Infusing Social Justice and DEI Practices into Teacher Candidate Literacy Instruction

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Carey, who has been a constant source of love and support during my doctoral journey (and long before that). I couldn't have done this without you.

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ABSTRACT

In response to factors in the landscape of the American education system (i.e. growing diversity of the K-12 student population, lack of diversity in the K-12 teacher workforce, current events highlighting racial and socioeconomic inequities, and a growing understanding of the opportunity gap), university teacher educators (TEs) have worked to integrate social justice (SJ) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) into teacher candidate (TC) preparation with the goal of preparing TCs who can teach culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse children. Research indicates that these concepts are not typically infused by teacher educators in coursework through entire programs. Instead, ideas are often siloed into introductory courses, and if SJ and DEI concepts are taken up across coursework, it is often sporadic and inconsistent across the program curriculum. Thus, current teacher preparation programs often limit or undermine the confidence of TCs to teach in socially just ways because TCs are not prepared with cohesive, well designed programmatic curriculum that makes clear connections between SJ theory and enactment.

Using case study methodology, this study addressed a gap in the literature by investigating how a revised curriculum in a literacy course that follows introductory elementary education coursework, built upon, and increased the understanding and confidence of TCs to teach literacy in a socially just way. Results from this study indicate that SJ pedagogies must be modeled and explicitly discussed by TEs in the context of discipline-specific instruction. As a result, TCs grow in their literacy knowledge, pedagogies, and confidence to employ SJ concepts when they are given opportunities to design, test out, reflect upon, and receive feedback on scaffolded literacy assessments and lessons for K-6 learners.

Study findings can be used to strengthen teacher education programs with a social justice emphasis, particularly in the field of literacy education, by indicating a roadmap of how to infuse social justice programmatically and disciplinarily. This includes, but is not limited to, providing TEs with a clear scope and sequence of what SJ concepts can be addressed throughout the program and how. Results from this study also note the need for agreement among TEs on the definition and application of SJ, and opportunities for TCs to enact SJ pedagogies in authentic practicum experiences. This study also points to how TEs can make intentional changes to their instruction that shift TCs' understanding and self-efficacy; findings also point to the need for intentional collaboration and curriculum planning by TEs to continuously weave and connect SJ concepts throughout the program. All of these efforts help TCs have a more nuanced and practical understanding of SJ. Finally, explicit connections between SJ theory and enactment in a particular discipline needs to occur in order for TCs to feel confident in teaching each disciplinary subject in a socially just manner.

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List of Abbreviations

CRP	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
CRT	Culturally Responsive Teaching
CSP	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
HRL	Historically Responsive Literacy
PCK	Pedagogical and Content Knowledge
R1	Research 1 University Classification – Very High Research Activity
SJ	Social Justice
SJPCK	Social Justice Pedagogical and Content Knowledge
TCs	Teacher Candidates
TE	Teacher Education

Chapter 1: General Introduction

Personal Experience

I began my career as an elementary school teacher in Illinois. During that time, I honed my teaching practice, focusing particularly on teaching literacy. I read books intended to enhance my practice, attended professional development sessions, and sought out mentoring from the literacy coach in my building. As I worked to become an excellent teacher of reading, I realized that while my undergraduate and graduate studies prepared me in many ways to be an excellent teacher, literacy was an area of complexity and nuance that I was not as prepared to teach. Much of what I learned about teaching literacy was done through experimenting in my own classroom and reaching out to colleagues with more experience.

I also learned a great deal about being a socially just educator, something we had often talked about in my teacher preparation program and that I understood theoretically. I taught in two schools during my six years in Illinois, a charter school in Chicago and a public school in a Chicago suburb. Both schools were similarly comprised of many Hispanic students whose parents were immigrants. Many of the families were from a low socioeconomic background, as well. Through home visits, conversations during after-school pick up, and other extracurricular activities, I developed relationships with families that opened my eyes to another culture and another way of viewing education. For example, I was frustrated by the lack of parent involvement in my classroom, especially compared to when I was in elementary school. In my experience, parents were always volunteering and working in my childhood classroom, and I assumed that was the

norm in all schools. But when I tried to solicit parent involvement for my own classroom, I was often met with hesitation. Initially, I viewed this hesitation as a lack of care for their child's education. However, after getting to know many families and gaining a better understanding of Mexican culture, I learned that families often viewed teachers as the expert, hence the Spanish for teacher which is "Maestra," related to the word "master." Parents viewed teaching as my area of expertise and did not see themselves as partners in the process.

My journey towards becoming a socially just educator started with a solid theoretical foundation in my initial teacher education program. Yet I still had to find ways to infuse my pedagogy with social justice on my own. I began to develop an understanding of socially just teaching that was based in diversity, equity, and inclusivity. I realized that socially just teaching is more than just talking about issues of social justice, although that is important. I came to see socially just teaching as *how* I taught. It became the lens I used to think about everything I did in the classroom. I began to ask questions such as, "Which voices are being amplified in this book?" "Will my students see themselves reflected in this work?" "How can I provide multiple ways to access this material?" "How does my classroom culture value all viewpoints?" "Does this activity help students think more critically?" By asking these questions, I began to consistently interrogate my pedagogy and make changes to ensure that all students were cared for, included, and valued.

When I started my doctoral program, I was aware that the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities teacher education program had a heavy emphasis on social justice. I was asked to supervise student teachers and was excited to see how TCs were

enacting that in their practice. But as I talked with my student teachers and observed their lessons, I started to wonder if there might be a similar problem of theoretical understanding, but a lack of tools to enact social justice. I conducted an interview with a TC for a previous class project, and the TC confirmed this idea. The TC told me that instructors talked about social justice all the time with TCs, including ideas about dismantling systems of oppression. But the TC struggled to understand what these ideas looked like in an elementary classroom.

With this disconnect in mind, I was asked to teach a three-credit class with a two-credit practicum for undergraduates—taken prior to their methods coursework but after their introductory course in TE. The class is a discipline-specific class full of content focused on providing the foundations needed to teach literacy, but it is not a methods course. This is because the teaching of literacy is not only a critical component for student success, but also because literacy is a complex, nuanced process. Further, state standards in Minnesota for literacy are lengthy, detailed, and constantly under fire from various political groups. As a result, literacy teacher educators have a challenging task to undertake. Because the foundations of literacy class is so full of content and does not cover pedagogy per se, social justice has not been a focus. I began to wonder: What would happen if we revised our curriculum to infuse social justice into TCs learning about the foundations of literacy? Would teacher candidates feel more prepared to think about literacy and teach literacy practices in a more socially just way?

I let this question percolate as I conducted some initial research into social justice and how it is approached in the general teacher education literature. What I found was a lack of coherent definitions or comprehensive understanding of social justice, and this

translated into somewhat haphazard introductory coursework in teacher education. I also found a lack of research into how teacher educators who prepare TCs in the teaching of literacy (following intro coursework in TE), infuse social justice into their discipline-specific preparation. As a result, I designed a study for my dissertation work based on my observations and experiences as a student teacher supervisor and graduate instructor, as well as my own professional experiences teaching various elementary grades. My dissertation study, described in the next section of this paper, seeks to address an area of the literature that is currently limited in research.

Rationale for New Research in Teacher Education Programming

There is general agreement that social justice (SJ) is critical to teacher education (TE) programming as a way to promote a more just and equitable society. National attention has been brought to issues of injustice due to recent events such as the murder of George Floyd (May 25, 2020) and the following civil unrest across the U.S. These inequities were highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020-present), and the white supremacist-led Capitol Insurrection of January 6, 2021. Even more recently, 41 states have proposed bills restricting what can be taught about racism, sexual orientation, or gender identity in schools (Herron, January 26, 2022; Lavietes, March 16, 2022; Schwartz, June 11, 2021). These events illustrate the political tension surrounding issues of SJ and the intensifying need to prepare TCs to engage in socially just practices.

Despite the importance of SJ described above, there is a lack of agreement on a cohesive definition of the term in the literature, and a lack of research into how teacher educators can infuse SJ throughout their respective programs. While researchers have found that when SJ is siloed into a few introductory classes, the impact on teacher

candidates is minimal (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016, Zeichner, 2009), and that TE programs that have a focus on SJ often have conflicting views within the program about what it looks like in practice (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016), the research has not explored how to change these concerns. Thus, the question remains: If teaching in a socially just way is critical to instill in teacher candidates, how do teacher educators do so?

This study builds on the current literature on SJ in teacher education and explores specific ways to infuse SJ into a content-specific course. It explores the varying definitions of SJ and uses the current literature to craft a comprehensive definition that will be useful for teacher educators and TCs when seeking to apply SJ-DEI in classroom settings. This study critically explores SJ in the current TE literature, seeking to identify current areas of strength, as well as areas that need to be strengthened. And this study has implications for the way teacher educators plan for and teach content-specific courses in a SJ-focused program, particularly those courses focused on literacy.

Purpose of the Study and Guiding Research Questions

The purpose of my dissertation study was to determine what knowledge about SJ-DEI issues are presented to teacher candidates in introductory teacher education classes and if (and how) these same issues are taken up in subsequent K-6 literacy-specific coursework. Specifically, I wanted to understand (a) what teacher preparation introductory coursework looks like at one research 1 (R1) institution, (b) what TCs state as SJ ideas taken up in their literacy coursework, (c) their perceived self-efficacy in terms of their ability to enact SJ-DEI pedagogies when teaching literacy to youth, and (d) how ideas and TCs' self-efficacy to employ their learning are manifested in their practices when constructing lessons and working with K-6 youth in practicum settings.

Research questions guiding this study were:

1. How are SJ-DEI frameworks and concepts introduced within introductory TE program coursework for early childhood and elementary education majors at one R1 institution (**Chapter 3)**?
2. Are SJ-DEI teaching practices integrated throughout the foundations of the literacy course that follows the intro classes at this R1 institution? If so, how is this accomplished **(Chapter 3)**? (e.g., In what ways are these ideas explored by the instructor and TCs from a theoretical perspective to a pragmatic one?)
3. If these practices are not taken up within the foundations of literacy coursework, what components are needed when redesigning the foundations of literacy syllabi (CI 5413 and 5414) to enable instructors to teach the content so it addresses the important cognitive, social, and cultural components of literacy development (K-6), while also using-infusing a socially just framework to reconsider all components of the coursework? What does a redesigned syllabus look like and what is the rationale behind the changes made by the instructor **(Chapter 3)**?
4. How do teacher candidates' knowledge and perceived self-efficacy about using SJ-DEI concepts change after participating in a redesigned course **(Chapter 4)**?

Definitions, Theoretical Perspectives, and Conceptual Frameworks

For this study, it is critical for me to define how SJ will be used and applied throughout my research, as it will be used as a guide for all three articles. Additionally, it is critical to define and explain the theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks I

used to guide my methodology, interpretation, and analysis of data, as well as my implications and conclusions.

A Working Definition of SJ in Education

The definitions for SJ are varied in the literature and often have different areas of focus, and as a result, there is not a complete, comprehensive definition in the current literature. As SJ and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have increased in focus for TE programs throughout the country, it is critical to examine the literature for how SJ has been infused into general teacher preparation, as well as in the disciplinary field of literacy. For a complete discussion of the definitions of SJ and DEI in the literature, please reference Chapter 2: Social Justice in Teacher Education Literature. However, as a preface to Chapter 2 and my research, I defined SJ as follows:

- Social justice is a comprehensive approach to teaching that encompasses the pedagogies, dispositions, and relationships of individual teachers. It is a dedication and commitment to teaching all students equitably and inclusively.
- Teachers who are committed to social justice recognize and teach students about inequalities, but also work to address those inequalities in their own classrooms (Dyches & Boyd, 2017).
- Socially just educators consistently reflect on and evaluate their own actions and pedagogy to identify which voices are being amplified and which are silenced.
- Socially just teachers create classrooms where their students can expect stability, care, and deep learning.
- Teachers who embrace SJ know that there are many influences that inform students' development (Zygmunt & Clark, 2016) and that each learner brings

unique “funds of knowledge” to the classroom, meaning the body of knowledge that is embedded in cultural practices and daily routines and lives of families (Gonzalez, et al., 2005).

- Socially just educators approach conversations about SJ and DEI issues with understanding, humility, and the ability to listen to others, even if the parties disagree. This allows educators to keep the door open for future conversations (Tisby, 2020).
- Socially just educators evaluate the culture in their classroom, school, and district to identify and dismantle policies and programs that systematically oppress students.
- Finally, socially just teaching is an ongoing process for individual teachers that should be aided by professional development and relationships with their peers.

Theoretical Framework

Several theoretical frameworks help to inform this study, particularly in how SJ is presented to TCs, how these concepts are infused by teacher educators within introductory classes, and how results are analyzed.

Ecological Framework

Bronfenbrenner’s (as cited in Zygmunt and Clark, 2016) ecological framework stated that there are direct and indirect influences on child development. While direct influences such as school, home, or community have a significant impact on child development, indirect influences such as national policy, social issues, and local politics also impact children. Children do not develop in a vacuum, and it is crucial for teachers who are dedicated to social justice to be aware of contextual influences on their beliefs

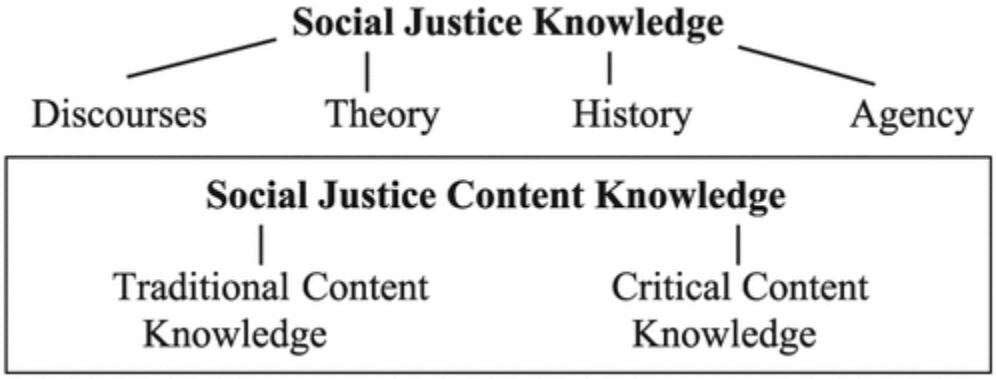
about students and their teaching practices. With this in mind, socially just teachers recognize the impact that a child's environment has on their development and that they do not arrive at school as a blank slate or "tabula rasa." Students arrive at school with their own experiences and knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti, 2005).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework is not only useful as a way to understand young children and their development, but it can also be applied to college students' development as teachers within a TE program. It is critical for teacher educators to acknowledge that TCs in their classes have many direct and indirect influences on their development. When considering how to teach in socially just ways, teacher educators must acknowledge these influences and bring them to the attention of TCs.

Social Justice Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (SJPCK)

Dyches and Boyd's (2017) theoretical framework, Social Justice Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (SJPCK), builds on Gudmundsdottir and Shulman's (1987) Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) framework and profoundly influences this work. Gudmundsdottir and Shulman's theory rests on the idea that teachers must have a specific, professional set of knowledge and skills. In this original framework, content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are separate, but closely related. Scholars who embrace this framework also reject the oversimplification of teaching practices as "condescensions that trivialize and diminish teachers' complex work" (Dyches & Boyd, 2017, p. 476). While this is an important foundation for the preparation of TCs, Dyches and Boyd (2017) posit that PCK fails to identify a significant element, and that is the assumption that teaching practices are never neutral and that teaching should never be isolated from social justice knowledge.

Dyches and Boyd (2017) acknowledge that CPK correctly identifies that "something *happens* when a teacher translates content for student consumption" (p. 479), taking it a step further by suggesting that this is inseparable from a teacher's social justice beliefs. In other words, a teacher's understanding of, as well as their dedication and commitment to, social justice must and should be weaved throughout their teaching because it encompasses discourse, theory, history, and agency in the classroom. Social justice practice should not be separated from content knowledge; rather, it should inform and shape content knowledge and teaching practices.



(Dyches & Boyd, 2017, p. 485)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1998), Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2001), and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012) are all helpful frameworks when attending to SJ and DEI practices. Each of these frameworks build on the previous one in order to increase equitable teaching practices in all classrooms. CRP, CRT, and CSP acknowledge the assets that students bring to the classroom such as language, experiences, culture, and family values. While CRP and CRT affirm and accept the backgrounds of students and seek to connect students' cultural knowledge and

personal experiences to instruction, CSP takes this a step further in viewing schools as places where diverse cultures can be sustained, rather than simply acknowledged (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). These three frameworks continue to inform teaching practices and classroom cultures, especially in regard to SJ and DEI practices.

My dissertation study is grounded in the ecological framework, the Social Justice Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (SJPCK) framework, and CRP, CRT, and CSP frameworks. By this I mean that I used these frameworks to define and understand teaching in a socially just way. The ecological framework acknowledges that human development is impacted by personal experiences and that all children entering school have experiences that have shaped them. This applies to the elementary students we study and work with, but it also applies to the college students enrolled in the class. Socially just teachers recognize that there are different factors at play in development and that every student in their classroom has a unique experience. SJPCK helps us understand that SJ cannot and should not be separated from content. A teacher's beliefs shape the way they choose to teach and present concepts, and their beliefs about SJ cannot be separated from their practice. CRP, CRT, and CSP frameworks provide direction in adjusting pedagogy towards equity by acknowledging and valuing student identities, experiences, and cultural knowledge. They also help us to think about inclusive pedagogy that sustains cultures rather than simply acknowledging them.

