

**SEED “Seeds,” “Stories of Injustice,” and the equity ideals of our partnerships:
A program in formation and pre-/in-service teachers as bridges to equity**

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Abstract: The authors of this case—and the team of school- and university-based educators with whom we partner in a secondary education (SEED) program at George Mason University in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States—are committed to the notion that all teachers have an obligation to orient their curricula around ideals of justice. In this article, we share the deliberations of our faculty and partnering mentor teachers from our sixteen-school partnership network as they appealed to NAPDS Essential #1 to consider “social justice” as one of the program’s core principles. In addition, to integrate a social justice stance into the pedagogies of our English teacher candidates, we have asked them to explore notions of equity via “Story of Injustice” narratives, which eventually serve as the foundations for their first lesson planning efforts. In this article, we present the results of a seven-year study of the justice concepts identified by 138 preservice English teachers. Through the examples of our program development and course instruction and this taxonomy of concepts of injustice, we hope to help move teachers and our field—both within and outside of school-university partnership and Professional Development School contexts—closer to these equity-oriented ends.

KEYWORDS: clinical educators, equity, mentor teachers, professional development schools; school-university partnerships, social justice

NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS ADDRESSED:

1. 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;
2. A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community;
3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;
4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;

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University-based teacher educators increasingly consider taking social justice stances in their endeavors, in and across school-based clinical experience and university classroom settings. They appreciate that an equity approach to teaching is connected to the political and social contexts of our schools, communities, and nation (Boggess, 2010; Kaur, 2012). Equity-oriented endeavors seem more important given the ways in which the xenophobic rhetoric of our current US presidential administration has been normalized (Lugg, 2017; Rethinking Schools, 2017). In response, the authors of this article and the team of school- and university-based educators with whom we partner in our university’s secondary education (SEED) program where we serve as the program coordinator (Zenkov) and instructors (Azevedo and Lague) are ever more committed to the notion that all teachers must orient their pedagogies around justice ideals (Hyteem & Bettez, 2011; McDonald, 2008).

The foundational principles of public education in the U.S. and a growing range of studies, practical standards, and professional association policies support an equity orientation to teacher education. Additionally, the first “Essential” of the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) notes that school-university partnerships should be guided by missions “broader in outreach and scope than the mission of any partner...that further the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community” (NAPDS, 2008). In this article, we briefly share how our program faculty—including this manuscript’s first and third authors—and partnering school-based mentor teachers have begun to consider social justice as one of the program’s five core program principles (its “Seeds”). We then spend the bulk of this manuscript detailing how, as a part of this consideration of an equity approach to teacher education efforts in school-university partnership contexts, we have attempted to integrate a social justice stance into the structures of our English education track.

We address two questions central to this special issue of *School-University Partnerships*: “What efforts are currently ongoing around the work of equity-based teaching in the context of PDS or school-university partnerships?” and “How can PDS and school-university partnerships serve as mechanisms to those who are working in areas of equity-based teaching?” Specifically, we do so by addressing the research question “With what conceptions of injustice do future teachers begin their journeys into the teaching profession?” by examining the injustice notions that candidates have explored via their first assignment (the “Story of Injustice”) in their initial methods of instruction course. Through the examples of our program development and course instruction and the taxonomy of concepts of injustice in our study’s findings, we hope to help move teachers and our field—both within and outside of school-university partnership and Professional Development School contexts—closer to these equity-oriented ends.

Literature Review

Virtually all teachers and teacher educators face an increasing number of standards and assessments by which they and their students are held “accountable” (Kapuska, Howell, Clayton, & Thomas, 2009). While politicians often steer our field toward diminished concepts of curriculum and more efficient but less authentic forms of assessment, educators have considered

social justice ideals as foundational objectives (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Oakes, Lipton, Anderson, & Stillman, 2018). An equity orientation to PK-12 classroom instruction and teacher education is supported both by the underpinning principles of US public education and by a growing range of professional association policies and scholarly studies.

