p>Share your story problem in your Seesaw Journal!</p>	<p><b>Social Studies</b></p> <p>Let's keep creating our definition of fair and unfair. Complete the "Fair and Unfair Sort" activity on Seesaw.</p>  <p><i>Extension: think of your own fair/unfair situations to sort!</i></p>
<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Unfair things happen all around us. Think about a time something unfair has happened to you.</p> <p>Write about it on the "Fairness Writing" Seesaw activity.</p> 	<p><b>Phonics</b></p> <p>How many new words can you create out of our justice themed vocabulary?</p> <p>Complete the "Justice Letter Scramble" on Seesaw!</p> 	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>Watch and listen to the read aloud <a href="#">This is Our House</a>. Think about what was fair and unfair in this story.</p> <p>Complete the "This is Our House" Seesaw activity.</p> 

[MATILDA' S]

The Week of April 27<sup>th</sup>

Choice Board

Start here!

<p><b>What is Activism?</b></p> <p>Take a look at some activists and what they did to help stop injustices. Some of the activists in this video are from a long time ago, but some of them you probably know as your classmates in Room # [MATILDA]</p> <p><a href="#">Click here to discuss activism with [MATILDA]</a></p>	<p><b>Art</b></p> <p>Many activists are also artists. Look at some of these artists on the “Art and Activism” Seesaw activity.</p> <p>Watch [MATILDA'S] example video before completing the activity.</p>	<p><b>Educational</b></p> <p>Malala Yousefzai has worked hard to make sure that children, especially girls around the world can go to school. <a href="#">Click here to listen to her story.</a></p> <p>If you had a magic pencil what would you do with it? Complete the “Malala’s Magic Pencil” activity on Seesaw to share!</p>
<p><b>My Life</b></p> <p>After learning about other people making a change in the world, think about something you would like to change. How would you make this change? Write a few sentences about it.</p> <p>Complete the “I Can Make a Change” Seesaw activity with a picture of your writing.</p>	<p><b>Caring About Others</b></p> <p>An important part of being an activist is caring about other people. This is called empathy. <a href="#">Click here to read Come With Me</a> to hear about how one girl is learning to spread kindness to make the world a better place.</p> <p>Think of a way to share kindness. Share it in your Seesaw journal.</p>	<p><b>Environmental</b></p> <p>Lilly Platt is a 9 year old who has been cleaning up plastic in her neighborhood. <a href="#">Click here to learn more about her.</a></p> <p>Brainstorm one way that you can help the earth. Take a picture or make a drawing of yourself being an environmental activist and post it on the “Environmental Activist” Seesaw activity.</p>

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## VITA

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#### Education

Ph.D., Curriculum and Instruction [Curriculum & Supervision] (August 2021), The Pennsylvania State University  
 M.Ed., Curriculum & Instruction (August 2014), The Pennsylvania State University  
 B.A., Elementary Education (December 2008), University of North Florida

#### Professional Experience

Professional Development Associate and Research Assistant (August 2019 – current)  
*Grant: Science 20/20: Bringing Language Learners into Focus through Community, School, University Partnership*  
 Field Experience Supervisor and Co-Teacher (May 2019; January 2020-May 2020)  
*CI 497: STEM and Language Development for ELs*  
 Instructor-of-Record for Undergraduate Courses (August 2017 – December 2019)  
*WLED 444: Language, Culture and the Classroom: Issues for Practitioners*  
*CI 280: Introduction to Teaching English Language Learners*  
 Teacher (March 2009-March 2010; August 2010; May 2012; August 2013 – August 2017)

#### Selected Publications

**Lynch, M.E.** (revise and resubmit). Supervision to deepen student teachers' understanding of social justice: The role of responsive mediation *Journal of Educational Supervision* (3)2.  
 Wolkenhauer, R., Rutten, L., Klock, H., Essick, K., McDonald, C., Morgart, E., and **Lynch, M.** (2020). Shared decision-making in times of change: Facing challenges through collaborative inquiry in a PDS partnership. *PDS Partners: Bridging Research to Practice*, 15(2). p. 26-28.  
**Lynch, M.E.** & Badiali, B. (2019). Goodlad's five-year study across three texts - The moral dimensions of teaching, Places where teachers are taught, and Teachers for our nation's schools. *School-University Partnerships* 12(3). p. 13-23.

#### Selected Presentations

**Lynch, M. E.** (2021). *Centering the development of socially just teachers in a PDS partnership: An activity theoretical analysis*. Paper accepted for presentation at the 2021 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, virtual.  
 Bose, F. N., Brown, M., Cody, J., Lee, M., **Lynch, M.E.**, and Zembal-Saul, C. (2021). *Bringing emergent bilingual children and their families into focus through asset-aligned science and language practices: A community-school-university professional learning partnership*. Symposium accepted for presentation at the 2021 Association of Teacher Educators Annual Meeting, virtual.  
 Lynch, M. E. & Klock, H. (2020). *Linking elementary education student interns' development of identity and teaching for social justice*. Paper presented at the National Association of Professional Development Schools Conference, Atlantic City, NJ.  
 Doyle, N. & Lynch, M. (2019). *Attending to the social situation of development in a preservice teaching experience in community-based adult ESL: An activity theoretical analysis*. Paper presented at the Language Teacher Educator Conference, Minneapolis, MN.