Organization of the Dissertation

My dissertation is structured as three separate articles, all exploring different aspects of the research study I undertook. My work is presented in a nontraditional dissertation format. Three separate articles follow this chapter (1), and the dissertation ends with a conclusions chapter (5) wherein I discuss themes and implications drawn from all three articles (chapter 2, 3, and 4). In the last chapter (5), I also summarize key points and offer direction for future research. Below I provide an overview of the three articles as a means of introducing the structure of my research efforts.

Chapter 2: Social Justice in Teacher Education Literature

In the first article I present a literature review focusing on social justice in general teacher education programs and narrowing to how social justice is infused in literacy-specific teacher education classes. My primary goal for this article was to explore what currently exists in the teacher education literature as to how teacher education programs with an emphasis on social justice are implementing that in their programming. My second goal for this article was to investigate how two teacher educators currently infuse social justice into their classes on literacy education. The findings I present in this article emphasize the generality of the current literature on implementing a socially just teacher education program, the lack of research or work in the area of literacy education, and I argue that there is a critical need for more work in infusing social justice throughout teacher education programming.

Chapter 3: A Process to Redesign Literacy Curriculum with Social Justice Focus

My second article presents the process I used to redesign a current undergraduate TE course called *CI 5413: Foundations of Reading*. In order to revise the syllabus and curriculum of *Foundations of Reading*, two introductory TE classes that precede this

course were examined using document analysis of the syllabi and a semi-structured interview with an instructor. Through this process, I determined how SJ-DEI issues were introduced and identified readings and assignments used in the coursework. The semi-structured interview I employed allowed the instructor to elaborate on the choice of topics and readings, planning, and goals for TC learning in SJ. I describe choices for revision. Finally, I make an argument that teaching content cannot, and should not, be divorced from SJ. In fact, content should be consistently infused with SJ-DEI if teacher educators wish to prepare socially just TCs.

Chapter 4: A Redesigned Curriculum: What Happened?

In my third article I present the results of the case study wherein I documented and analyzed how the changes made to the newly revised syllabus and curriculum influenced participants' beliefs and understandings of SJ, as well as their self-efficacy in teaching literacy in a socially just way. Utilizing open-ended survey questions, interviews with key informants, and document analysis of lesson plans, I analyzed if and how TCs' understandings of SJ changed or shifted throughout the semester. I close the article with an argument for teacher educators to expand their own understandings of SJ and to make explicit connections for TCs between theory and practice. Without these two critical actions, TCs will feel less confident in their ability to teach in a socially just way. These implications are discussed further in chapter 5—the closing chapter.

Chapter 2:

Social Justice in Teacher Education Literature

This chapter examines how the concept of social justice (SJ) is presented in teacher education scholarship. Social justice is not a new focus in teacher education (TE) programs, but the way it is implemented across the country varies widely. This review considers three reform movements in recent TE practice and how those movements have impacted SJ-focused teacher education programs. It also identifies strategies that TE programs across the country have used to integrate SJ into their teacher preparation. Particular attention is paid to how SJ has moved beyond introductory teacher ed surveys to be taken up within discipline-specific coursework within programs, specifically literacy. Finally, the chapter offers proposals for future practice.

Because the literature on social justice in literacy education is extremely limited, I determined that a good starting point would be to reach out to a leading scholar in this field. I conducted an interview with Dr. Mikkaka Overstreet, an assistant professor at East Carolina University. My goal was to explore ways in which she infuses social justice into her literacy education classes. I also reviewed two papers written on this topic by Dr. Overstreet (Howard, et al., 2018; Overstreet, 2019). To complement what I learned from Dr. Overstreet, I then reviewed a recently published professional development book, *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy,* which focuses on social justice in literacy education by Dr. Gholdy Muhammad, an associate professor at Georgia State University and University of Illinois at Chicago. The book was primarily written for current K–12 educators, but as a teacher

educator, Muhammad has included teacher candidates in her audience, as well (Muhammad, 2020). After completing this initial literature review, I expanded my scope of articles and resources that I reviewed as I moved forward with this paper.

Building a Rationale for Infusing SJ and DEI into Teacher Education Programs

Social Justice (SJ) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have been thrust into the political spotlight in recent years, especially due to events such as the murder of George Floyd (May 25, 2020) and the civil unrest that followed. The inequities illuminated by the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020–present) also contributed to growing racial and socioeconomic awareness. In education, this emphasis on SJ and DEI is not new, however. Over the past three decades, teacher education programs have continued to shift towards a greater emphasis on SJ due in part to the increasing diversity of students within classrooms, the lack of diversity in the teacher workforce, the rising levels of professional stress experienced by teachers and the social-emotional support needed by students, and the deepening understanding of the opportunity gap.

Classrooms have become increasingly diverse in a variety of ways. As of 2017, there were 44.5 million immigrants residing in the United States, and 21% of those entered the country in 2010 or later (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018; Zong et al., 2019). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021a), 52% of students enrolled in public schools were students of color in 2018. In addition to racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity, a growing number of young people are identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) (Russell et al., 2010). There is diversity in socioeconomic status, as well. According to the U.S. Census, 14.4% of children under the age of 18 were living in poverty in 2019 compared to 16.1%

in 2020 (Shrider et al., September 2021). The poverty rate for American Indian and African American families in 2019 was three times higher than that of white and Asian families, 30% and 31% respectively (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2021).

While the student population in the United States has become increasingly more diverse, the teacher population has remained primarily female and white (NCES, 2021b). For example, during the 2017-2018 school year, 89% of elementary grade teachers were females in comparison to 88% from 1999-2000. Additionally, 79% of public-school teachers were reported to be White compared to 7% Black, 9% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. While the percentage of White teachers has decreased slightly from 84% in 1999-2000 to 79% in 2017-2018, the percentage of students of color has risen with only 47% of students identified as White. While the percentage of teachers of color is beginning to move towards being more representative of the student population in the United States, the elementary teacher workforce is still primarily white and female.

Current teacher candidates (TCs) and those entering the profession in the next few years will be entering a changing environment, particularly in the level of stress teachers feel and the rising need for social-emotional support for students. A recent survey conducted by the EdWeek Research Center (Will, 2021) indicates that 33% of teachers are very likely to leave teaching in the next two years, while 21% indicated it was somewhat likely. There are numerous factors influencing teacher departures, but the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced additional issues related to student violence, racial and political tension, and social-emotional learning. There were 34 school shootings in 2021 compared to 10 in 2020 and 24 in 2019. The climate in education is evolving

rapidly, and teacher education programs are looking for ways to prepare teacher candidates for the changing environment.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher education programs shifted to focus on social justice in order to address the achievement gap, more recently known as the opportunity gap. This shift in terminology draws attention to the conditions and obstacles that students face throughout their education, placing responsibility for the disparity in academic achievement between particular groups of students on the inequitable systems that have not provided the opportunities needed for children to thrive academically (Milner, 2012). The opportunity gap has been studied by many researchers (e.g., Coleman et al., 1966; National Center for Education Statistics, The nation's report card, 2019). These researchers identify conditions or obstacles for educational success such as socioeconomic status, race, gender, lack of parental involvement, lack of qualified teachers, and personal trauma (e.g., Barnard, 2004; Berliner, 2009; deBrey et al., 2019; Felitti et al., 1998; Robinson & Lubienski, 2011; Valencia, 2002).

Berliner (2009) investigated six out-of-school factors (OSFs) that are common among children from low socioeconomic households and limit what schools can accomplish without additional support. These OSFs include: "(1) low birth-weight and non-genetic prenatal influences on children; (2) inadequate medical, dental, and vision care, often a result of inadequate or no medical insurance; (3) food insecurity; (4) environmental pollutants; (5) family relations and family stress; and (6) neighborhood characteristics" (Berliner, 2009, p. 1). While these OSFs are generally thought to be caused by poverty, they are often endemic to particular racial groups that tend to experience poverty at higher rates due to the segregation of America's schools. DeBrey et

al. (2019) found that the rate of poverty was higher for Black children (31%) than White or Asian children (10% each). Additionally, while 84% of Asian children and 73% of White children lived with married parents in 2016, only 33% of Black children lived with married parents. While this statistic does not include children living with two parents or two guardians who are unmarried, this stark difference indicates a gap in familial stability for Black children that can impact educational attainment.

Gender has also been suggested as a cause for the opportunity gap. Robinson and Lubienski (2011) found that female students generally achieve higher than males in reading. In addition, they found there is no gap between females and males in math achievement beginning in kindergarten. However, females begin to lose ground in math achievement in elementary school. Finally, Robinson and Lubienski (2011) found that teachers generally rate females higher than males in math and reading, regardless of assessment data. This predisposition in thinking that one gender performs higher in certain subjects can contribute to the opportunity gap as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Parental involvement, or the lack thereof, has been cited by researchers as a potential cause of the opportunity gap. Barnard (2004) found that students with higher parental involvement in elementary school were less likely to drop out of high school. Valencia (2002) investigated the myth that Mexican American parents do not value education, particularly parents from low socioeconomic households. The findings indicated that while perceived lack of parental involvement has been blamed for low performance by Hispanic students, the lack of involvement was due to cultural misunderstanding on the part of teachers.

Felitti et al. (1998) have found that childhood exposures to trauma can also impact educational achievement. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study identified seven categories of childhood exposures to abuse and household dysfunction:

- psychological abuse such as swearing at or insulting a child
- physical abuse such as pushing, shoving, or slapping a child
- sexual abuse of any kind
- substance abuse by anyone living in the home
- mental illness of a household member such as depression
- mother treated violently such as being pushed, shoved, or threatened with a weapon
- criminal behavior in household such as a household member going to prison (Felitti et al., 1998)

Children who were exposed to four or more of these categories were more likely to have social, emotional, and cognitive impairment, adopt unhealthy behaviors, or develop other social problems. These experiences have been described as childhood traumas and have been shown to have a negative effect on academic achievement, in addition to contributing to negative health outcomes.

While some gains in academic achievement have been made in certain states, as evidenced by the class of 2020 in Minnesota, students of color continue to graduate at a lower rate than White or Asian students (Minnesota Department of Education, 2021). For example, in Minnesota in 2017, 66.3% of Hispanic students, 64.7% of Black students, and 50.7% of American Indian students graduated on time compared to 88.0% of White students and 85.5% of Asian students (Minnesota Department of Education, 2022b). In

comparison, in Minnesota in 2020, 70.4% of Hispanic students, 69.2% of Black students, and 55.7% of American Indian students graduated on time compared to 89% of White students and 89.1% of Asian students (Minnesota Department of Education, 2021). While the opportunity gap has continued to improve, there are still significant disparities and thus this gap is still a critical component to address in teacher education programming.

Current events, increased student diversity and lack of teacher diversity, the impact of COVID-19, and the continued presence of the opportunity gap in schools indicate that America's education system is still fraught with deep, systemic inequalities. Without a continued, concerted effort towards a more equitable life experience for all students, these systems will continue to produce unequal outcomes. Universities and businesses have begun to recognize this reality. Teacher education programs have added entrance requirements that include commitment statements from candidates revealing their perspectives on social justice, and teacher educators seek to prepare TCs to teach for social justice to combat these inequalities. Additionally, many companies and universities have also begun to emphasize DEI, specifically in their recruitment, interviewing, and hiring practices, culture development, teaching expectations, and work relationships (e.g., About Amazon, 2021; Corporate Responsibility, 2020; Office for Equity and Diversity, 2021; Office of Diversity and Inclusion, 2021; Tisby, 2020).

Social justice and DEI are becoming more mainstream ideas, and for good reason. However, there are varying definitions and emphases in the literature for both, which makes implementation and follow-through difficult for teacher educators, teacher preparation programs, and ultimately the teachers trained by these programs.

Additionally, there is a dearth of research about how SJ and DEI can be infused and the critical role they play in the specific area of literacy education.

Crafting a Definition of SJ and DEI

This section clarifies the definitions of Social Justice (SJ) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) that ground this paper and discussion. The topic of SJ in teacher education is widely written about in the literature. One search for these terms produced over 400,000 results. Topics range from translanguaging, to dispositions, to service learning. While there is clear interest in SJ and how to apply it in education, definitions vary in focus and depth. It is critical to define SJ and DEI, specifically in how they are used in an educational context. DEI has been included as a part of this definition to help shape the idea of social justice in education. Additionally, conceptual frameworks will be identified and applied in crafting a definition of SJ in education useful to this study.

Social Justice

Social justice has a variety of definitions in the literature and many definitions have similar elements. However, there is not one definition that fully encapsulates the term. Many teacher educators understand SJ as a lens used to view students. For example, Belle (2019) focuses on teachers valuing the experiences and knowledge students bring to the classroom as assets rather than the deficit view many teachers develop over time. Deficit thinking "blames students for their shortcomings and can lead to educators believing that such shortcomings are incapable of being changed or supported at school" (Reed, 2020). In contrast, an asset-focused lens echoes Gonzalez et al.'s (2005) concept of the "funds of knowledge." Students enter school with unique cultural experiences and understanding that are assets and can empower them to learn and contribute. It is a

critical piece of SJ that educators view their students as having these assets or "funds of knowledge."

Another definition focuses on individual interactions with students, emphasizing equality and fairness. Alvarez (2019) describes SJ as treating individual students in a way that makes them feel physically and mentally safe. Teachers with an SJ-focus or lens should cultivate class cultures that are mindful of students who depend on the school for food stability and other physical needs such as feminine care, lack of housing, or even lack of sleep, and take an active role in supporting these students. The class culture should provide for mental safety, through a nonjudgmental learning space where mistakes are welcomed, and differing opinions are embraced. Additionally, Alvarez's (2019) definition includes within the social justice concept the equal distribution of resources, which goes beyond providing food for students who are experiencing food instability but suggests redistributing resources in a more equal way.

Noddings (1984), one of the first to center social justice research on care, focuses on the ethics of care and developing deep relationships with students that provide safety and stability. While most of Noddings' work predates recent SJ literature, there are echoes of her work in numerous classrooms. This definition has some similarities to Alvarez's (2019) understanding, but with a few differences. Noddings (1984) suggests that teachers should develop ethical caring as opposed to natural caring. Ethical caring is modeling for students how to care for someone when it is difficult and does not come easily. Natural caring is care that develops naturally, such as a mother-child relationship. By developing this ethic of care, Noddings (1984) suggests that students will begin to build an image of the caring person they want to become. Noddings' vision of SJ in

education focuses on the development of caring people who take care of others, even when it is difficult or unnatural.

Hackman (2005) suggests that SJ in education encourages student responsibility and the "empowering, democratic, and critical educational environment" that teachers create (p. 103). While the previous definition described classroom culture, this definition goes beyond physical and mental safety and envisions an environment that encourages students to take on responsibility for their own education. Learners should be pushed to think critically and question the status quo, to the point of empowerment and liberation. Education can be a liberatory practice when students begin to see the role they can play in society.

Many educational institutions, such as the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development, have developed social justice commitment statements that are focused on systems and define SJ as eliminating institutional barriers and challenging systems that perpetuate racism and oppression in society (Department of Curriculum and Instruction, 2022). These commitment statements are often read or referred to in educational spaces, but how systems are dismantled and institutional barriers eliminated is not defined.

DEI

The term DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) is defined in a more straightforward manner in the literature. The Chief Diversity Officer of the University of Michigan defines DEI this way: "Diversity is where everyone is invited to the party. Equity means that everyone gets to contribute to the playlist. Inclusion means that everyone has the opportunity to dance" (Defining DEI, 2021). Tisby (2020) explains this

concept further, stating, "[i]f diversity focuses on who is present, equity says who has access to a community's resources and on what terms, and inclusion speaks to the sense of welcome and belonging extended to each person or group" (p. 121). Many corporations and institutions of higher learning have taken up this idea of DEI, especially in regard to hiring and teaching practices (e.g., Bowen et al., 2021; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, 2021; Tisby, 2020). For the purposes of this paper, DEI will be seen as an addition and modification to the SJ literature because it helps to define the *who,* the *what,* and the *how* in a socially just classroom.

As stated above, DEI gives further structure to the idea of SJ in education by identifying *who* is centered, *what* is taught, and *how* to teach in a way that promotes social justice for those students. The following describes how DEI will be applied to socially just teaching in this study:

- Diversity: Socially just teachers know that they serve a diverse group of students, and as a socially just educator, this means teaching *all* students, not just those that fit a certain identity or mold. These students can express diversity in many ways, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, language, religious commitments and associations, culture, gender and gender identity, political perspective, and socioeconomic status.
- Equity: Socially just educators work for equity in their classrooms through their pedagogy. Equity in education can take many forms, but for the purpose of this paper, socially just educators seek to find ways for all students to be successful in learning, whether that is by providing additional resources such

as technology or additional texts or finding ways to incorporate home cultures and languages into their instruction.

- Inclusion: Socially just educators commit to creating a classroom culture that is inclusive. Each student should feel like a valued member of the classroom community who can see themselves reflected in the books in the classroom library, curriculum, and class discussions.

The SJ literature, and to some extent the literature focused on DEI, has a myriad of definitions. However, the outcome that is hoped for in each definition is consistent, which is a more just education for all students.

Conceptual Frameworks

A compilation of conceptual frameworks informed and shaped the definition of SJ used in this study. Each framework is described below and will be reflected in the comprehensive definition of SJ crafted to encompass the literature.