Our social justice teaching and teacher education orientations have been informed by multicultural and social studies educators (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015) via the concept of “equity literacy” as well as by anti-oppressive teaching practices (Kelly, 2012). Echoing the stances of many teachers and teacher educators, as English teachers and teacher educators we have welcomed the intensified justice focus in the current standards of the National Council of Teachers of English (Golden & Bieler, 2018; NCTE, 2013), our primary professional association. To inform our study, we reviewed bodies of literature on two related topics: First, conceptions of social justice in teacher preparation; and, second, methods of integrating social justice into teacher preparation structures.

University-based teacher education programs have long considered questions about schools’ objectives and their efforts to promote a democratic society (Osguthorpe & Sanger, 2013; Zeichner, 2009). Examinations of the impact of teacher education programs on their graduates’ instruction—including their focus on justice issues—have often led to queries about the quality and quantity of these effects (Kirkland, 2014; Tinkler, Hannah, Tinkler, & Miller, 2014). It seemed important, then, that we begin with an understanding of what scholars and teacher educators have meant by “social justice,” if it is to be viewed as central to teacher educators’, classroom teachers’, and school-university partnerships’ work (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2016).

Universities around the United States have documented histories of integrating social justice ideals into their teacher education courses and clinical experiences (Picower, 2011). In these programs, “social justice” addresses notions of critical consciousness, K-12 teachers’ evidence-based and equity-oriented instructional practices, and skills required by school leaders to enact social justice (Dover 2013; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Studies indicate that justice pedagogies promote improved achievement among students from minority cultures (Francis, Mills, & Lupton, 2017); researchers speculate that such pedagogies are effective because they encourage teachers to adapt their instruction to students’ needs (Han, Madhuri, & Scull, 2015).

Scholars have identified “markers” of teaching for social justice, including the implementation of curricula that integrate a range of perspectives, appreciate linguistic and racial diversity, and demonstrate comfort with modeling equity in their classrooms (Agarwal, Epstein, Oppenheim, Oyler, & Sonu, 2010). Dyches and Boyd have articulated a “science” of social justice teacher education in what they term “Social Justice Pedagogical and Content Knowledge” (SJPACK), which includes three domains: Social Justice Knowledge, Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge, and Social Justice Content Knowledge (Dyches & Boyd, 2017). English educators are among the most ardent supporters of a social justice approach to instruction, which challenges entrenched aspects of adolescents’, family and community members’, and teachers’ relationships to literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; Dunn, VanDerHeide, Caughlan, Northrop, Zhang, & Kelly, 2018).

While many scholars have identified the “what” of equity-focused educator preparation, others have explored the “how” of these endeavors. Numerous researchers consider the notion of teacher “identity” as central to justice-oriented teacher education efforts (Hoffman-Kipp, 2008;

Mirra, Filipiak, & Garcia, 2015). Preservice teachers are not “blank slates” and come to teacher education programs as fully developed individuals (Obenchain, Balkute, Vaughn, & White, 2016). Dyches and Boyd (2017) explained the importance of connecting social justice-oriented teacher preparation curricula with teaching identity, calling on preservice teachers to adjust their orientations to the world, represented by the stories we tell our students and ourselves. Teachers who are more conscious of their own experiences are more able to adjust this frame (Chubbuck & Zemblys, 2016), and learning to reflect on one’s own experience with injustice reinforces the concept that teaching is never an impartial act (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Richards & Zenkov, 2015; Zenkov & Newman, 2016).

Noting incongruities in social justice definitions in teacher education, Alsup and Miller (2014) aimed to outline an effective guide to assessing a teacher’s “social justice disposition,” operating with the hypothesis that “dispositions are shaped by pre-dispositions” (p. 200). Scholars have illustrated how equity orientations do not function in isolation from teachers’ subject areas disciplines (Coffee, Fitchett, & Farinde, 2015). Frederick, Miller, and colleagues have assessed how new teachers might best transfer the justice pedagogies they learn in their teacher education programs into their teaching practices (Frederick, Cave, & Perencevich, 2010), speaking to our own study of teacher candidates’ development of social justice orientations.

The Secondary Education (SEED) Program and the “Social Justice” Seed

Over the past six years, faculty members in the George Mason University secondary education (SEED) program—including two of this article’s authors, Zenkov and Azevedo—have explicitly considered the “Nine Essentials” of NAPDS (NAPDS, 2008) in an intentional and developmental manner. We have attempted to translate these into our program structures, which include sixteen partner schools (eight middle and eight high schools) where candidates complete the bulk of their three-semester sequence of clinical experiences. We have focused on Essential #1 and the integration of social justice into our program, echoing the efforts of universities and colleges across the United States (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Reagan, Chen, & Vernikoff, 2016). Across these programs, “social justice” addresses notions of critical consciousness, K-12 teachers’ evidence-based instruction oriented toward creating equitable schools, and specific skills required by school leaders to enact equity-centered assessment practices (Dover, 2013; North, 2008).

Our program’s and partnerships’ efforts to advance equity in schools and beyond have resulted in the identification of not just one orienting ideal—social justice—but in the selection of five “Seeds”:

- Social Justice
- Inquiry and Reflection
- Advocacy and Agency
- Collaboration and Partnership
- Relationships with and Respect for Students

We understand these to be both principles to which our program, its teams of university-based and school-based teacher educators, and our partner schools are committed, as well as ideals that our graduates should work to enact during our program and throughout their teaching careers (Cochran-Smith, Ell, Grudnoff, Haigh, Hill, & Ludlow, 2016). Over the past year, we have engaged with faculty, students, and partner school mentors and administrators in a series of

discussions to define these notions and reflect on how they might best be integrated into all elements of our minimum four-semester licensure/master's degree track (Zenkov, Lague, & Azevedo, 2020).

For each of these "Seeds," then, we considered the following questions in sub-committees of program-affiliated university- and school-based personnel:

- To what readings, organizations, etc. might we appeal to best develop our own and teacher candidates' understandings of this principle?
- What will our teacher candidates produce as evidence of their growing understandings of these "Seeds"?
- How might this principle be integrated into our program—at application, across key assignments in our course sequence, and in clinical experiences?
- What will this "Seed" look like in our partner school and mentor selection processes?
- What is the evidence of these principles with which our students should be familiar—beyond their classrooms?

This "Seed" links to more than the concept of "equity" named in NAPDS Essential #1. It also has bases in notions of culturally relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogies, student and teacher "voice," teacher leadership, and Participatory and Youth Participatory Action Research principles and methods (Castro, 2010; Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009). We are also appealing to the foundational work of "Teaching Tolerance" to inform our integration of the "Social Justice" Seed, and we have identified a number of other educator preparation programs and the University of Michigan's TeachingWorks, all of which look to social justice as an orienting ideal.

Social Justice and Our English Education Track

While our overall program's and partnerships' considerations of these social justice ideals are at an early stage, our integration of an equity orientation is much more complete in our English education track, for which Zenkov (this article's first author) serves as the lead faculty member and from which Lague (the second author) graduated and now serves as an instructor. As secondary and English educators, we have welcomed the heightened focus on social justice principles found in the current standards of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2013), but these are far from the only equity notions that influence English teachers' and English educators' work. In fact, the history of justice-focused literacy instruction is protracted, and one with which many English teachers, teacher educators, and scholars have engaged (Dyches & Boyd, 2017; Lazar, 2013; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; Williamson, Rhodes, & Dunson, 2007).

For our integration and examination of these justice ideals in our English education track, we reasoned that if equity approaches are to become foundational in both teacher education contexts and middle/high schools, scholars need a responsive understanding of the ideas of "justice" with which pre-service English teachers are operating (Destigter, 2008; Fowler-Amato, LeeKeenan, Warrington, Nash, & Brady, 2019). As well, we have speculated that equity ideals might matter to these future teachers and these principles might be more effectively incorporated into their instructional orientations if we began our program—via the first English instruction methods course that we co-teach—by calling on them to explore the notions of injustice with which they are most familiar. To enact this premise, for the last seven years we have asked

preservice teachers to examine and narrativize these ideas via a “Story of Injustice” assignment, which eventually serves as the foundation for their first lesson planning efforts.