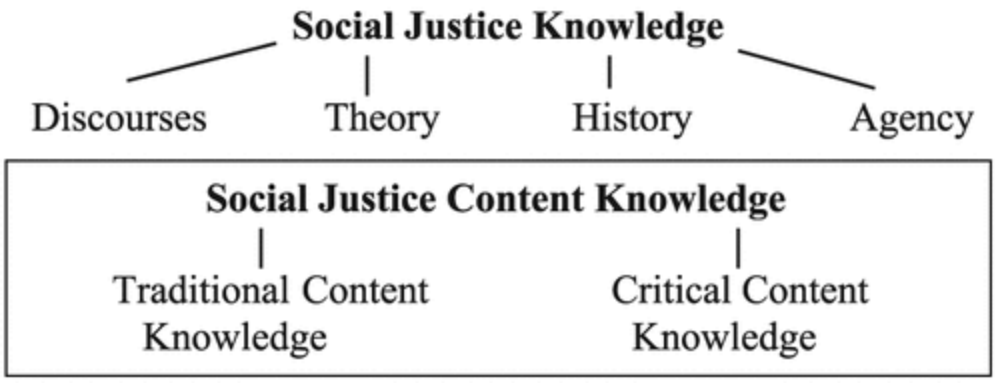
Ecological Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (as cited in Zygmunt & Clark, 2016) ecological framework stated that there are direct and indirect influences on child development. While direct influences such as school, home, or community have a significant impact on child development, indirect influences such as national policy, social issues, and local politics also impact children. Children do not develop in a vacuum, and it is crucial for teachers who are dedicated to social justice to be aware of this in their beliefs about students and in their teaching practices.

Social Justice Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (SJPCK)

Dyches and Boyd's (2017) theoretical framework, Social Justice Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (SJPCK), builds on Gudmundsdottir and Shulman's (1987) Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) framework and profoundly influences this work. Gudmundsdottir and Shulman's theory rests on the idea that teachers must have a specific, professional set of knowledge and skills. In this original framework, content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are separate, but closely related. It also rejects the oversimplification of teaching practices as "condescensions that trivialize and diminish teachers' complex work" (Dyches & Boyd, 2017, p. 476). While this is an important foundation for the preparation of TCs, Dyches and Boyd (2017) posit that PCK fails to identify a significant element, and that is the assumption that teaching practices are never neutral and that teaching should never be isolated from social justice knowledge.

Dyches and Boyd (2017) acknowledge that CPK correctly identifies that "something *happens* when a teacher translates content for student consumption" (p. 479), taking it a step further by suggesting that this is inseparable from a teacher's social justice beliefs. In other words, a teacher's understanding of, as well as their dedication and commitment to, social justice must and should be weaved throughout their teaching because it encompasses discourse, theory, history, and agency in the classroom. Social justice practice should not be separated from content knowledge; rather, it should inform and shape content knowledge and teaching practices.



(Dyches & Boyd, 2017, p. 485)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Finally, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1998), Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2001), and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012) are all helpful frameworks when attending to SJ and DEI practices. Each of these frameworks build on the previous one in order to increase equitable teaching practices in all classrooms. CRP, CRT, and CSP acknowledge the assets that students bring to the classroom such as language, experience, culture, and family values. While CRP and CRT affirm and accept the backgrounds of students and seek to connect students' cultural knowledge and personal experiences to instruction, CSP takes this a step further in viewing schools as places where diverse cultures can be sustained, not just acknowledged (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). These frameworks continue to inform teaching practices and classroom cultures, especially with regard to SJ and DEI practices.

Definition of SJ

For this paper, SJ will be defined as follows: Social justice is a comprehensive approach to teaching that encompasses the pedagogies, dispositions, and relationships of individual teachers. It is a dedication and commitment to teaching all students equitably

and inclusively. Teachers who are committed to social justice recognize and teach students about inequalities but also work to address those inequalities in their own classrooms (Dyches & Boyd, 2017). Socially just educators consistently reflect on and evaluate their own actions and pedagogy to identify which voices are being amplified and which are silenced. Socially just teachers create classrooms where their students can expect stability, care, and deep learning. These teachers know that there are many influences that inform a learner's development (Zygmunt & Clark, 2016) and that each learner brings unique "funds of knowledge" to the classroom, meaning the body of knowledge that is embedded in cultural practices and daily routines and lives of families (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Additionally, socially just educators approach conversations about SJ and DEI issues with understanding, humility, and the ability to listen to others, even if the parties disagree, in order to keep the door open for future conversation (Tisby, 2020). Socially just educators evaluate the culture in their classroom, school, and district to identify and dismantle policies and programs that systematically oppress students. Finally, socially just teaching is an ongoing process for individual teachers that should be aided by professional development and relationships with other educators.

Social Justice in Teacher Education Literature

A review of the general teacher education literature was conducted to examine how TE programs infuse SJ practices in teacher preparation and explore how this has been applied in a literacy education context. The search terms used to conduct the review were "social justice," "teacher education," and "literacy." These terms were combined in various ways to identify works in the literature focusing on social justice in teacher education. The search returned three results with a clear focus on social justice in literacy

education, and those that were related were focused on bilingual education. As a result, I reached out to a current expert, Dr. Mikakka Overstreet, in this area to conduct an interview. She provided two articles (Howard, et al., 2018; Overstreet, 2019) for review, as well. Finally, the book *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy* by Dr. Gholdy Muhammad (2020) was included in this review as Muhammad focuses her work on enacting SJ in a literacy context. This review highlights the necessity for more specific examples of implementation in the general literature, as well as in the more specific area of literacy education.

Social Justice in the General Teacher Education Literature

The general teacher education literature with a focus on SJ that was included in this literature review can be grouped into four categories. The first category examines major influences on SJ-focused teacher education programs. The second category examines the differences in TE program theoretical foundations. The third category examines the need for a unified or shared SJ vision within a TE program. Finally, the fourth category identifies common pedagogical approaches used in a SJ-focused TE program.

Major Influences on SJ Teacher Education

Zeichner (2009) identifies three current reform agendas that have influenced the implementation and integration of SJ teaching practices in TE programs: Professionalism, Deregulation, and Social Justice. It is critical to understand the reform history of TE programs because of the influence various agendas have had on the development and understanding of SJ in education. This "historical amnesia" regarding the development of TE reform movements results in a lack of understanding of the political and theoretical

influences that underlie those movements (Zeichner & Liston, 1990, p. 1). Additionally, all three of these reform movements agree that high quality education is important for a democratic society and teachers should have deep content knowledge; the solutions proposed by the different groups are very different and each one raises important points and leaves out others (Zeichner, 2009).

Professionalization. The first reform agenda, professionalization, began in 1996 and 1997 as a result of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) reports as well as involvement by several organizations such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) (Zeichner, 2009). This wave of reform to professionalize teaching and teacher education emphasized the specialized knowledge and preparation teachers encounter, intending to elevate the profession. This reform movement, although it gained notoriety in the nineties, was based in the social efficiency tradition of reform in teacher education (Liston & Zeichner, 1991). Professionalization has resulted in requirements for performance-based assessment in teacher education for state licensure. There are echoes of Competency/Performance Based Teacher Education of the 1970s, a program that drew a great deal of attention nationally because it was supported by the U.S. Department of Education and was partially developed and informed by behavior psychology used to train personnel in the military during and after World War II (Zeichner & Liston, 1990). Nine specific skills were identified as effective for teachers and were taught and measured accordingly. While the emphasis in this early program was on measurable behavior of teachers, performance-based teacher education assessment has expanded to

include “certain knowledge, dispositions, and performances thought to be necessary for effective teaching” (Zeichner, 2009, p. 8).

While there have been some positive outcomes from the move towards professionalization such as performance-based assessments of teacher candidates, higher standards for university accreditation, higher expectations for content knowledge, and other reforms to elevate the profession, this reform movement has some drawbacks. First, proponents for the professionalization of teaching suggest that inequities in education can be solved by raising standards for teaching and teacher education. Unfortunately, raising or changing standards often results in reforms to end alternative routes to teaching, which has a negative impact on recruitment of teachers of color. Current entrance requirements for teacher education programs focus primarily on academic criteria, such as standardized test scores or GPA, rather than looking at a range of attributes that candidates from diverse backgrounds may bring to teacher education. Additionally, proponents of this movement advocate for the use of teacher education standards which do not always give enough explicit attention to what research says teachers need to know and be able to do to teach diverse students, particularly with regard to culturally responsive teaching (Zeichner, 2009). Without explicit attention to teaching diverse students, teachers prepared in programs influenced by the professionalization agenda may never become aware of the inequities in education and SJ pedagogies to address them.

Deregulation. The deregulation reform agenda draws attention to the importance of teacher subject or content knowledge and is supported by conservative groups such as the Progressive Policy Institute and the Fordham Foundation (Zeichner, 2009). This agenda describes teachers as experts in their content areas, and because of this expert

knowledge, there should be less regulation around what teachers should teach. This agenda is rooted in the academic tradition of the early 20th century, beginning with Flexner's study of teacher education in 1930 (Liston & Zeichner, 1991). Programs influenced by this agenda are more likely to emphasize teacher expertise in content and verbal ability and deemphasize instruction in pedagogy, relying on teachers to learn those skills "on the job" (Zeichner, 2009, p. 13). Proponents for deregulation call for the elimination of state certification as well, emphasizing that to be a good teacher, one only needs to have solid knowledge of content.

Content knowledge is critical for effective teaching; however, expertise in content is not enough to prepare teachers for today's classrooms. There is a body of research which refutes this idea (i.e., Ball, 2000; Grossman, 1990; Hewson, et al., 1999; TeachingWorks, 2021). Additionally, this reform movement also decries multicultural teaching as unnecessary because content knowledge is all that is needed, and proponents of this movement have asserted that TE programs that emphasize social justice-oriented pedagogical strategies such as multicultural education, constructivism, and cooperative learning undermine high academic standards (Zeichner, 2009). The deregulation reform agenda also fails to recognize the importance of pedagogical knowledge, or "how to" teach content, and often advocates for alternative programs and pathways to teaching. These programs are often disconnected from university preparation programs and may not fully prepare teachers for diverse classrooms (Boyd et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 1990; Zeichner, 2009).

In spite of the deregulation agenda, in more recent years, many universities have partnered with local school districts or charter schools to develop alternative programs

and pathways that are steeped in content and pedagogical knowledge known as Grow Your Own (GYO) programs. These partnerships work to recruit current paraprofessionals to pursue a teaching license (Gist et al., 2018; Minnesota Department of Education, 2022a). Universities provide training in pedagogy and content while paraprofessionals continue to work in the district or charter school which provides opportunities to put their training into action. Additionally, GYO programs remove many of the barriers for teachers of color to pursue a teaching license, and their skills and knowledge, particularly "community cultural wealth" which includes social, linguistic, familial, and cultural capital, better equip GYO teachers to teach a diverse student population (Yosso, 2006, p. 78). These programs provide an alternative track to teaching that emphasizes preparation in content and pedagogy.

Social Justice. The social justice reform agenda focuses on preparing teachers to work in culturally and linguistically diverse schools and has been championed by organizations such as the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). This reform movement began with the social reconstructionist tradition which emerged in the 1930s, fueled by an economic recession and social unrest across the country. This tradition focused on planning for a reconstruction of U.S. society where "there would be a more just and equitable distribution of the nation's wealth and where the 'common good' would take precedence over individual gain" (Zeichner & Liston, 1990).

Proponents of the social justice reform agenda emphasize the research showing what teachers need to be able to do as SJ educators such as incorporating aspects of students' experiences and abilities into the class to enhance student learning and viewing

students as coming to school with resources for learning rather than problems to overcome (Zeichner, 2009). There has also been a deliberate effort in this agenda to recruit, prepare, and retain more teachers of color.

While programs influenced by this movement have made important contributions to shifting the knowledge and dispositions that should be cultivated for a more socially just teaching force, it does have limitations that have weakened its overall impact (Zeichner, 2009). The first problem is that this agenda has been primarily focused on individual teacher educators and individual classrooms rather than on broader structural change, such as admission policies and other institutional structures. Another limitation of this movement is the lack of experience faculty teaching in the program have with diverse learners. This reform movement can be too narrowly focused on transforming white, monolingual, female teachers to teach students of color rather than how to teach all students (Zeichner, 2009). Finally, this reform movement often influences programs to focus less on preparing teacher candidates to have strong content area knowledge.

Summary and Analysis of Reform Movements. Each of these reform movements identifies significant issues with teacher preparation and attempts to provide solutions, but each movement is not sufficient on its own. The professionalization reform movement intends to elevate the teaching profession and provide more credibility to teachers through performance-based assessments, high expectations of teachers, and rigorous requirements for accreditation of teacher education programs. Unfortunately, this reform movement addresses issues of inequity and injustice by raising admission requirements and deleting alternative track programs which discourage teachers of color from pursuing a career in education.

The deregulation reform movement, firmly rooted in the academic tradition, emphasizes the expertise of teachers in content areas. This movement also calls for less regulation for teacher certification and more opportunities for alternative pathways to teaching, which could be helpful in recruiting, preparing, and retaining teachers of color. However, this movement tends not to value pedagogy when preparing teachers. It also does not value the pursuit of social justice in education through multicultural education, theories such as constructivism or social learning. Finally, this movement posits that TE programs that do emphasize these ideas are opposed to high standards for content knowledge.

The social justice reform movement, on the other hand, highly values attention toward injustice and inequity and preparing teachers to teach diverse learners. Research in this movement has focused on dispositions and knowledge that socially just teachers possess. Unfortunately, this movement has been limited to individual teacher educators and classrooms rather than impacting overall program change. The social justice reform movement has impacted teacher educators, and while there is still room for program change, many have worked to revise the theoretical foundation grounding their work in teacher preparation.

Theoretical Foundations

In addition to the influence of the agendas described above, teacher educators use various theoretical foundations to guide their programming. Zeichner (2009) identifies three broad categories of SJ theory that teacher educators use to create the foundational ideas that ground their programs: 1) distributive theories (e.g., Rawls, 2001); 2) recognition theories (e.g., Young, 1990); and 3) theories that attempt to pay attention to

both. The theories within these three categories influence the emphasis of a teacher education program and how socially just teaching is framed.

Programs with a foundation in distributive theory teach that material goods and services should be redistributed equitably and relate this to redistributing educational resources more equitably, often relying on policy changes as a solution (Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015). For example, school districts may reorganize or change school lines to better distribute resources such as the Comprehensive District Design (CDD) in Minneapolis (Fesher, 2020). Another example of this theoretical view is evidenced in departmental SJ commitment statements that define social justice as identifying and dismantling systems of oppression (Commitment Statement, 2022).

A foundation in recognition theories focuses on identifying the social relations and inequities between individuals and groups, often without identifying specific solutions to these inequities (Zeichner, 2009). For example, in some introductory level classes, TCs will be exposed to current issues of injustice in education, such as the effect of redlining in systematically segregating areas of a city, but the class often stops with identifying the issue. In some teacher preparation programs, the solution is that the current system needs to be dismantled and replaced by "reformers" (Zeichner et al., 2015, p. 122), meaning educators who consistently work to change the system. TCs prepared by teacher educators who take up this view often feel overly prepared to identify instances of inequality but less prepared to address them in a practical way.

Programs that use both distributive and recognition theories as the foundation for teacher education curricula attempt to teach that both foci are part of SJ. These programs often advocate for policy changes as one way to address educational inequities, as well as

a more individual identification and acknowledgment of systemic inequities. Zeichner et al. (2015) refer to this foundation as the "transformers" (p. 122). One potential problem with this foundation is that teacher candidates may see themselves as "world changers" and mistakenly put themselves in the position of a "savior" to the less fortunate.

Summary and Analysis of Theoretical Foundations

The literature indicates that teacher educators often ground their work in one of three ways: redistributive, recognition, or a combination of both. However, it should be noted that even when teacher educators use both of these foundational perspectives to shape preparation programs, they still have not addressed the tendency to cast teachers as the saviors of the less fortunate. This can become a significant issue because teachers with this mindset will often approach students from a deficit perspective, thinking that they are problems to overcome or that they need to be saved, rather than recognizing all the strengths and assets students bring to the classroom which facilitate learning.

Unified Approach and Clear Vision for Socially Just Teacher Candidates

Recent research findings indicate that social justice-focused teacher educators should identify a clear outcome for program graduates, addressing the question: What should graduates be able to do when they complete the program? According to a meta-analysis conducted by Mills and Ballantyne (2016), teacher education programs must have a unified theoretical framework and pedagogical approach, or TCs that graduate from these programs will be unprepared to teach for social justice as a result. This can be due to two factors: varying degrees of understanding and commitment to social justice by TCs leaving a program, and the siloed approach of teaching social justice within a teacher

education program. These factors will be explained further in the following section and point to the need for a unified approach to social justice teaching.

Mills and Ballantyne (2016) found that the understanding of social justice and attitudes to diversity varied widely among TCs. Without a consistent, committed approach to how social justice is defined and taken up by teacher educators across a TE program, TCs will be more likely to leave the program without a solid foundation in, and commitment to, these ideas. Mills and Ballantyne (2016) found that teacher educators were able to influence the beliefs of TCs about social justice, generally in a positive way. While it is difficult to change TC beliefs, their conceptions of social justice appear to be changeable over time with support from teacher educators. A unified definition and approach by teacher educators can help future teachers understand and appreciate diversity in their classrooms and begin to value teaching for equity and inclusion.

Researchers note that merely teaching SJ issues is not enough—it is how these ideas are taught that matters. For example, Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) and Mills and Ballantyne (2016) state that social justice should be woven throughout the entire program rather than being taught in isolation or in one or two introductory level classes. Social justice concepts and practices are more effective when integrated throughout a teacher education program rather than being restricted to a stand-alone class on the subject (Zeichner, 2009). This is because when SJ is taught in one or two classes, TCs often struggle to know how to integrate SJ into content areas or their general educational philosophy. Additionally, the importance of SJ is undermined.

Zeichner (2009) also noted that the faculty in a teacher education program should be diverse and should have experience in diverse classrooms so they can model and

embody the social justice beliefs and equitable practices they espouse in every class. A significant impediment to this goal is the fact that many faculty lack experience in diverse classrooms, which impacts their ability to model and share experiences with their TCs. TCs learn more about SJ concepts and practices when teacher educators exemplify and model them (Zeichner, 2009).