Methodology

Conceptual Framework

We recognize that promoting an equity approach to teaching cannot be separated from the political and social contexts of our nation, communities, and schools (Anderson, McKenzie, Allan, Hill, McLean, Kavira, Knorr, Stone, Murphy, & Butcher, 2015). In addition, we conceive of English teachers’ social justice notions as examples of what Meyer and Land (2003) have called “threshold concepts”: many future teachers struggle to adopt a social justice stance, because they fail to recognize that education is inherently focused on improving the human condition. We rely on the hypothesis that if equity approaches are to become foundational in both teacher education contexts and middle/high schools, scholars need a responsive understanding of the ideas of “justice” with which pre-service English teachers are operating (Fowler-Amato et al, 2019).

Our research and pedagogical conceptual frameworks are rooted in the belief that no instruction should occur without an appreciation for students’ life and learning experiences and that all curricula should honor youths’ and pre-service teachers’ perspectives on the topics to which we are introducing them (Gay, 2012; Lee, 2011). We were cognizant of these considerations as we developed the “Story of Injustice” assignment and designed this first component of what is now a longitudinal study of preservice teachers’ and early career teachers’ concepts of and pedagogical implementations of justice. We are committed to the notion that all English teachers, who often focus on youths creating texts, engaging with, and generating concepts, have an obligation to orient their pedagogies around ideals of equity (Bieler & Burns, 2017).

Study Context and Participants

We have examined the “Stories of Injustice” of 138 pre-service teachers who were enrolled in a master’s licensure program at our very large, diverse mid-Atlantic U.S. university and completing clinical experiences in one of sixteen partner schools. Despite this diversity, the majority of candidates were White females in their early 20’s, which is similar to teacher preparation programs nationwide. Most indicators suggested that formal education and educational institutions were highly valued in our students’ communities, although the disenfranchisement and disengagement patterns often seen in impoverished communities were also clearly present.

Project and Study Implementation

To introduce future English teachers to social justice-oriented pedagogies, we call on them to develop “Stories of Injustice” as the first element of multi-genre compositions, through which they document an equity-oriented subject of their choosing with texts they craft (e.g., this Story of Injustice, a justice-focused research essay, and a poem) and select (e.g., visuals, social media, research reports, etc.). In the syllabus, the project is described as an “exploration of a justice-related topic related to English instruction you want to learn about and share with your future students,” in part “to consider how our teaching work can help to make the world a more

just place.” Candidates are asked to compose this story in a form that they would call on their future students to both read and write, with content that they expect these young people might encounter in their lives or should experience in the school curriculum. We assign candidates the task of considering “injustice” rather than “justice” issues because they are eventually required to detail how they and their future students might address these injustices, on personal levels in the poems they craft and via structural means in the research essays they compose.

We read these 138 stories using qualitative research methods to catalogue the topics of injustice pre-service teachers identified (Creswell, 1998). We further analyzed all data through an extensive coding process (Saldaña, 2013) based on these emergent themes. First author Zenkov completed an initial analysis of story topics, and second author Lague conducted the second stage of qualitative analysis processes by collecting notes while closely reading each story to track emerging themes. We were in near complete agreement on these topics, as most authors explicitly named the topics in their stories and because the majority of stories (81.2%) addressed multiple issues, increasing the likelihood that we would identify at least one common topic.

As we read and analyzed the stories, codes emerged organically and thematically, allowing Lague to create the language for specific codes. For example, she observed that several stories included adult bystanders who were unsupportive of adolescents facing injustices or seemed to perpetuate the story’s injustice; this pattern begot the code “complicit adults.” Though some stories had only one clear theme, most addressed two or three distinct issues; no story was given more than four topic codes.

In the final stage of our analysis, Lague used Google Sheets to organize the consolidated topics by each of the seven semesters from which data were collected. Codes were separated from their stories but remained organized by respective semesters for later trend analysis. We alphabetized codes in Google Sheets by semester and counted manually. We then combined codes in a separate Google Sheet to count overall occurrences across all seven semesters. This resulted in the identification of 75 topics, which we detail further below.

Findings

We identified 75 distinct topic codes, 32 of which had more than three occurrences across the 138 total stories. For the analyses and findings we share in this manuscript, we considered ten distinct themes, each of which occurred nine or more times. We calculated the occurrence percentage of each of these topics from this tally of stories of injustice (see Table 1 for frequency and definitions).