Researchers have identified characteristics of SJ teachers, as well as noted program characteristics. Specifically, in a review of the literature, Whipp (2013) identified seven characteristics of socially just teachers:

- [they] hold high academic and behavioral expectations for all in a rigorous curriculum;
- create classroom climates that are warm and demanding;
- affirm and sustain their students' cultural backgrounds by drawing from their 'funds of knowledge' (languages, histories, cultural practices);
- connect with their students' families and communities;
- advocate for curricular and policy changes that promote more equitable educational opportunities;
- help students identify and critique historical and contemporary examples of injustice; and
- empower students to actively work toward social change. (p. 455)

These characteristics were found to be key because these socially just teachers not only hold high expectations academically but also know that learning encompasses the whole person. These characteristics embody the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are necessary for effective teaching while weaving in socially just approaches.

In addition, coherent, social justice-minded programs are characterized as having a clear theoretical understanding and a clear vision for graduates, and these programs will be more likely to result in producing teacher mindsets that are oriented towards structural and individual social justice. Teacher educators can promote these mindsets by including all teacher educators in a common vision around social justice and by providing ongoing support (Whipp, 2013).

Social-Justice Oriented Program Curricula. In the introduction of their research article, Zygmunt and Clark (2016) noted that teacher education programs are failing students, both university students and school-age students, because they are not fully preparing TCs to teach in diverse classrooms. However, with a focus on the "omnipresent trinity" of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, Zygmunt and Clark (2016, p. 2) argue that programs can improve. Other researchers also advocate for a holistic, practice-based approach for programs designed to prepare TCs in these three areas (e.g., Hollins, 2011; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; TeachingWorks, 2021; Whipp, 2013; Zeichner et al., 2015). In theory, the development of TCs' knowledge, skills, and dispositions should lead to more socially just teachers in the field. The sections below describe further each of these three aspects of program design.

Knowledge. Effective, socially just teachers must have a solid knowledge base in content, theory, and human development in order to teach in a more equitable and inclusive way. While this knowledge is ever-growing, Hollins (2011) identifies six essential concepts teachers should understand:

> (a) knowledge of human growth and development and individual and group differences that when combined with specific knowledge of particular learners—

such as their background experiences, what they know and how they make sense of what they know, and what they value, how and why—inform the design of learning experiences and the specific ways in which learning is facilitated;

(b) deep understanding of the learning process that combines findings from the new learning sciences with a clearly delineated theoretical perspective on learning as a framework for classroom practices and the assessment of learning;

(c) deep understanding of the organizing ideas for a discipline; domain-specific reasoning and practices; the process for participating in a disciplinary-based discourse community; and how to connect disciplinary knowledge and practices to the everyday experiences of learners from diverse cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds;

(d) an understanding of pedagogy as a clearly designed and interrelated pattern of learning experiences embedded within a particular theoretical perspective and guided by a clearly articulated philosophical stance that provides vision and purpose for long- and short-term learning outcomes;

(e) an understanding of how to identify and develop appropriate classroom assessment approaches for evaluating learners' progress in relationship to discipline-specific knowledge and practice and how to manage the demands of standards-based curriculum and assessment; and

(f) an ability to maintain a strong professional identity, engage in self-directed professional growth and development, recognize characteristics and qualities of professional communities in different contexts, and work collaboratively with colleagues within a professional community to improve learning outcomes. (p.

397)

In addition to this essential conceptual knowledge, researchers at TeachingWorks (2021) emphasize the importance of "subject-specific teacher training" (High-Leverage Content). In other words, teachers need to have a deep knowledge of the content they are teaching and have knowledge of how to unpack concepts and teach these to K-12 students. Using the Common Core State Standards as a foundation for this work, TeachingWorks (2021) prioritizes content that is foundational for students and is relevant across grade levels. For example, TeachingWorks focuses on four select disciplinary practices in English language arts: 1) understand the basic architecture of language, 2) interpret and analyze literary texts, 3) critically evaluate texts, and 4) leverage the conventions of academic English. Thus, to foster student learning, teachers need specialized understanding of specific content, such as phonemic awareness, in order to develop the skills necessary for decoding. In addition, teachers need knowledge about the reading process and how children learn to read in order to help students develop as competent readers.

Skills. Researchers have found that successful teacher educators develop pedagogical skills in their TCs. Hollins (2011) suggests using focused inquiry and directed observation to allow TCs to learn these pedagogies. She also suggests giving TCs opportunities to experiment with a sequence of learning experiences: "planning, enacting, interpreting, translating, planning, and (re)-enacting" (p. 404).

Ball and Forzani (2009) suggest that the work of teaching is rooted in deconstructing knowledge and considering how to support learners in building their own knowledge. They suggest that skillful teaching "requires appropriately using and

integrating specific moves and activities in particular cases and contexts, based on knowledge and understanding of one's pupils and on the application of professional judgement" (p. 498). Based on this research, TeachingWorks (2021) has developed sixteen high leverage practices that TCs should learn and develop:

- leading a discussion
- explaining and modeling content
- eliciting and interpreting
- diagnosing patterns of student thinking
- implementing norms and routines for classroom discourse
- coordinating and adjusting instruction
- establishing and maintaining community expectations
- implementing organizational routines
- setting up and managing small group work
- building respectful relationships
- communicating with families
- learning about students
- interpreting student work
- providing feedback to students
- analyzing instruction
- checking understanding during and at the conclusion of lessons (TeachingWorks, 2021, High-Leverage Practices).

These high-leverage practices are "used constantly and are critical to helping students learn important content… [and] are also central to supporting students' social and emotional development" (TeachingWorks, 2021, High-Leverage Practices).

Dispositions. Dispositions are defined as the beliefs and attitudes that TCs possess which have proved difficult for teacher educators to teach (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). According to Zygmunt and Clark, (2016) some researchers do not believe it is possible to teach dispositions—either a teacher candidate has them or they do not. Other scholars use a more constructivist approach to dispositions. Villegas and Lucas (2002) and TeachingWorks (2021) fall into the constructivist group, and TeachingWorks even has a slogan to that effect: "Great teachers aren't born. They're taught" (para. 2). Other researchers with this constructivist approach, such as Hollins (2011), have identified specific dispositions TCs should learn and develop: the ability to collaborate, engage in coherent communication, and consistency in actions.

Other researchers have identified other specific dispositions. The University of Minnesota—like many teacher education programs—has a tool for measuring and promoting disposition development and it reflects the constructivist approach to dispositions. *The Minnesota Educator Dispositions System* (2017), based on the work of a research group at the University of Minnesota, identifies eight dispositions that are critical for TCs: assets, role of self, collaboration and communication, critical care, intentional professional choices, navigation, flexibility and adaptability, imagination and innovation, and advocacy. The emphasis on these dispositions intends to move TCs towards a more socially just teaching framework by leading to better coaching

conversations between TCs, their classroom teacher mentors, and teacher educators who supervise TCs.

Programs with a social justice focus should be wary of the development of contempt that may occur within their graduates (Tisby, 2020). When TCs leave a program with a focus on SJ and changed views on DEI, particularly with respect to race and racism, there is often an attitude of superiority and "wokeness" that they bring to K-12 school buildings. These new teachers look at older teachers—who are not yet aware of, or do not yet address, the equity issues that exist in their classrooms, and the greater community—with contempt. Forms of contempt can include "sarcasm, cynicism, name-calling, eye-rolling, mockery, and belligerence" (Tisby, 2020, p. 182). Contempt not only closes down the opportunity for young teachers to have conversations with older teachers around SJ and DEI issues, but it can "dehumanize other people and cause us to replicate the hate we wish to eradicate" (p. 183).

For these reasons, teacher educators should seek to cultivate an attitude of humility in their TCs. All people have shortcomings and blind spots, no matter their race, age, sexual orientation, or other differences. Without humility, it is nearly impossible to consider one's own limitations and fallibility. "Humility allows new information to correct old ideas . . . and forces us to descend from our lofty perches of self-justification to consider how our action or inaction can contribute to racism" (Tisby, 2020, p. 185).

Pedagogical Approaches for Integrating Social Justice

In the following section, I will build on the idea of a constructivist approach to social justice and identify several successful strategies for integrating social justice into teacher education, many of which focus on immersing TCs in the community. The first

strategies emphasize the need for TCs to be immersed in the local communities where schools are located; these experiences then serve as the foundation for most of the other strategies. Later strategies focus on developing a holistic and practice-based program and have a global focus whereas other strategies have a more localized focus, such as the importance of a peer community and reflective practices.

Engaging in Community. Researchers have found that engaging TCs in the community, or local schools, is very effective in preparing socially just teachers (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015). Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) suggest that while prior research has been concerned with preparing a teaching force that is capable of creating equitable educational experiences for all students, it is crucial that TE education programs help "white, monolingual teaching candidates develop critical awareness of the privilege they derive from their membership in racially, ethnically, and linguistically dominant groups" (p. 115). For students to derive this critical awareness, they must have extended experiences in diverse communities that are deeply related or embedded within their coursework. This allows TCs to "interact with children outside of the tightly structured academic tasks that prevail in schools [and] give candidates more access to children's strengths and potential than school fieldwork does" (p. 116).

Community members, especially K-12 personnel, should be involved in teaching TCs, and TE programs should value the experience these community members possess (Zeichner et al., 2015). Zeichner et al. (2015) describe a current effort to transform teacher education by addressing the issue of *whose knowledge counts* in the education of teachers. The researchers identify horizontal expertise and what they call "knotworking."

In horizontal expertise, each professional involved in teacher education brings unique knowledge and understanding, and all knowledge is equally valuable and relevant. There is no hierarchy of knowledge. Community members' knowledge is valued equally with university professors' knowledge. In this way, there is a community effort to problem solve and prepare TCs. Zeichner et al. (2015) suggest the use of "knotworking": collaboration across university, school, and community systems and a need for better partnerships between these systems (p. 126). Just as a knot pulls threads together into something that is tight and connected, "knotworking" pulls all the community, university, and school learning together for TCs (Zeichner et al., 2015, p. 126).

There is room for critique of this view. While community members, such as K-12 educators, paraprofessionals, and administrators, bring significant and valuable experiences to share with TCs, these experiences are not necessarily steeped in the latest research in teaching. Teacher educators, on the other hand, are consistently reading and studying research-based, effective pedagogies. However, what community experts have that teacher educators often lack is the experience in diverse classroom settings. These are different types of knowledge, and while each are valuable, they do play different roles in preparing teacher candidates.

Similarly, Zygmunt and Clark (2016) advocate for intentional engagement of community wisdom and expertise in the education of new teachers. Calling this approach "situated learning" in a "community of practice" (p. 9), the authors detail a theoretical context that is community-engaged and inclusively collaborative. TCs are positioned within a community context where "clinical experience and community engagement, combined with integrated content… challenge candidates to think about issues in ways

that have not before occurred to them (p. 31). Boyd et al., (2009) describe this as a community of practice, "characterized by mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire among its participants" (p. 15). An example of how this theoretical context plays out would be a course on reading instruction that meets in a local school and integrates classroom learning with practicum experiences. TCs would plan literacy lessons and instruct primary and intermediate readers, all while being immersed in the school community. These ideas lead to the need for carefully designed practica or field-based experiences for TCs in school contexts, as detailed below.

Holistic and Practice-Based. Researchers have demonstrated that holistic, practice-based teacher education programs enable TCs to make the connection between their coursework and actual practice (Hollins, 2011; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Whipp, 2013; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015). Education and the needs of students are constantly changing, and this connection is critical to meeting those student needs. Teacher educators should scaffold experiences and coursework to help TCs see the connection between the knowledge they learn, how to put it into practice, and how students respond—shaping future lessons. While attending to this model does not mean universities should throw everything away and start over, it does require a shift in "how we think about whose expertise should contribute to and who should be responsible for the education of professional teachers for public schools" (Zeichner et al., 2015, p. 132). TE programs should embrace the knowledge of community members and their expertise, specifically in teaching diverse learners and creating classroom community. Community engagement, field experiences, and service learning are very effective in helping TCs

reconsider their ideas and beliefs about social justice, as well as shaping their knowledge and practical skills (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zeichner, 2009).

Community of Peers. As was mentioned previously, it is challenging to change and develop TCs beliefs and dispositions, particularly around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Researchers find that it is very difficult for TCs to transfer ideas around DEI and SJ that are learned in their preparation programs because those views often run counter to standard school practices (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). However, these scholars found that if learning to teach is seen as a "social and collaborative endeavor that occurs in a community of peers, which involves learning from and with others by exchanging ideas, articulating the reasoning behind instructional decisions, engaging in inquiry aimed at solving specific problems of practice, and reflecting on one's teaching to improve student learning," TCs were more likely to take up those SJ practices when they got to the field (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015, p. 111). What this tells us is that teacher educators need to design their programs to include opportunities for TCs to discuss, debrief, and deconstruct their experiences with a group of peers but in structured ways that allow effective learning on the part of TCs.

Reflective Opportunities. While TCs engage in community and field experiences, they should also be given opportunities to reexamine and reflect on their own identities, experiences, biases, and beliefs. Izadinia (2013) suggests that research on reflective practices used in teacher education, specifically looking at values, beliefs, teaching practices, and experiences, help to shape TCs' professional, teaching identities. Zeichner (2009) recommends that TCs write an autobiography as part of their reflective activities, allowing them to analyze their own educational backgrounds and how those

impact their beliefs about teaching. Research indicates that reflective activities in teacher education bring about positive changes in TCs, particularly in their "self-knowledge, cognitive and emotional selves, sense of agency, voice, confidence as a teacher and self-dependency" (Izadinia, 2013, p. 700). These reflections allow TCs the space to develop a sociocultural consciousness (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Through these reflections, TCs can wrestle with the dissonance and disequilibrium of how their own educational and personal experiences have shaped their teaching beliefs and practices leading to a more socially just teaching identity. However, merely asking TCs to reflect following class activities is not enough, especially if used in a haphazard manner. Teacher educators should implement reflections with intention, asking specific questions that support TCs in considering how their understanding and beliefs are changing and how their own experiences have influenced their current beliefs

Other strategies. In tandem with reflective opportunities, TCs should be exposed to new ideas about SJ in a myriad of ways. Facilitating class discussions, providing thought-provoking readings, and reviewing and analyzing case studies and films have all been found to produce positive results (Zeichner, 2009). Another potential strategy is to allow or require TCs to conduct action research to delve into prevailing SJ concepts and practices (Zeichner, 2009). When implemented with intention, TCs are able to examine classrooms for ways in which SJ is or is not being infused in the classroom. However, if this is done in a haphazard manner, the desired learning will likely not occur.

As has been stated throughout this paper, the literature on social justice in teacher education programs often makes the point that it is difficult to help students make the transition from a theoretical understanding of SJ to practical implementation of socially

just practices. This is true in the general sense but is also true when focusing on discipline-specific teaching. The following section examines the existing literature on integrating social justice theory and pedagogies into developmental literacy content classes.

Social Justice in Literacy Education

Teacher educators must provide TCs with the support that is needed to transition from a theoretical understanding of SJ and DEI to a more pragmatic one, especially in domain-specific classes. In other words, teacher educators must help TCs answer the question, "How can I teach this content in a way that promotes social justice and values diversity, equity, and inclusion while also preparing future teachers to teach the discipline well?" The following section examines two approaches to infusing DEI/SJ practices into literacy education classes.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Literacy Methods

Overstreet (2019) and Howard et al. (2018) provide specific ways teacher educators can infuse SJ and DEI practices into their literacy methods instruction. In a personal interview, M. Overstreet (personal communication, March 4, 2021) described her conceptual framework as highly influenced by Vygotsky and Piaget. As a result, her teaching is highly social, and she relies on TC learning communities to challenge future teachers' thinking. She also stated that she sees cultural responsiveness as a spectrum rather than an all-or-nothing accomplishment. Her goal for her TCs is to "move the needle" towards cultural responsiveness (M. Overstreet, personal communication, March 4, 2021). The following sections will detail ways in which Overstreet achieves this in her classroom.

Explicit Modeling. Overstreet's article (2019) conveys the importance of modeling Culturally Responsive Pedagogies for students (see also Howard et al., 2018). In her classes, she has TCs move between the roles of college student, teacher, and K-2 student. Using this strategy, Overstreet models specific strategies, such as choices she makes as the teacher when creating groups or implementing class routines. She can think aloud about the metacognitive choices she is making as a teacher, so that the TCs in her class can "see" her thinking process and how she is using Culturally Responsive Pedagogies. For example, she may describe how she groups students or how she builds upon cultural knowledge of students in her classroom. She provides other simulations in which TCs engage as children, then she debriefs with them, reflecting on her practices and expounding upon her teaching choices.

Overstreet (2019) also models how to establish classroom community. One way she infuses SJ and DEI into her literacy instruction is by asking TCs to share "things they wish I knew" about them (p. 13). This introductory activity allows TCs to choose parts of their identities to reveal in non-threatening ways, acknowledging that TCs' thoughts and feelings are highly valued, and models one specific way TCs can show their future students that their identities and experiences are valued. This is an important move towards socially just teaching because it emphasizes cultivating deep relationships with students so that they know they have value and are cared for (Noddings, 1984) and bring their own "funds of knowledge" which refers to the body of knowledge that is embedded in cultural practices and daily routines and lives of families (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Most TCs are aware of the importance of getting to know their K-12 students, but Overstreet provides explicit strategies to do so. Overstreet (2019) provides other opportunities to

explicitly model connecting with TCs throughout the semester, such as using exit slips to collect ideas, feedback, and need for support. Knowledge about explicit modeling can then be taken by TCs and used within K-12 classrooms

Culture as the Curriculum. For Overstreet (2019), privileging culture as curriculum is as "integral to teaching reading as phonemes and sight words" (p. 10). By this she means that it is not possible to add culturally responsive pedagogy as another thing to teach. Rather, she models for TCs how to infuse CRP and SJPCK (Social Justice Pedagogical and Content Knowledge) into literacy instruction. She does this during university class sessions by working to make explicit connections between TCs' identities and literacy, use teachable moments to provide TCs with dissonance around justice and equity issues, and disrupt deficit thinking through counter-narratives.

In addition, Overstreet has carefully considered Bishop's (1990) theory of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors. What Bishop is referring to in this theory is that children need books that act as mirrors so that they can see themselves reflected in the content. Children also need books that act as windows and allow them to see into another person's world. Finally, Bishop discusses the need for books that act as sliding glass doors which allow the reader to take part in someone else's experience. Overstreet (2019) notes that it is not enough to just have diverse books available in the classroom library to develop literacy. For example, teachers who are committed to social justice should intentionally use diverse texts as read-alouds and draw upon them to address phonological awareness and phonics content. Overstreet (2019) argues that diverse texts can be used to teach required content, and she uses them to model for her TCs how teachers can approach socially conscious conversations, with students and with parents or

administrators (M. Overstreet, personal communication, March 4, 2021). For example, if a teacher uses a read aloud book that portrays a same-sex family to teach a phonics lesson, not only does that book have a clear content connection, but it also provides a mirror for a student in the class that may come from a family with two moms. This shows a clear link to content while also working towards inclusion for all students.

Another way Overstreet infuses SJ concepts within her literacy class is when teaching TCs about emergent literacy. Specifically, Overstreet (2019) continues to emphasize to her students that texts are not neutral. While emergent texts are often written more for readability and provide a space to teach specific skills, these texts are also not neutral and often do not provide mirrors and windows for all students. For example, a decodable text focusing on the word "big" might have pictures of dinosaurs or an ocean, but these pictures do not necessarily represent the experiences of K-2 students. Overstreet (2019) models for TCs ways to provide those mirrors and windows for students by including more diverse ways to think about the topic in the book and shared writing ideas that are authentic and connected to learners' lives. In the example from above, Overstreet suggests adding pictures from the local community of "big" things such as a building or a garbage truck. In this way, K-2 students can see their world reflected in the decodable text.

Literacy content is also presented to TCs by Overstreet in a way that emphasizes equity. According to Overstreet (personal communication, March 4, 2021) a developmental approach to literacy is used as a framework for coursework because of its equitable focus and because it does not focus on children being a certain age or having certain experiences to show they are literate at a particular grade level. Instead,

Overstreet's approach is focused on the skills and experiences children do have, hearkening back to the asset-thinking associated with CRP, rather than on the skills children do not yet have. By approaching literacy with an asset-based, developmental lens, students can receive the instruction they need based on what they are able to do. Developmental literacy also gives teachers the freedom and flexibility to use diverse texts, teaching strategies, and provide the instruction and support that every child needs, based on their stage of development rather than relying on scripted curriculum or basal readers that only consider age or grade level. While teaching literacy from a developmental lens is not necessarily a new approach, a slight shift in thinking about how developmental literacy focuses on assets is a way of thinking about and teaching literacy to K-12 students from a SJ framework.

Disruption of Deficit Thinking. Teacher educators must ask TCs to deconstruct their learning and think about how it impacts their teaching because it is not enough to simply present information with the hope of that information impacting the learner. This can be done by providing multiple narratives to problematize traditional thinking. For example, Howard et al. (2018) discuss the use of facilitative texts to scaffold affirming and accurate language. A facilitative text promotes the use of inclusive language by reading the text and hearing the language used by the characters or from the perspective of groups being represented. These facilitative texts build TCs' capacity for culturally relevant instruction by modeling how to scaffold language about topics of diversity.

Overstreet (2019) describes one of the readings she uses with her class and how she helps direct their reflection. The reading focuses on twelve commonly held beliefs about diverse and/or economically disadvantaged families' literacy practices and counters

them with stories collected over the years that offer more than just a single narrative (Compton-Lilly, 2002). After reading the article, TCs participate in a writing exercise called “ink sheddings” which includes writing a personal reflection guided by intentional prompts as part of their homework, sharing with a small group to “see” into the minds of classmates during class, and finally a whole class sharing and discussion (Overstreet, personal communication, March 4, 2021). Overstreet described another writing technique using index cards. Students write down questions while reading to bring to class. During class, students share their questions in small groups and decide on the most important questions. They then trade questions with another group and attempt to answer the other group’s questions. Finally, they share out with the whole group. Both of these reflection techniques allow students to work in and be challenged by a community of peers, which is often more effective than having the teacher in the front of the room tell students something (Overstreet, personal communication, March 4, 2021). As was mentioned in a previous section, these techniques are not necessarily new, but the intention is to shift the focus from self to a more collaborative focus, a technique that has been identified by other researchers as effective in helping TCs reevaluate their previously held beliefs and showing how it can be applied in a discipline-specific course (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

Finally, Overstreet (personal communication, March 4, 2021) suggests reflective questions that can be used with lesson plans to help TCs examine their pedagogy and their thoughtfulness about SJ issues as they plan and enact lessons. Questions such as “What did you notice? What perspectives, that differ from your own, are reflected in this lesson? How are you building on your students’ strengths?” are used to direct reflection

(Overstreet, personal communication, March 4, 2021). These reflective questions also connect to critical literacy practices and theories (e.g., Freire, 2000; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993).

Historically Responsive Literacy (HRL)

Dr. Gholdy Muhammad, a professor and former middle school educator, espouses key ideas for how to embed SJ and DEI components into literacy teacher education and educational contexts. In her book, *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy* (2020), Muhammad's "Historically Responsive Literacy" framework identifies four pursuits: identity, skill development, intellectual development, and criticality. Muhammad states that these four components are key for TCs learning because they consider the holistic development of K-12 students, whereas standards primarily focus on skill development. Muhammad believes that if TCs incorporate these four pursuits into literacy lesson plans, they have the opportunity to bring equity into the teaching of literacy by grounding literacy in history and restoring excellence in education. By this, Muhammad means that this framework "allows for a practical model based on culturally relevant and responsive theories of education … one that helps youth develop both personally and academically" (p. 11). Through this work, she is making explicit connections between theory and practice in literacy contexts.

Muhammad's (2020) research begins with Black literacy societies. She studies the practices, genius, and "transformative acts" of reading and writing that refine and advance individuals and society from the perspective of Black people that were a part of these societies. She posits that history "tells us that educators don't need to empower

youth or give them the brilliance or genius. Instead, the power and genius is already within them" (p. 13). For Mohammad, it is crucial that educators cultivate this genius in students of color, rather than seeing them through a deficit lens.

Muhammad's (2020) first pursuit, identity, encourages students to explore their own identity and the identities of others. Identity is constantly being changed and revised, an idea explored by many theorists and where Muhammad's work on identity is situated (e.g., Gee & Crawford, 1998; McCarthey & Moje, 2002; Street, 1994; Sutherland, 2005). Muhammad noted that "[i]dentity is fluid, multilayered, and relational, and is also shaped by the social and cultural environment as well as by literacy practices" (Muhammad, 2020, p. 67). Children should have space in school to make sense of who they are, as well as who they are not. Not only should students have the opportunity to explore their identities, they should also see themselves in the curriculum. Teachers should ask themselves, "[h]ow will this lesson/unit plan help my students to learn something about themselves or others?" (p. 78).

The second pursuit, skills, acknowledges that while literacy is more than just skills, it is important for students to develop skills such as comprehension, fluency, or writing mechanics. Rather than teaching skills in isolation, which is not only demotivating for many students but often does not result in skill transfer, Muhammad suggests teaching skills in a more authentic way. For example, she suggests having students write literacy autobiographies. In this way, teachers can better understand students' experiences with literacy and students have an opportunity to work on the skill of writing informational text. Meaningful learning experiences "engage the mind and heart and help shape positive school histories" (Muhammad, 2020, p. 98). An additional

example is from a lesson designed to address the standard "determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text" (p. 98). Muhammad suggests using *The Negro Motorist Green Book: 1948* as the main text for the lesson, a book published as a travel guide for Black motorists to provide hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and other services that were safe for African American travelers during the height of Jim Crow laws (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, 1948). Students would consider their identity as travelers (Identity) and investigate the history of the Green Book (Intellect), while considering the ways in which travel could be dangerous for African Americans in the 1940s and 1950s (Criticality). All these pursuits combine to make the development of a literacy skill, determining a central idea, more authentic and meaningful.

The pursuit of intellect moves beyond skill development to "developing [students'] mental culture" (Muhammad, 2020, p. 105). Intellectualism helps students learn to navigate society, think more deeply about justice issues, apply their learning in authentic ways, and develop their emotional intelligence and self-awareness. One of Muhmmad's suggestions for cultivating intellect is designing lessons and unit plans that connect to the human condition or various problems that are affecting communities. Students can begin to rethink the way the world and society works around them and ways to change it.

Finally, the pursuit of criticality pushes teachers and students to ask themselves, "What does it mean to be human? What is personal responsibility in the face of human violence and oppression? What do humanizing practices look like in and outside of the

classroom?" (Muhammad, 2020, p. 118). Pursuing the cultivation of criticality helps students to avoid being passive consumers of information. It allows students to see the world through a critical lens which will help them make decisions in the future that have a positive effect on themselves and their communities. Muhammad has several suggestions for cultivating criticality such as critical literacy and interrogation of the media. By this, Muhammad recommends lessons where students critically engage with the messages of various media and how those messages have ingrained ideas of marginalization of particular groups of people.

Muhammad (2020) also suggests selecting texts that will cultivate genius in students. Using layered texts, or multiple texts from different viewpoints that are both print and nonprint, ensures that multiple viewpoints are represented. These texts can include primary sources, multimodal and digital texts, videos, or other media and can be used to support the required curriculum or textbook. This not only increases motivation for students, but it also avoids the tendency towards single narratives. Muhammad asks her TCs to engage in "Defend the Text" exercises in which TCs must intentionally select texts to support their instruction for diverse learners and should be able to defend their choices as they prepare to head into the field. "Texts should incite new language, learning, and ways of thinking of the content" rather than being watered down or simplified for the sole purpose of passing a state-mandated assessment (Muhammad, 2020, p. 152).

By using the Historically Responsive Literacy framework, Muhammad prepares her TCs to write lessons that are equitable by centering students' identities, cultures, intellects, and interests at the core of unit and lesson plan design. Rather than viewing

students through a deficit lens, the HRL Framework pushes teachers to view all students through the lens of cultivating genius. Incorporating the four pursuits into units and lessons centers students in the classroom and can decenter the teacher, whiteness, and other oppressive practices that often occur in a classroom where teachers are not taking intentional steps toward equity and inclusion. This is, of course, infusing social justice into content. Students are learning and developing the necessary skills for literacy while also deepening their knowledge of themselves and the world around them.

Comparison of SJ and DEI Literature and Discipline-Specific Infusion of SJ/DEI

There are many similarities between the social justice literature and the literature focused on infusing SJ and DEI practices into literacy-specific classes. TCs' learning in a community of peers, explicit modeling by teacher educators, and TCs' reflective practice are discussed in the general literature as effective strategies for infusing SJ and DEI into teacher education classes. Literacy experts mention these approaches, as well. While preparation of TCs is similar between these areas of scholarship, the implementation is more specific in the literacy-focused work.

For example, Overstreet's (2019) discussion of learning in a community of peers explicitly describes ways in which TCs work in small groups focusing on literacy learning. The general literature on SJ posits that utilizing a community of peers for discussion is an effective strategy in preparing socially just educators, but the general literature does not often discuss classroom implementation. The suggestions are often general, such as having TCs discuss current issues in education or discuss what they are learning in a practicum. Overstreet (2019), rather, counsels that teaching practices should

be modeled in and on a community of peers to better promote cognitive dissonance, and lead to deeper class discussions around equity.

With respect to explicit modeling of culturally responsive practices, there is some specific discussion of implementation in the general literature, especially by TeachingWorks (2021). However, Overstreet (2019) and Muhammad (2020) discuss specific ways teacher educators can model these practices in a literacy class. Overstreet (2019) describes ways she models read-alouds, grouping, and class routines. Muhammad (2020) describes specific ways to plan lessons that cultivate student genius. One exception can be noted: when it comes to reflective practice, the general literature and literacy-focused literature are similar, both suggesting that TCs write autobiographies and use reflections to think critically about personal experiences that impact and inform future teaching.

Discussion and Implications

Findings from research reviewed throughout this paper highlight the critical need for socially just teachers. Education is constantly evolving and changing because the students and contexts in our schools are constantly evolving and changing, while also being impacted by historic frameworks and movements, such as systematic racism and oppression. Effective teachers must consistently and expertly adjust their teaching to reach a diverse group of students. Students come to school with their own unique personalities, experiences, cultures, and identities—socially just teachers know and embrace this reality to teach equitably and inclusively. In order for teachers to cultivate this social justice lens and SJ pedagogies, teacher educators must adjust their teaching, as well.

The general teacher education literature conveys the importance of SJ and DEI in education. Scholars (Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Zeichner, 2009) have researched the early development of SJ-focused TE programs, including the reforms in teaching that influenced development. Scholars (e.g., Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zeichner, 2009) have also identified the various theoretical frameworks undergirding TE programs, as well as highlighting the critical need for a unified, shared vision for graduates. Without this shared vision and explicit instruction in socially just pedagogies, emerging teacher candidates are more likely to feel unprepared to teach in a socially just way and possibly revert to pedagogies that were used in their own educational experiences, regardless of who those pedagogies included or left out.

However, neither the general teacher education researchers nor the literacy scholars cited above explicitly address the need to connect theoretical understandings of SJ to specific pedagogies. Neither of these groups offer clear guidelines or actions in preparing teacher candidates to teach literacy in a socially just way. One of the reasons for this is the lack of a cohesive, comprehensive definition of social justice used to ground TE programs and practices. Without more clarity on what SJ is and should look like, it is difficult to design a course or a program that prepares TCs to teach in a socially just way. A second reason for this is the tendency for SJ concepts to be siloed into introductory classes. Research indicates that this is not effective; therefore, teacher educators must work collaboratively to identify what is being taught, how it is being taught, and how subsequent classes can build on and deepen that knowledge.

This supports the need for more programmatic agreement when implementing an SJ focused curriculum. TCs are exposed to issues of SJ in introductory level classes, but

those strands are not necessarily carried through the rest of their teacher preparation program or discussed with classrooms in mind rather than on systemic problems. Additionally, graduate students are often used as the main instructors and supervisors in TE departments but often are not included in departmental meetings which has a significant impact on SJ implementation throughout a program. As the main instructors and those that have the most interaction with TCs, it would be helpful for graduate students to know and buy in to the vision for SJ at the department level. For example, in the four years I have served as a graduate instructor, I have never attended a college or department-wide meeting to discuss SJ implementation. As is the case at many institutions, graduate instructors receive little to no support from professors in the department when planning their curricula, although this is dependent on the specific class and content. If SJ is a focus for the department, as with any program or initiative, there must be buy-in from all instructors if it is to be effective.

When looking at SJ in content- or discipline-specific classes, the field of literacy is lacking in research. More research must be conducted to determine what strategies are effective in preparing TCs to teach literacy in socially just ways. The few sources that were analyzed for this literature review have identified specific strategies to use with TCs. However, because the field is quite limited, more research is needed. Additionally, even though these sources applied strategies in a literacy-specific context, there is still a need for more specific coursework to infuse SJ into content.

TCs need explicit connections to be made between the theoretical understanding of SJ and how that is enacted or infused into a classroom. Being able to identify a system of oppression does not equate to a pedagogical tool. A teacher education program that is

focused on preparing teachers that teach in a socially just way must spend the time to define SJ and envision what graduates should be able to do, including the knowledge, skills, and dispositions. SJ should be infused throughout the program rather than being siloed to one or two introductory level classes because without a consistent approach and understanding, the teachers that are produced will be unprepared to teach in a socially just way.

Conclusion

While SJ and DEI are common topics of discussion in society today, there is often disagreement about their definitions and implementation. Teacher education programs are not immune to this problem. In fact, much of the current literature on SJ focuses on the shortcomings of many of these programs. The general literature also identifies significant and effective practices that are used in successful SJ focused programs. However, these are often vague suggestions that can be difficult for teacher educators and TCs to enact in a content-specific setting. While the work to infuse SJ and DEI practices into literacy-specific courses is much smaller, the work is much more specific and actionable for teacher educators. However, it is also a field that needs more research to corroborate findings and provide direction for teacher educators.

Chapter 3:

A Process to Redesign Literacy Curriculum with a Social Justice Focus

Social justice (SJ) and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are common topics of discussion, both in wider society and teacher education programs. There are many reasons for this, particularly in recent history with the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020–present) and its impact on widening social and economic gaps. The racial tension that has always been a reality in the United States has been highlighted by, for example, recurrent images of police brutality toward people of color. While the causes of prejudice and discrimination are not agreed upon, there is general agreement that something must change. Teacher education (TE) programs in higher education institutions have doubled down on their social justice programming as they prepare new teachers, in response to this emerging social and political consensus.

However, there is often disagreement about how to define SJ and DEI concepts and, consequently, how to implement them in an educational context. Much of the literature in teacher education that focuses on SJ highlights the defects of SJ-focused teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zeichner, 2009). One of the major shortcomings is the disagreement about how to define social justice and how to implement it. Some researchers have found that programs lacking a unified approach to SJ are not effective in preparing teachers to teach in a socially just way (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016). Additionally, many programs tend toward a theoretical preparation but stop short of pedagogical preparation. The question remaining is: What does it mean to prepare new teachers to teach in a socially just way?