Table 1: Topics from Data Analysis

Top Topics	Definition
Identity = 15.22%	Forming or deforming of a person’s identity
Racism = 15.22%	Discrimination against someone who belongs to a minority group
Bullying = 13.77%	Related to ongoing harassment of someone
Complicit adults = 13.04%	Facilitated, perpetuated, or ignored by a trusted adult
Family injustice = 11.59%	Abuse, neglect, or a decision perpetrated by family member
Complicit teacher = 8.7%	Facilitated, perpetuated, or ignored by a teacher
The Other = 8.7%	Related to a fear or hatred of an “other”
Sexism = 7.97%	Unequal treatment based on gender, not including sexual violence
Powerlessness = 6.52%	Created by a loss/lack of control over one's situation or actions
Religion = 6.52%	Based on or due to a person's religion or a difference in religion

In the remainder of this section, we examine some of the most frequently occurring and often merged topics, elucidating these with excerpts from candidates’ stories.

Identity and Racism

Nearly one third of the stories portrayed either “identity” or “racism”—in some cases, identity shaped by race or racism. These two topics were the most familiar catalysts for candidates’ formative moments of developing understandings of injustice. Interestingly, while these two topics were the most popular, their pervasiveness may actually make them the most nuanced and personal; stories with these topics were often lived events and seemed to influence not just the author’s conception of justice, but of themselves as people.

“I’m aboard a plane 50,000 feet above the Atlantic Ocean. I’m headed to a place that is apparently my home, although I haven’t been there since I was eleven years old,” one preservice teacher—M—began in an account of injustice entitled “Alien.” This individual was the author and narrator of this story, and his tale was crafted in the form of a letter—written from the sky—relating currently unfolding events, which he was already recognizing would forever define his identity. The letter continued:

When you are eighteen and 21 you can’t go anywhere where they require an ID because you won’t get in. So your friends stop calling you. You can’t buy a video game for your little brother because it’s rated “Mature” and you don’t have an ID. Things as simple as boarding a plane or applying to college become nightmares because you can’t put in the nine-digit code to success.

All these things seem insignificant but they have a psychological effect on you. You're scared to do anything. You're scared to reach out for help when you're trying to figure out how to get into college. You don't trust anyone enough to let them in and let them help you figure out what to do when you leave high school. Because if you get in trouble or if anyone finds out what you are, you'll be deported with no questions asked. You have no rights. Since *you* are illegal, by default everything you *do* is illegal.

The statement “[s]ince *you* are illegal, by default everything you *do* is illegal” summarizes the far-reaching consequences of one’s identity being dictated by immigration status. An injustice is sometimes a reality that is embodied, beyond an individual’s control.

“I didn’t see at the time, to my eternal shame,” a White preservice teacher—P—wrote of a time she was not attuned to the terror felt by a Black mother during a laser tag birthday party taking place in a suburban neighborhood where the preteen boys were left to roam the streets with plastic guns. The racism was not the author’s, though one could contend the privilege of peace of mind enjoyed by the author was part of the architecture of racism. The primary example of racism in this story was another unspoken reality: the debilitating fear among Black Americans that they will be shot by police or, at the very least, treated differently by other community members, even at children’s birthday parties.

Like “Alien,” this story offers not only the notion of injustice of which a future teacher was aware, but her reflection on that concept:

The injustice, to me, is not just that my friend could not sit and knit and chat like the rest of us. It’s that she could not count on the world to protect her son if he is out of her reach, like I can. She cannot expect all teachers where our children go to school together to see past the color of his skin and see his intelligence first.

P connects her idea of injustice—illustrated by an innocuous event, a birthday party, accessed through her lens as a parent—to her future teaching practice: she believes teachers serve all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or other facets of their identities.

Religion

“Religion” was a concept that overlapped with several of the topics and was present in 6.52% of stories. One of the most compelling examples of these stories opened with lines from the famous Muslim poet Rumi’s “Life & Death”: *I gave my word/at the outset to give my life/with no qualms/I pray to the Lord/to break my back/before I break my word*. The author—Z—goes on to connect the reader to her/his spiritual roots in a way that seems impossible in the narrator’s community.