The literature identified some practices and strategies that have been effective within these programs. These include focused reflection (Izadinia, 2013; Overstreet, 2019; Zeichner, 2009), practice-based experiences (Hollins, 2011; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Whipp, 2013; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015), and community engagement (Boyd et al., 2009; Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). While these strategies have been used effectively to prepare teacher candidates (TCs) in introductory coursework, there is little research into how these strategies have been or could be applied coherently throughout TE programs, specifically within discipline-focused preparation classes, such as literacy.

Social justice and disciplinary content do not have to be mutually exclusive. In fact, social justice can function as a framework that informs teaching throughout a school day and on a daily basis. It is the way teachers see students, think about and plan instruction, and how they use resources and assessments to provide equitable and inclusive experiences for all students. Of course, it is critical that TCs are also prepared with disciplinary knowledge in order to effectively teach K–6 students to read, write, and engage in discussions about their learning. Thus, providing TCs with ways to infuse SJ into their daily routines and pedagogies should be a critical next step in teacher preparation.

Context and Rationale

Teacher education programs around the country have increased their focus on SJ. Unfortunately, many programs focus heavily on social justice in introductory classes and then leave it behind. Often, SJ is not addressed throughout the rest of the program, especially in classes focusing on disciplinary content and pedagogy. Introductory classes

introduce TCs to potential situations of injustice they may encounter throughout their professional careers, often highlighting prejudice directed toward minority communities, such as immigrant, LGBTQI+, racial, cultural, and language groups. These classes often highlight the role economic inequity plays in education, as well.

The syllabi of these introductory classes may contain vision statements depicting elementary educators who understand their work to be justice-oriented. This orientation necessitates a need for action, as well as the dispositions that are essential to socially just teaching. Such statements are "part of a growing movement to disrupt and dismantle unjust practices and actively humanize systems in public education in order to build a just future for all" (Mission, 2022, para. 1). While creating a unified vision for TCs is an important step for a teacher education program (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016), teacher education programs often lack consensus in how these visions should become reality.

Literature Review

Social justice is widely written about in the teacher education literature, but there is a wide range of foci, definitions, and understandings. Additionally, much of the general teacher education literature is just that—general. (For a more detailed review, see Chapter 2). Strategies and implementation are described in broad terms and often do not explore discipline-specific implementation. The purpose of this brief literature review is to examine some of the definitions of SJ in the teacher education literature, as well as effective strategies used to infuse SJ.

Definitions of SJ in the Literature

Social justice has been described as a lens through which to view students, particularly in valuing the experiences and cultural perspectives students bring to school

(Belle, 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2005). Other scholars, such as Alvarez, have focused on SJ as individual interactions with students, looking to provide physical and mental safety, as well as equality and fairness (Alvarez, 2019). Social justice has also been defined as centering care for students, focusing on developing deep relationships with students that model the ways in which students can care for others (Noddings, 1984). Others focused on SJ as encouraging students to take personal responsibility for their learning, shifting toward liberation and empowerment (Hackman, 2005). Finally, in many contexts, social justice is the identification of social injustice and actively working to dismantle and challenge the systems of oppression that caused those institutions and practices (Commitment Statement, 2022). These definitions identify critical components of SJ, but the literature lacks a comprehensive definition.

In addition, DEI has been used increasingly in efforts toward SJ, particularly in educational fields, but also in businesses and other organizations (e.g., Bowen et al., 2021; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, 2021; Tisby, 2020). For this study, DEI helps to define SJ in literacy education by identifying *who* is centered (diversity), *what* is taught (equity), and *how* to teach in a way that includes all students (inclusion).

To guide the research, teaching, and interpretation of this study, I created the following definition of SJ which compiles the work of many researchers:

> Social justice is a comprehensive approach to teaching that encompasses the pedagogies, dispositions, and relationships of individual teachers. It is a dedication and commitment to teaching all students equitably and inclusively. Teachers who are committed to social justice teach students about inequalities but

> also work to address those inequalities in their own classrooms (Dyches & Boyd, 2017). Socially just educators consistently reflect on and evaluate their own actions and pedagogy to identify which voices are being amplified and which are silenced. Socially just teachers create classrooms where their students can expect stability, care, and deep learning. These teachers know that there are many influences that inform their development (Zygmunt & Clark, 2016) and that each learner brings unique "funds of knowledge" to the classroom, meaning the body of knowledge that is embedded in cultural practices and daily routines and lives of families (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Additionally, socially just educators approach conversations about SJ and DEI with understanding, humility, and the ability to listen to others, even if the parties disagree, in order to keep the door open for future conversation (Tisby, 2020). Socially just educators evaluate the culture in their classroom, school, and district to identify and dismantle policies and programs that systematically oppress students. Finally, socially just teaching is an ongoing process for individual teachers that should be aided by professional development and relationships with their peers. (Chapter 2: Social Justice in Teacher Education Literature, pp. 27-28)

Infusion of SJ in Teacher Education Programs

With this definition of SJ in mind, the following section briefly describes how scholars have worked to infuse SJ into teacher education. Two strands from the literature review were included here as they were most relevant in this part of the case study research: 1) knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and 2) effective SJ strategies in teacher preparation. See Chapter 2 for more discussion.

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

Zygmunt and Clark (2016) identified three areas that must be developed in TCs: knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Knowledge can encompass content, theory, human development, pedagogy, assessment, and professional identity (e.g., Hollins, 2011; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). Zygmunt and Clark defined skills as pedagogical strategies TCs develop while in a teacher education program. These include leading a discussion or focused inquiry (e.g., Hollins, 2011; TeachingWorks, 2021). Finally, many researchers identified dispositions as beliefs and attitudes TCs possess that can be difficult to teach or obtain but are changeable (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). Scholars have indicated that teacher educators must provide opportunities for TCs to wrestle with and revise their beliefs and attitudes.

Effective SJ Strategies in Teacher Preparation

Researchers have found that engaging TCs in local communities is very effective in preparing socially just teachers (Boyd et al., 2009; Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). This pedagogical strategy stresses the importance of intentionally engaging members of the community in ways that challenge TCs to think differently about issues than they have before. Researchers have shown that holistic, practice-based programs effectively help TCs make the connection between their coursework and actual practice (Hollins, 2011; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Whipp, 2013; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015). Multiple practicum experiences should be incorporated in programs to give TCs experience in diverse classrooms and opportunities to see teachers who choose to infuse SJ into their daily pedagogies, as well as opportunities for TCs to engage in a community of peers

(Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015). Finally, researchers have found that TCs must be given opportunities to reflect on their experiences, particularly about how those experiences shape their professional identities, values, beliefs, and teaching practices (Izadinia, 2013; Zeichner, 2009). Overstreet (2019) described these as periods of cognitive dissonance, and the disequilibrium can help TCs develop a more socially just teaching identity.

Purpose of the Present Study

With the recent increase in attention to SJ and DEI, teacher education (TE) programs should evaluate their current programming to ensure that TCs not only have foundational knowledge about SJ practices and pedagogy, but that novice educators leave the program ready to teach all subjects in a socially just way. To address this need, the purpose of my study is to: (a) look specifically at the literature on the socially just preparation of teachers and use the findings as a backdrop to my further analysis, (b) analyze the strands of social justice introduced in the syllabi of two introductory level classes, and (c) examine how SJ strands formed within foundational coursework can be elaborated upon and taken up in a discipline-specific literacy course. With this information, we can begin to examine how teacher educators can improve the coherence and developmental trajectory of SJ knowledge and pedagogy across teacher education programs. The following research questions guided the work for Part 1 of my study:

1. How are SJ-DEI frameworks and concepts introduced within introductory TE program coursework for early childhood and elementary education majors at one R1 institution?

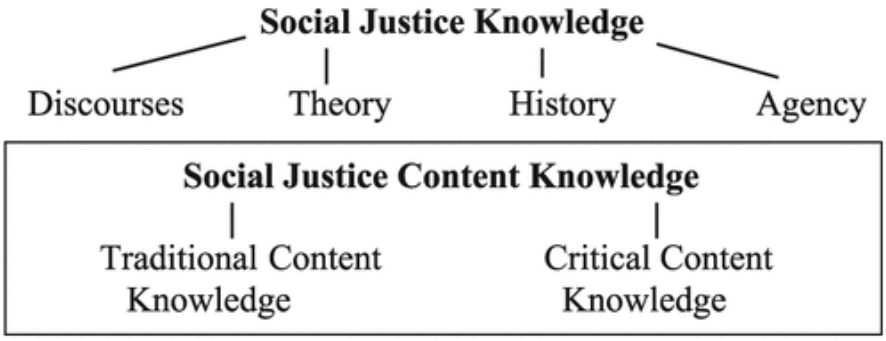
2. Are SJ-DEI teaching practices integrated throughout the *Foundations of Reading* course that follow the intro classes at this R1 institution? If so, how is this accomplished? (e.g., In what ways are these ideas explored by the instructor and TCs from a theoretical perspective to a pragmatic one?)
3. If these practices are not taken up within the *Foundations of Reading* coursework, what components are needed when redesigning the syllabi (CI 5413 and 5414) to enable instructors to teach content so that it addresses the important cognitive, social, and cultural components of literacy development (K–6), while also infusing a socially just perspective into all components of the coursework? What does a redesigned syllabus look like and what is the rationale behind the changes made by the instructor?

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Dyches and Boyd's (2017) conceptual framework, Social Justice Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (SJPCK), profoundly influences this work. Dyches and Boyd built on Gudmundsdottir and Shulman's (1987) Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) framework, which suggested that teachers must have specific, professional skills and knowledge. This framework, however, failed to acknowledge that teaching practices are never neutral and therefore should never be separated from social justice knowledge. In other words, teaching and social justice should not be separated as they are intricately intertwined.

The SJPCK framework suggests that teaching practices are inseparable from a teacher's beliefs about social justice. Teachers' understanding and dedication to social justice must be woven throughout their teaching. Social justice practice informs and

shapes content knowledge and teaching practices. I used this framework to guide the way in which content was framed for TCs. It not only acknowledges the critical importance of learning specific content such as literacy development, but it also requires incorporating teacher knowledge of SJ as they consider teaching that content.



(Dyches & Boyd, 2017, p. 485)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1998), Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) (Gay, 2001), and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) (Paris, 2012) are useful frameworks when attending to SJ and DEI teaching practices. Each framework adds to the previous one to move teaching toward more equitable and inclusive outcomes. All three of these frameworks acknowledge the assets children bring to the classroom, and while CRP and CRT affirm and accept these varying experiences, CSP looks to sustain diverse cultures in schools. These frameworks informed my analysis of the various syllabi and how SJ is understood in relation to teaching practices.

Finally, the core theoretical framework that grounds this work is pragmatism. Pragmatism focuses on the outcomes of the research rather than on particular methods (Dillon et al., 2000; Dillon & O'Brien, 2018). There is a focus on selecting a method and research tools that align with answering the specific questions being asked or the problem being studied. Pragmatism also values a practical application of the information gathered

for the participants, which is a revised curriculum with more targeted instruction preparing TCs for socially just teaching throughout a TE program.

Study Design

Beginning with a pragmatic theoretical lens to guide my thinking, I selected a holistic case study to answer my research questions (Yin, 1984). The analysis is divided into two parts. I describe Part 1 of this case study in this chapter, and I discuss Part 2 in Chapter 4. A qualitative case study enables a researcher to study a particular context or system deeply using diverse data collection materials (Creswell, 2007). It is critical for a researcher using case study methodology to identify a specific case or "bounded system" and to position the case as a part of its larger context or setting (Creswell, 2007, p. 244). In this case study, the case is the group of TCs enrolled in *Foundations of Reading* for the Fall of 2021, which has clear boundaries and seeks to understand the experiences of those participants. In this paper, I situate this case as a part of its larger context by examining the syllabi for two introductory classes that precede *Foundations of Reading* and by interviewing an instructor of one of those classes to extend and explain the choices made in content and pedagogy in the syllabus. Additionally, I describe the process to redesign the curriculum.

Context Description

At a large, midwestern R1 university, two classes precede the course that is the object of study: *CI 1001: Introduction to the Elementary School* and *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary School Teaching.* Teacher candidates typically take these classes early in their undergraduate program, and the classes are required for their degree. These courses are meant to introduce TCs to various aspects of elementary teaching. *CI*

3211: Introduction to Elementary School Teaching requires a field experience in conjunction with the course, and those experiences are highly integrated into the course content.

CI 5413: Foundations of Reading is a course that TCs typically take during their final year in their undergraduate program. The class meets primarily at a local elementary school. There is a great deal of content in the course, as it is:

> designed to acquaint future pre-K–6 preservice teachers (PTs) with how reading develops and how assessments can be used to understand typical and struggling readers. PTs will learn about the foundations of reading processes, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension, and students' motivation to read. (Robinson, 2021, p. 1)

A field experience, or practicum, accompanies the course in which TCs administer literacy assessments, analyze the data, and use that data to plan literacy lessons for a primary "buddy" (e.g., grade K or 1 student) and an intermediate buddy (e.g., grade 4 or 5 student), and buddy sessions occur twice a week for 30-minute segments. Teacher candidates put what they are learning into practice in these buddy sessions.

Participants

To situate the case within its larger context, I interviewed an instructor of *Introduction to Elementary Teaching* (CI 3211). I chose to interview this instructor, Rose,[1] because she is a professor in the department and was instrumental in redesigning the course in previous years. She would be able to provide an in-depth explanation into

[1] Pseudonym used.

choices regarding specific topics, assignments, and readings. Additionally, Rose's areas of research include Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and social justice in education, and I wanted to understand how she infuses SJ into the courses she teaches in the elementary education program.

Data Collection

For this portion of my study, I used two qualitative data sources. These provided depth and understanding of the greater context of my identified case. I collected data in the form of (a) syllabi and (b) a semi-structured interview [See Appendix A]. I analyzed the syllabi for CI 1001 and CI 3211 to provide background and understanding as I prepared to interview Rose and revise the syllabus for *Foundations of Reading*. I performed the analysis using a document analysis tool I created that focused on how SJ-DEI is introduced and infused throughout the syllabus (e.g., course descriptions, readings, and assignments) [See Appendix B]. I also used the document analysis to prepare interview questions as I identified topics, readings, or assignments that I wanted to understand more fully. This data informed research question 1 and 3.

The interview provided an opportunity to understand choices made regarding topics, readings, and assignments, as well as pedagogical decisions Rose made to better prepare TCs to be socially just educators. The interview followed a semi-structured format derived from an interview guide that listed the questions for the interview [See Appendix A]. This enabled me to use time efficiently and remain focused on the areas of the syllabus that I wished to explore during the interview. It also allowed me to ask follow-up questions if that was necessary (Patton, 2002). I used this data to address research questions 1 and 3.

I analyzed the syllabus for *Foundations of Reading* (CI 5413) utilizing the same document analysis tool used for CI 1001 and CI 3211. Through this analysis, I intended to identify SJ-DEI topics, determine if topics introduced in the introductory classes were present or carried through in CI 5413, and to identify areas for revision. This data informed research questions 2 and 3.

Procedures for Data Collection

Prior to the end of the previous semester, I contacted instructors of the introductory classes and asked if they would be willing to share the syllabi for their classes to be used in my dissertation research. Once I received the syllabi, I completed a document analysis. After completing the document analysis, I prepared the questions that I would use in the semi-structured interview with Rose. The interview took place over Zoom in August 2021. I transcribed the interview immediately after and stored it in Box, a platform for secure content management. Table 1 elaborates on the data collected, how I stored it, and when I collected it.

Table 1

Data Collection

Type of Data:	Description:	Storage Strategy:	Time of Collection:
Documents (Primary):	2 syllabi were collected from instructors of introductory classes (CI 1001 and 3211)	Document analysis stored in Box	June 2021
Semi-Structured Interview (Primary):	Conduct focused, semi-structured interviews with 1 instructor of introductory course using a semi-structured interview guide.	Recorded via otter.ai Transcripts stored in Box	August 2021

Documents (Primary):	Syllabus from *Foundations of Reading* (CI 5413)	Document analysis stored in Box	August 2021

Data Analysis

I analyzed each syllabus by reading through each one time to get a general understanding for its layout and components. Then I read through each syllabus a second time and analyzed each section using my document analysis tool with specific attention to SJ issues presented. These sections included course descriptions, course objectives, required texts, course calendar, and any institutional mission or vision statements. After comparing each of these sections and analyzing how or if SJ was presented or woven into these sections, I turned to the course calendar. The calendar indicated daily topics, readings, and assignments. I analyzed the assigned readings and how or if they presented SJ topics.

After I collected the interview data, I transcribed the interview and analyzed the data by reading the transcript, looking for key ideas in the responses, particularly in the way Rose understood SJ, how she determined topics and readings, and what pedagogical decisions she made to develop socially just TCs. I completed two cycles of coding to analyze the raw data collected in the interview (Miles et al., 2020). For the first cycle, I used In Vivo coding, which adopts words or phrases from the participants as codes. Second cycle coding focused on synthesizing patterns that emerged in the first cycle. I then wrote a theoretical memo to further explore the themes from the interview.

After I completed the initial analysis of introductory level classes and the interview, I conducted an analysis for the *CI 5413: Foundations of Reading* syllabus. I

relied upon the same tool to identify social justice topics, readings, and assignments. I followed the same process used with the other syllabi. I analyzed each section of the syllabus, paying careful attention to topics of SJ.