Z explains that the narrator, Faheem, “was inspired by the story of Ahmed Mohamed – the 14-year old Sudanese boy who was arrested for bringing a homemade clock to school” in Irving, Texas in 2015. The timepiece was mistaken by school authorities for a bomb, leading to a local and eventually a national public uproar. Faheem faces “othering” by his community as a Sudanese American, but he feels this exclusion even more deeply as a Muslim. This story offers a glimpse into Faheem’s life after his arrest as he wonders what will happen to him in the future because of Islamophobia.

Faheem thought about Sudan. His thoughts of his homeland were only in his imagination; he had never been there. He thought about his grandfather who, at age

fourteen, walked six miles out of Shatoy in search of the British school, only to be captured and brought back to the Khalawie school in his village. His grandfather who loved science. The gentle old man who had held his hand and pointed up to the stars, quietly reciting a Sufi poem under his breath:

*I've come again
to break the teeth and claws
of this man-eating
monster we call life
I've come again
to puncture the
glory of the cosmos
who mercilessly
destroys humans*

The early morning light splintered though the tiny window between splotches of dirt and grease and illuminated a galaxy of swirling dust particles. He gazed up at the swirl, imagining himself as a single particle of dust on a vast plane. He longed to feel that small again.

All of the stories students shared about religion described a threat to the narrator's beliefs that led them to consider "breaking [their] word [to God]," as in the Rumi poem. This pattern suggests that when preservice teachers consider their experiences with religion, the injustice often lies in the doubts they cannot control.

Complicit Adults

The remaining top ten topics—stories of injustice related to bullying (13.7%), sexism (7.97%), family injustice (11.59%), and powerlessness (6.52%)—also spoke to the centrality of power and control in these preservice teachers' senses of what is just. The majority of stories took place either from the point of view of an adolescent or as a reflection on an event that happened during adolescence—a time when most young people do not get to choose much of what happens in their lives.

Across these stories, teacher candidates shared their perception that the people who do have power or control are typically trusted adults in their lives, including teachers and parents. These are the people who are supposed to be the most reliable: yet an unnerving number of stories—nearly 25%—characterized teachers and other adults as complicit actors, not always unwitting agents of injustice, who betray the narrator or perpetuate injustice simply by doing nothing to stop it. One such story, "A Lesson in Bureaucracy," began with strings of vulgar language. It is soon revealed that the narrator, the person enduring this language, was a 17-year old girl sitting in her Calculus class listening to the high school boys who sat behind her, loudly discussing their sexual conquests:

I constantly dreaded third period where I spent an entire class uncomfortable and wanting to be anywhere but there. I wished I had some way to warn or protect these nameless girls, yet I was powerless. Every other day I was granted a reprieve thanks to our block scheduling, but I always arrived in my fifth period Calculus class with my stomach in

knots, having spent an entire period stressed and hoping that the teacher would notice just once.

He never did.

The most common action of these “complicit adults” was their choice to ignore the problems experienced by the young people for whom they are responsible, and it is that choice that makes the injustice so impactful to the writer or narrator. The author of “A Lesson in Bureaucracy” states, “Teachers should be there for their students and aware of what is going on in their own classroom. Above all, teachers should be advocates and supporters of students. To do otherwise is perhaps unforgivable.” While there were many stories of injustice that portray adults and teachers making questionable—and occasionally unforgivable—decisions, we also found that adults in these stories could be forces for justice.

Discussion

Our program faculty and school partners—university- and school-based teacher educators—continue to consider how we might integrate an equity orientation into our courses, clinical experiences, and partnership structures. We have been guided by the grandest ideals of schools’ democratic purposes, as well as by NAPDS Essential #1 and a growing body of professional standards that speak to a justice “standard.”

As an illustration of our program’s most successful and comprehensive consideration of these equity ideals, the stories composed by these preservice teachers provide insight into the diversity of their ideas about and experiences with injustice and into their developing notions of what might make the world a better place for their future students. The distinct topics affirm that, despite a generally common demographic, these future teachers bring with them a variety of views. Additionally, the majority of stories depicted incidents involving *intersecting* injustice-related issues, revealing the complexities of teacher candidates’ perspectives, the complicated nature of injustice, and the flexible frame of mind teachers need when working with a social justice stance.

The instructional and research project we have conducted with our English teacher candidates began with the mission of helping these teachers consider the nature of a social justice orientation to their pedagogical practices—to take such stances from rhetoric to reality. It is clear that we must continue to consider the existing equity notions that our fields have identified and determine how to link these concepts to teacher candidates’ ideas and how to enact these in our classrooms. The 2009 CEE Position Statement Beliefs about Social Justice in English Education proposes that educators “must teach about injustice and discrimination in all its forms” with the goal that ensuring that “each student in our classrooms is entitled to the same opportunities for academic achievement regardless of background or acquired privilege” (Commission for Social Justice, 2009). The 2010 NCTE Resolution on Social Justice in Literacy Education echoed this proposal and acknowledged the “vital role that teacher education programs play in preparing teachers to enact and value a pedagogy that is socially just” (NCTE, 2010). And NCTE’s 2013 standard called on teacher candidates to “plan and implement English language arts and literacy instruction that promotes social justice and critical engagement with complex issues,” while

recognizing that such concepts of justice had to be rooted in students' individual and collective histories and identities (NCTE, 2013).

This, then, may be the most promising concept of "bridging" that our project has revealed. These preservice teachers already appear to be grounded in many of the difficult and the hopeful realities of teaching: they believe that youths' experiences with injustice are painful, complex, and personal, but that these are also signs of solidarity. They recognize that adults and teachers can choose to position themselves as intermediaries between their personal experiences with and conceptions of injustice and the realities of their students to find common ground and opportunities for action (Dantley & Green, 2015). J, the author of one of these stories, reflects on this: "The truth is that life is mostly set by the nebulous circumstances out of your control, like your race, gender, class, sex."

Though some of these teacher candidates' stories were works of fiction, many (68%) were personal accounts, drawn from moments of injustice preservice teachers had encountered in their lives or communities. All stories illustrated points of concern for these individuals as they were beginning to form their new teacher identities. We wonder if this trend shows a tendency for new teachers to see the injustices faced in the past as "cautionary tales," and that perhaps these pre service professionals are picturing the kind of teacher or adult they never want to be, for the sake of their future students or other vulnerable people in these young adults' lives.

Our now seven-year long consideration of teacher candidates' stories also reveals part of these individuals' journeys from human being to teacher, and perhaps back again. We believe we know these teachers and writers—the students whose work we have read and analyzed—better through their stories. We recognize that, though our intention was to study teacher candidates' conceptions of justice, these stories are more than ideas. And while we have reduced them to their core themes, as teachers, teachers of teachers, and readers we long to honor these stories as the personal experiences they represent.

We continue to consider what form the social justice "Seed" will take in our program's courses, clinical experiences, partnership elements, and beyond. And we continue to engage with additional pools of English teacher candidates, collecting new stories, gathering their ideas about justice, and reviewing the first lesson plans they craft in our course. We are aware that the results on which we have reported here represent only the foundation of our program's and these new educators' interests in and efforts to integrate justice into teacher education and their instruction. We hope to build on this foundation, and we have just completed a follow-up study of these English teacher candidates in their early years in the profession, gaining insight into the structures of schools—inside and outside of school-university partnership and PDS contexts—that support early career teachers' efforts to engage in social justice-focused instruction. We look forward to sharing these findings in future manuscripts.

The most important point of calling on a school-university partnership-based program (comprised of English, math, science, and social studies educators) to integrate such equity ideals and of asking future teachers to articulate their conceptions of injustice may be that we create opportunities to find the common ground of such equity-oriented inquiries, in our middle and high school and college courses—and, indeed, in the teaching profession. The awareness we develop as the result of such reflections might lead to justice-focused pedagogical practices and actions in and across our schools, universities, and communities. Considering the "Seeds" of justice alongside our faculty, partner schools, and students and calling on future teachers to

narrativize injustice are just some of the ways for us—teacher educators, teachers along a professional continuum, and young people—to eventually *see* justice in our classrooms and communities.

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