Table 2

Alignment of Data Sources and Research Questions

Research Question	Data Sources	Analysis Strategy
1. How are SJ-DEI frameworks and concepts introduced within introductory TE program coursework for early childhood and elementary education majors at one R1 institution?	• Syllabi review of CI 1001 and CI 3211	• Document Analysis – using analysis tool developed by researcher
	• Interview	• Transcription of interview (Madison, 2020) • Inductive coding (Miles, et al., 2020) • In Vivo codes (Miles, et al., 2020) • Development of theoretical memo (Miles, et al., 2020)
2. Are SJ-DEI teaching practices integrated throughout the *Foundations of the Reading* course that follows the intro classes at this R1 institution? If so, how is this accomplished? (e.g., In what ways are these ideas explored by the instructor and TCs from a theoretical perspective to a pragmatic one?)	• Syllabi review of CI 5413	• (See above)
3. If these practices are not taken up within the *Foundations of Reading* coursework, what components are needed when redesigning the syllabi (CI 5413 and 5414) to enable instructors to teach the content so it addresses the important cognitive, social, and cultural components	• Syllabi review of CI 1001, CI 3211, and CI 5413	• (See above)
	• Interview	• (See above)

	of literacy development (K–6), while also using-infusing a socially just framework to reconsider all components of the coursework? What does a redesigned syllabus look like and what is the rationale behind the changes made by the instructor?

Findings

The following section explores the findings of this study. I have organized the findings around the three research questions and the primary data sources to address them. In the first two sections, I share the findings from my analysis of introductory course syllabi, the interview with Rose, and the data used to answer question 1. In the third section, I share the findings from my analysis of the *CI 5413: Foundations of Reading* syllabus to answer research question 2. Finally, I share the revisions that I made to the syllabus for CI 5413 and the rationale as connected to my research above and relevant literature to answer question 3.

Part I: Analysis and Interpretation of Introductory Course Syllabi

At the introductory level, SJ is clearly woven throughout the course, shaping the way topics are introduced by instructors and discussed by TCs. Social justice is woven throughout via the course descriptions, course goals, and course calendar, which state the goals of the class, many of which are clearly steeped in a socially just framework. The following section offers examples of how SJ is represented in the syllabi.

Course Description

The *CI 1001: Introduction to the Elementary School* is described in the syllabus as:

> a beginning course for undergraduate students considering a career in the field of education or a Foundations of Elementary Education major. The class examines various aspects of elementary schools and elementary teaching, including school organization, contemporary students and families, standards, assessment, policy, culture and diversity, and the role of the teacher. (Lo Bello Miller, 2021, p. 1)

It is clear from the course description that this class is meant to function as an introductory course that provides some foundational knowledge in elementary education. However, the way the topics are listed does not indicate that each topic will be approached through an SJ lens.

In contrast, *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary School Teaching*, is described in the following way:

> The class focuses on three topics: classroom management, instructional planning, and working with families—as we wrestle with how these topics fit within a framework of equity . . . Students will learn curriculum and instructional strategies that integrate development, skills, and content knowledge in individualized and culturally relevant ways. (Zwicky, 2021, p. 1)

SJ is stated more explicitly in this description, indicating that these course topics will be approached from a socially just lens, specifically one of equity and culturally relevant teaching.

Course Objectives

The course objectives listed in a syllabus describe what participants will do throughout the course. For example, the following course objectives appear in the syllabus for *CI 1001: Introduction to the Elementary School*:

- Examine approaches to working with students from a range of cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and family backgrounds.
- Think critically about and discuss the relationship between individual, institutional, and systemic forms of oppression and how these relate to elementary education. (Lo Bello Miller, 2021, p. 1)

These two objectives have a clear foundation in SJ. The first indicates a dedication to understanding and learning to teach diverse K–6 students. The second objective is dedicated to identifying systems of oppression, thinking critically about them, and understanding how those systems impact elementary education. The objectives are central to the course and lay out the topics and readings for the entire semester. Many of the course objectives for *CI 1001: Introduction to the Elementary School* were written with an SJ framework of attending to diversity, equity, and inclusion, while also addressing state required content.

In contrast, the following course objectives are listed in the syllabus for *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary School Teaching:*

- Explain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of effective teachers.
- Describe and evaluate different approaches to classroom management.
- Create learning plans that align to standards, incorporate research-based strategies and academic language goals, and address the learning needs of students. (Zwicky, 2021, p. 2)

These objectives are not as clearly informed by an SJ framework as they focus on general knowledge, skills, and pedagogy. The third objective, however, does acknowledge the

need to plan lessons that address individual learning needs, which is an equitable teaching practice.

Course Topics

I analyzed the topics for each course by examining the course calendar. The following are examples of topics on the course calendars for *CI 1001*: *Introduction to the Elementary School* and *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary School Teaching*.

- Social Construction of Race and History of Education
- Opportunity Gap
- Intersectionality and the Social Construction of Identities
- Elementary Teachers—Abolition? (Lo Bello Miller, 2021, p. 5)
- Becoming a Reflective Educator: Knowing the Teacher, Knowing the Learner
- Developing a philosophy of education: What kind of teacher do I want to be? (Zwicky, 2021, p. 9-10)

These topics are clearly related to SJ as well. SJ is concerned with providing equitable outcomes for all, and therefore a study of the barriers that exist for some elementary students is critical. Additionally, SJ requires a consistent evaluation of self and personal bias, which contributes to becoming a reflective educator and developing a philosophy of education.

Required Readings

In my analysis, I also examined the required readings and how those may infuse SJ into the course content. In *CI 1001: Introduction to the Elementary School*, TCs are required to read *We Want to Do More than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* by Love (2019) and *Troublemakers* by Shalaby (2017)

(Lo Bello Miller, 2021). Love's (2019) book described abolitionist teaching and interrupting systems of oppression in elementary schools. Shalaby's (2017) book, an ethnographic study, followed four children that have been identified as "troublemakers" and questioned the expectation many teachers have of compliance. Both books introduce SJ topics and push the reader to consider how certain ways of teaching or certain methods of classroom management can be harmful for K–12 students because they do not value the whole person.

Summary of Syllabi Examples

It was clear in my analysis that SJ is infused throughout the semester and informs each class period. And while there were areas in each syllabus where SJ was not as clearly interwoven, the overall syllabus was clearly written with an SJ lens. The *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary School Teaching* even includes a section called "Learning Environment" which describes the classroom culture:

> The success of this class is dependent upon everyone's contribution to a safe, inclusive learning environment. Positive participation is essential and includes being on time, listening, asking questions, offering ideas, and not dominating discussions. Considering multiple perspectives, using appropriate language, and treating each other with respect are expected of both students and the instructor. Students assume responsibility for their own learning and success, as well as the energy brought to bear on course discussion, lectures, in-class activities, and group dynamics. This is another way of articulating a well-used expression: *You get out of this course what you put into it.*

> Finally, *Know Thyself.* Be aware of how your background shapes your views, feelings and your behavior towards others, and the content presented … Behaviors not contributing to a positive learning environment will be reflected in your participation grade. The expectation for this class is that you notice the privileges you are granted or denied on the basis of your class, race, gender, disability, family status, religion, or sexual orientation; come to class prepared to learn from, with, and about each other. The uniqueness of each class member is an invaluable resource and an essential component to the collective critical examination of what we read, see, and hear. We will rely on one another's perspectives in helping us to learn, unlearn, and relearn beliefs, practices, and reactions to the multitude of issues encountered in elementary classrooms and the world. These include, but are not limited to, the multi-layered issues of racism, classism, sexism, ageism, and ableism. (Zwicky, 2021, p. 3)

While this is a lengthy quotation, this statement illustrates the dedication to SJ in this course from the very beginning. Teacher candidates read through this syllabus on the first day of class, and it sets the tone for the rest of the semester, particularly the goal of preparing TCs that teach in a socially just way. SJ is clearly infused throughout the courses and provides a framework for thinking about issues in the elementary school.

Themes

During my analysis, two themes about SJ emerged: 1) working toward SJ at a personal level through reflection and analysis of personal experiences and bias, and 2) working toward SJ at a systems level, primarily through introducing SJ issues in elementary schools and then identifying systems of oppression. In the first few meetings

and assignments of both classes, TCs are asked to examine their own identities and analyze how their identities intersect with and influence their ideas about teaching and schools. Additionally, since these classes are considered introductory, they give a broad overview of some of the systemic issues that affect schools and students in the United States. In the following sections, I will describe these two themes and provide details of how these themes reflect the teacher education literature.

Social Justice on a Personal Level. Several topics are introduced in the first few weeks of class: gender, race, sexuality, class, language, religion, exceptionality, age, and geography. The focus, however, is not how these may show up in future K–6 students that TCs may teach, but rather in how these microcultures interact and work to shape each TC. Overall, an important foundation that is laid out in the initial foray into these topics is the goal that TCs begin to understand their own identities and how these show up in different contexts, but particularly in their future classrooms. This is reflected in much of the teacher education literature, particularly the research on dispositions, teacher identity, and reflection.

In the first required class in the program for elementary education majors, *CI 1001: Introduction to Elementary Schools*, the topics for the first few weeks focus on the context in which elementary schools exist. Teacher candidates dive into the social construction of race, the history of education, the Opportunity Gap, intersectionality, and the social construction of identities. Using a mixture of books such as *Troublemakers* by Shalaby and *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* by Love, peer-reviewed articles by scholars such as Ladson-Billings, and podcasts from National Public Radio, teacher educators seek to introduce

and discuss with TCs the idea that their personal experiences and contexts have influenced their development and beliefs about education (Lo Bello Miller, 2021).

One of the major assignments is a good example of this goal in action. The "Subjectivities Paper" asks students to "describe and analyze how aspects of your identity (e.g., your gender, race, sexual orientation, social class, linguistic background, dis/ability status) shape your life" with the goal of understanding the relationship between individual positionality and becoming a teacher who can see the whole child (Lo Bello Miller, 2021, p. 9). There is an emphasis on the importance of reflection and wrestling with beliefs held about others, a strategy often considered in the teacher education literature (Izadinia, 2013; Overstreet, 2019; Zeichner, 2009).

CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary Teaching has a similar grouping of topics: "Examining My Lens: Teacher as Learner," "Becoming a Reflective Educator: Knowing the Teacher, Knowing the Learner," and "Developing a Philosophy of Education: What kind of teacher do I want to be?" (Lo Bello Miller, 2021, p. 9-10). Required readings include the introduction and Chapter One from hooks' (1994) influential text, *Teaching to Transgress* and an article by Villegas and Lucas (2007) called "The Culturally Responsive Teacher." These readings emphasize for TCs that learning is socially constructed and that knowing students is essential to learning, diversity must be affirmed and seen as an asset, and that the purpose of learning must be deconstructed by educators. Villegas and Lucas (2007) stated, "Teaching is an ethical activity, and teachers have an ethical obligation to help all students learn" (p. 32). In this way, teaching is framed as a movement for social justice. Helping all students learn is equitable and is the ethical obligation for a teacher.

The first assignment for *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary Teaching* is a cultural autobiography in which TCs analyze 10 microcultures that make up their identities (class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language, religion, exceptionality, age, and geography) and which have helped create the kind of person they are and the educator they will likely become (Zwicky, 2021, p. 5-6). This assignment is very similar to the "Subjectivities Paper" TCs write for *CI 1001: Introduction to the Elementary School*, with the goal of helping TCs wrestle with their positionality in the classroom and how that may impact future students.

In *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary School Teaching,* TCs read selections from *Rethinking Elementary Education* edited by Linda Christensen, Mark Hansen, Bob Peterson, Elizabeth Barbian, and Dyan Watson. The book includes articles on several different topics such as building a classroom community and socially just teaching in reading, writing, math, and science. Teacher candidates are required to complete reflections about the reading using the following questions from the syllabus:

1. What did I learn about myself in regard to class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language, religion, exceptionality, age, and geography by reading the articles in this section? How will what I learned help me become a culturally competent teacher?
2. What did I learn about teaching students who are different from myself in regard to class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language, religion, exceptionality, age, and geography? How will what I learned help me become a culturally competent teacher?
3. How will my identities influence how I plan, teach, and assess my students?

4. How will I situate and negotiate students' knowledge, expertise, and identities with my own? (Zwicky, 2021, p. 6)

Through these readings and reflections, TCs continue to deconstruct their own identities and how those identities influence their beliefs about teaching and future pedagogies.

Teacher candidates also begin to think about the diversity of the students in their future classrooms and how they will interact with families. Both introductory classes include a children's literature activity in which they plan a read-aloud and present it to the class, including discussion questions. This activity follows discussions of Bishop's (1990) theory of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors, and TCs are required to choose books that represent a diverse group of students or focus on a social justice topic such as gender, race, or sexuality. *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary Teaching* has a class session devoted to differentiation and the readings circle back to the idea that teaching all students is an ethical practice. It affirms the different ways students learn and interact with material, and TCs write one lesson plan that includes differentiation ideas for students. Finally, *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary School Teaching* includes a family engagement project in which TCs read a collection of essays focusing on family and family involvement and then write a group paper designing family involvement practices that are inclusive and sensitive (Zwicky, 2021).

This approach reflects prevailing views in the teacher education literature. Many researchers indicated the importance of personal reflection (Izadinia, 2013; Overstreet, 2019; Zeichner, 2009). The assignments and readings for *CI 1001: Introduction to the Elementary School* and *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary School Teaching* provide opportunities for interrogation of personal bias and exploration of the intersections of

personal identity, leading to analysis of how these experiences shape future teaching practices. Additionally, these readings and assignments encourage TCs to develop the dispositions necessary to becoming a socially just teacher (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016).

Social Justice at a System Level. My analysis indicates that the *CI 1001: Introduction to the Elementary School* course focuses more on the systems level of social justice, particularly in identifying systems of oppression in schools, although there is some attention to personal identity and dispositions as shown in the previous section. Teacher candidates learn about the history and implications of school choice, different school models, classroom environments, and the various experiences of multilingual students and immigrants to the United States. Class time is devoted to critical discussions of these issues and how they may limit access or academic success.

In *CI 1001: Introduction to the Elementary School,* TCs are required to complete a current events presentation in which they share a news item related to elementary schools or education that explores a critical issue that has been discussed during the semester, such as school choice, school models, or classroom environment. The requirements for the presentation include a summary of the news item and two or three discussion questions for classmates. The final paper in *CI 1001: Introduction to the Elementary School* extends the current event presentations, and TCs synthesize how their thinking has changed about issues in education since taking the class. Teacher candidates must identify next steps in becoming an engaged thinker and engaged actor around elementary schools, deciding how they will advocate for what they believe to be right and

good in given classroom situations (Lo Bello Miller, 2021, p. 3). This paper attempts to move TCs from identification of systems of oppression to action.

This theme reflects the dedication of many teacher educators to "develop future teachers, practitioners, technologists, and researchers who are equipped to identify and challenge systems and structures of racism and oppression in their field(s), locally, and globally" (Commitment Statement, 2022). It also creates an opportunity for cognitive dissonance and disequilibrium wherein TCs can wrestle with previously held beliefs about the systems they may have grown up with or the beliefs they hold about others (Overstreet, 2019). For teacher educators attempting to move TCs towards a more socially just framework, these strategies can help TCs to think differently about their previous experiences.

Part II: Analysis and Interpretation of Interview with Rose

I conducted a semi-structured interview over Zoom with Rose, the instructor and designer of *CI 3211: Introduction to Elementary School Teaching*, to delve deeper into the curriculum and discuss ways in which she infuses social justice throughout the course. I developed the interview questions after the syllabi review, and the questions move from general (e.g., How were topics chosen?) to specific (e.g., For the final reflective essay, what are the core objectives you have for this assignment?). The semi-structured interview guide can be found in Appendix A. Additionally, the interview provided an opportunity to discuss how social justice can and should be woven throughout the whole program.

Understanding and Defining Social Justice

Rose began by discussing her understanding of SJ and how that informs the way she has designed the class, stating "Yeah, to me, social justice isn't a thing that's simply defined, and oh, I got it. It's really a journey of how do we live in the world? And how do we experience one another in a way that is expansive, and people can see themselves in it?" When I asked Rose to elaborate on an expansive curriculum, she discussed the way we select books in elementary classrooms.

> To me, that's not a social justice curriculum, to keep spotlighting that which makes us different . . . And how do you expand your thinking and say representation looks like: we're reading a book about this topic. And it happens to have a kid who shares my life experience. But the point of the book is not to talk about her life experience. The point of the book is, we all have these shared experiences about being interested in growing flowers. And instead, it ends up being tomatoes . . . So really just rethinking what it means to have an expansive curriculum.
>
> To get them out of thinking that every character is White, unless it's about something being . . . because I think that's another way that centers Whiteness is if you're only reading these books to point out what makes us different, then you're saying, in order for something to be different, there has to be something that's normalized. You know, so if I'm saying this is different, I mean, different . . . from me, the norm, from being White, middle class . . . So how do we decenter that normalization of Whiteness? So, I think it's a more complicated, not so linear way that we address social justice.

Rose describes SJ as a journey of how we live in the world. It is a constant, complicated process, that does not progress in a linear fashion, to better understanding others and how they experience the world and how that intersects with us personally. While she mentions representing different life experiences, such as having a large family, Rose's examples focused primarily on racial representation in children's literature and on the racial identities of the TCs in her class.

One of the ways that she encourages TCs to begin thinking in a more expansive way is to evaluate the lens through which they view students and ask, "Is this asset-based? Or am I viewing areas of difference as deficits?" She weaves SJ into the different topics that the state requires. For example, there is a state requirement to include discussion of classroom management. Rather than telling TCs to think a particular way about this topic, she asks TCs to observe the interactions between the teachers and students in their practicum placements. Many TCs read the book *Troublemakers* by Shalaby (2017) in the other introductory class, and this often begins to challenge the notion that classroom management should be focused on compliance. In class, they can then have discussions about which students were asked questions and which were seen as "troublemakers" and received a consequence. In this way, the instructor challenges TCs' beliefs about diverse students and begins to lay a foundation for socially just teaching.

In our interview, the instructor discussed how SJ has often been limited to talking about representation in children's literature. She talked about the tendency to only focus on the race of the main character rather than on other components of their identities or experiences that kids can find representation in, such as class or interests or family make up. Rather than spotlighting what is different, she encourages expanding representation.

She believes that when we make representation solely about race, it still centers Whiteness.

Rose included differentiation as a component of SJ. She explained that she is working to help TCs think about how to make the curriculum expansive and inclusive, and one way to do that is through differentiation. In the class, students discuss that differentiation can be in the product, process, and content. Teacher candidates read two chapters in Tomlinson and Imbeau's (2010) *Leading and Managing a Differentiated Classroom* that suggest ways to provide students multiple ways to respond to material and show their understanding. They also discuss different strategies for presenting the content that will enable all students to access the material. In this way, Rose infuses SJ into instructional planning, another topic required by the state.

Selection of Topics

In the following interview segment, Rose discussed how she selected topics for the course:

> And so, I came with that lens of: what is it teachers really need to know about before they become a teacher? And going through the syllabus as it was the first year, first semester, I just kept my eyes open to see what are some things worth keeping? And what are some changes? And there had been more emphasis on logistical things in the class, like there was a session on how to teach handwriting. And I really thought . . . those are things you can kind of learn on the job. But the thinking that goes into why we do things as teachers, I thought, was most essential.

For Rose, identifying essential concepts TCs should learn during an introductory class was critical. In her view, learning how to teach handwriting was not a topic that merited a class session. However, topics such as community involvement through field experience, teacher identity, and developing a culturally responsive classroom were critical to examine. As an educator for twenty years in the local school district, Rose was able to use her connections with local schools to expand practicum placements that were centered in the local community, and which were intended to move White TCs into a space where they might experience being a minority for the first time. As many researchers have found (e.g., Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Hollins, 2011; Howard et al., 2018; Izadinia, 2013; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016), Rose uses field experiences, as well as intentional reflective questions, to help TCs begin to develop a sociocultural awareness.

Additionally, the state board of education standards require topics such as classroom management and family involvement. Rose works to incorporate these topics with an SJ lens:

> So, I think it's always that trifecta of: What did I come with [and] how did my identities inform how I'm looking through this lens? What am I actually seeing in the classroom? And then, what are the readings, in theory, in class, helping to support or refute the things that I've seen?

By introducing topics in this way, Rose hopes to:

> help [TCs] develop a critical lens to not keep looking at, well, someone said this. So, I'm going to believe . . . that's kind of the underlying thing to me, 'I'm a social justice educator' is not, 'We all can speak with this one voice, and all have

> the same idea.' [Instead, it's] that we all know how to examine things and really dissect them for multiple aspects."

Rose plans her instruction with the belief that teacher educators should provide opportunities for TCs to think critically about issues and make observations in schools and classrooms to develop an SJ lens. Rather than telling TCs to think a certain way about a certain issue, she asks them to answer the question, "What do you notice?" As an extension of this idea, socially just teachers know how to examine things and dissect them from multiple angles because they understand that everyone experiences the world differently. Rose intends to push back on the idea that social justice is that we all speak with one voice and have the same idea. She provides the space for her students to wrestle with ideas and beliefs and come to their own conclusions.

Additionally, Rose shifted assignments to continue to infuse SJ throughout the class rather than presenting it as a standalone topic. The book *Rethinking Elementary Education* by Christensen et al. (2012) plays an important role in this as TCs respond to the same four questions in an iterative way:

> So, the *Rethinking Education* text also has a big focus on social justice as an educator, and so they might read a cluster of articles that focus on family . . . there's an article/essay they read called "Elena's Father Got Deported" that a classroom teacher is writing about what happened in her classroom when that happened to a student. The students I teach get exposure to thinking about immigration and how that impacts your own classroom, GLBT families and whether they're included or not included or seen or invisible.

This activity provides exposure to how different SJ topics like immigration or LGBTQI+ issues may show up in a classroom and how a socially just teacher handled the situation.

Rose stated that she has designed the course to help TCs think more expansively about their own identities, particularly through two papers they write during the semester. The first, the cultural autobiography, asks TCs to analyze their own cultural experiences and how those have impacted them. The second paper requires TCs to reread their first paper and see how their thinking has changed from the beginning to the end of the semester. Rose designed the papers this way to help TCs do the discovering and thinking for themselves rather than telling them what to think or how to think.

Rose is intentional about the questions she asks, observations TCs are required to complete, and the books chosen for a read aloud assignment. Teacher candidates also complete a culturally responsive classroom observation as part of their practicum experience, and the project starts with an ethnographic overview of the community and neighborhood, then the interior of the school, the interactions in the classroom, and finally the academics in the classroom. Rose makes certain that TCs consider their own intentions: “Why did you make that move? It matters as a teacher. You really have to be thinking.”

Pedagogical Strategies

When asked to discuss the pedagogical strategies she uses to infuse SJ throughout the course, Rose said, “The number one thing I do is really break us out of individualism in my classroom.” She begins every class with a circle to check and share. Teacher candidates are put in base groups which are groups that are often used for discussions. Additionally, there are group projects that are completed with TCs at the same practicum

site. Via these groups, Rose intentionally shifts TCs toward working collaboratively and maintaining accountability. She often utilizes jigsaws, a group activity in which each person is held accountable to understanding the content because they will present their content to a new group and have to be an expert. “And so, it’s really, you know, decentering individualism in the classroom and really moving toward more collectivism. And we do better when we all do better.” In doing this, she intends to move TCs toward disrupting typical classroom trends that work for some but not for all.

By moving to disrupt these typical classroom trends, Rose said that she often gets “wildly positive” and “wildly negative” feedback, as many TCs felt uncomfortable when considering their own identities and positionality:

> So, it’s lots of ways that I guess I crack open the norms of school, of what got White, bright girls where they are, because they could do school, and really helping them to see like, that doesn’t work for everybody. And we can’t keep perpetuating a classroom that works for you. Because there’s so many NOT yous [*sic*] in your class, and they need to be seen and heard and successful, too.

As the teacher education literature suggests, Rose continues to give TCs opportunities to reflect on their identities and how they show up in the classroom (e.g., Izadinia, 2013; Zeichner, 2009). Rose is always naming parts of her identity that are showing up, specifically naming Whiteness. She will often preface something by saying that this is her experience as a White female and that means her perspective is not going to encompass every perspective. Teacher candidates find this to be helpful modeling and have often never experienced that awareness before.

Rose also works hard to challenge TCs, whether in the type of work that is expected or the cognitive dissonance that occurs when wrestling with beliefs and misunderstandings of others. “So, my pedagogy is also keeping it just hard enough that people don’t shut down, but they keep wanting to lean in and learn.” She sees this as critical in her job as a teacher educator. Teacher candidates need to know what it is really like to be an elementary school teacher and decide if it is truly something they want to pursue.

Interviewing Rose enabled me to probe deeper into the selection of course topics, how she defines SJ-DEI, and pedagogical strategies she uses to infuse SJ-DEI throughout the course. Throughout the interview, Rose emphasized the intentionality with which she approaches teaching and planning. I used the initial syllabi analysis and interview with Rose to inform the next stage of my analysis.

Part III: Analysis and Interpretation of *CI 5413: Foundations of Reading* Syllabus

I conducted document analysis for the course *CI 5413: Foundations of Reading*, using the same analysis tool [See Appendix B] to ensure consistency. The following discussion describes the findings from each section of the syllabus with analysis and interpretation.

Course Description

The course description for *Foundations of Reading* states:

> The course is designed to acquaint future K–6 preservice teachers (PTs) with how reading develops and how assessments can be used to understand typical and struggling readers. PTs will learn about the foundations of reading processes,

> including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, comprehension, and students' motivation to read. (Robinson, 2021, p. 2)

The accompanying practicum is also described wherein TCs will learn to use assessment data to make instructional decisions and plan literacy lessons for primary and intermediate students. Social justice or social justice approaches are not mentioned in the course description. When compared to the introductory course syllabi, SJ was infused throughout the course, starting with the course description. For TCs to begin to understand that SJ is a lens with which they approach all of teaching, it must be infused into the basic course description to make clear that social justice cannot be separated from content (Dyches & Boyd, 2017).

Course Objectives

The listed course objectives focus primarily on content, and SJ is not woven into them. The following examples are course objectives listed in the syllabus.

> Upon completion of this course, each student will have demonstrated knowledge of, or competency in the following:
>
> - The Minnesota reading standards for early childhood/elementary teachers and the Minnesota Statute 122A.06, Subdivision 4 (PELSB Standards)
> - Theoretical frameworks that undergird the process of reading and its development, including language and linguistic foundations and how oral language is related to facility with written language.
> - Research on reading process used to inform teachers' understanding of reading and students' literacy learning.

- Know and use approaches to assessment and types of reading assessment tools used to establish reading proficiency and engagement. (Robinson, 2021, p. 2)

This is critical content for TCs to learn and is highly influenced by state standards and requirements, which was true of the introductory classes as well. One objective acknowledges the diversity of students as TCs will work with "K–6 learners from a variety of backgrounds including high-poverty students in high-need schools" (Robinson, 2021, p. 1). However, because this objective stands alone, it contributes to the idea that SJ and content are separate. SJ should be infused throughout the course objectives to indicate to TCs that SJ and content are inseparable as one informs the other (Dyches & Boyd, 2017).

Course Topics

The course schedule addresses topics weekly, such as the Foundations of Literacy and Emergent Readers and Writers. One day is dedicated to Culturally Responsive Teaching, another to differentiation for students who struggle with reading and another for those learning English. These specific days focus on social justice topics such as race, ethnicity, language, and ability. However, SJ is not clearly present in other material or topics.

Assignments and Readings

Assignments in the class address topics such as research on reading motivation, lesson planning, analysis of various literacy assessments, and a case study. Since TCs usually work with one student in each practicum session and plan lessons accordingly,

differentiation is typically not a requirement of lesson plans. The following reflection questions are found at the end of the lesson plan template:

1) How do you think the lesson went? What went well? What did not go well?

2) What would you have changed if you were to do it again or replan?

3) How does this lesson inform my future practice?

Lesson plans are due before buddy sessions and the reflection questions have not been required. Teacher candidates also complete a reflection on dispositions at two points in the semester which includes a self-assessment of class participation. However, these reflections focus on how well a TC engaged in class and does not ask them to reflect on their identities or how their experiences impact them as teachers.

Readings for the class include two required textbooks. Both textbooks are written from a developmental perspective, but the connection between that mindset and SJ is not explicitly made. Additional readings for the class are mainly written by White authors, and seven were written before 2010. In some cases, these are seminal articles that are critical content to the course.

Summary

The document analysis revealed that the syllabus for *CI 5413: Foundations of Reading* did not have SJ clearly infused throughout. There was a heavy emphasis on content and certain days focused on SJ topics such as culturally responsive teaching. This reflects the tendency toward focusing on SJ in introductory classes and shifting to content only in later classes (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zeichner, 2009). What this analysis made clear is that instructors must teach content with a socially just lens and consistently make clear connections between SJ theory and practice.

Part IV: Analysis and Interpretation of Revised *Foundations of Reading* Course

I began the revision of the *CI 5413: Foundations of Reading* course by compiling the findings from the literature review, syllabus analysis, and interview, and applying those ideas. These ideas include:

- integrating SJ into literacy content (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zeichner, 2009);
- describing and modeling specific SJ pedagogical strategies in literacy instruction (Howard et al., 2018; Muhammad, 2020; Overstreet, 2019);
- providing opportunities for intentional reflection (Izadinia, 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2009);
- engaging TCs in community of peers and a local school (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

Integrating SJ into Literacy Content

The introductory level classes were explicit in their course descriptions and course goals about how SJ would be addressed in the course. Within the course description for Foundations of Reading, I added a sentence explaining that TCs would learn "how to infuse SJ and DEI practices into their literacy instruction." Additionally, I added a course goal that acknowledged the experiences some TCs may have had in previous classes and how that can be integrated with what they learn about literacy. Finally, I added a student learning objective explaining that TCs will "learn and begin to apply their understanding of how SJ and DEI topics inform and can be infused in literacy instruction." Making these slight changes to the course description and goals for the

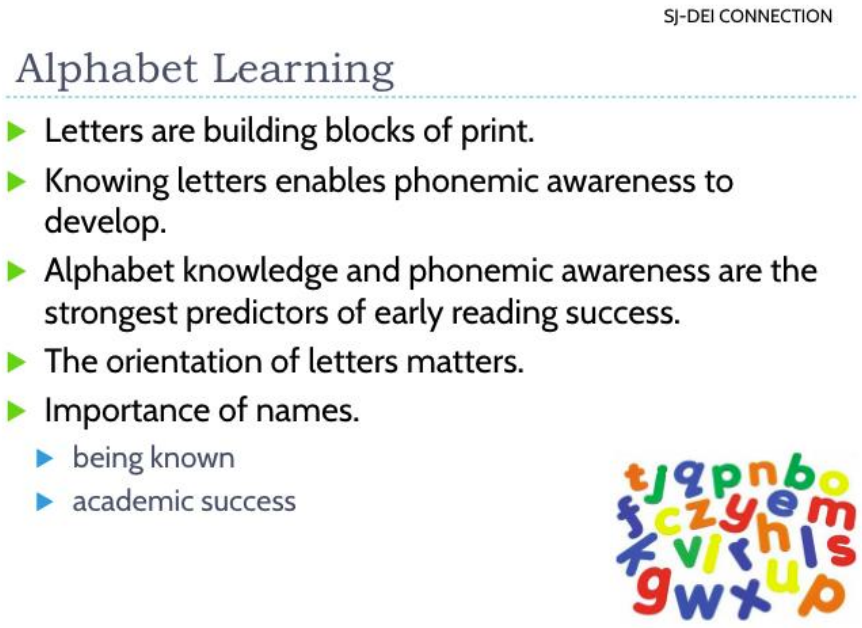
course emphasize the idea that SJ should always be integrated into how we think about teaching, especially in this literacy-specific classes.

As I stated in the preceding analysis section, the required textbook teaches a developmental view of literacy. In past semesters, there has not been an explicit connection between how a developmental perspective is an asset-based perspective. One change I made in class was to intentionally make this connection clear to TCs and refer to it throughout the semester. Additionally, ten of the original readings were written by White authors, and seven were outdated. In the revised syllabus, I included scholarly articles or chapters by several women of color, including Muhammad (2020), Overstreet (2019), and Walker-Dalhouse and Risko (2020). A chapter on dual language instruction by Dominguez and Gutierrez (2019) was included, as well as updated readings on vocabulary development and digital literacy.

I adjusted lectures to include slides making explicit connections to SJ-DEI within a particular topic. For example, when discussing emergent readers and writers, I discussed how critical name writing is for young readers. Name writing skills are highly correlated with phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge, and students who are proficient in name writing outperformed peers on many literacy tasks (Bloodgood, 1999; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Welsch et al., 2003). However, this knowledge contributes not just to academic success, but it is also a way of making sure students feel known in the classroom which is a socially just practice.

Figure 1

Sample Slide from Emergent Literacy Lecture



Describing and Modeling Specific SJ Pedagogical Strategies in Literacy Instruction

Explicit modeling of SJ pedagogies in literacy instruction is a critical component for TCs (Howard et al., 2018; Muhammad, 2020; Overstreet, 2019). During the course, TCs read three chapters from *Cultivating Genius* detailing Muhammad's four pursuits: identity, skill, intellect, and criticality. During class, TCs examined sample literacy lesson plans in which the four pursuits were addressed. After reading these chapters, TCs had the opportunity to apply their learning to their lesson plans and implement them in buddy teaching sessions. I revised the lesson plan template to include 4 questions to help TCs think about integrating the four pursuits:

1. Identity: How will your teaching help students learn something about themselves and/or others?

2. Skill: What skills and content learning standards are you teaching?
3. Intellect: What will your students become smarter about?
4. Criticality: How will you engage your thinking about power, equity, and anti-oppression in the text, in society, and in the world?

Implementing these four pursuits into lesson plans not only teaches content but provides deeper understanding and learning rather than focusing solely on skill development.

One of the main topics in the class is the use of literacy assessments. Many SJ advocates are critical of the use of literacy assessments, and assessments in general, and we discussed the problems with assessments that center Whiteness by assuming certain cultural knowledge. However, we also discussed ways assessments can be used to provide an equitable education for all students. Teacher candidates discussed how literacy assessments such as the Test of Phonemic Awareness can identify areas where students are excelling and areas where they need additional support. Phonemic awareness is a foundational skill all students need in order to read, and TCs discussed the importance of providing support and intervention early on. I modeled ways that phonemic awareness can be taught with any read-aloud book, can be kinesthetic, and can support all K–6 students in their learning. I enhanced this discussion by stating that learning goals and SJ aims are met in multiple ways to meet learners needs.

Teacher candidates also learned about the use of qualitative spelling inventories. These inventories are developmental in nature and look at a student's understanding of different spelling features. Rather than highlighting the areas where a student struggled, TCs looked at the spelling inventory as a way to identify patterns a student has mastered and patterns they have not yet experienced. I modeled how to use word sorts to teach

these patterns and how to connect these patterns to authentic reading. Again, both academic and SJ aims are met by intentional attention and planning for both.

Providing Opportunities for Intentional Reflection

Reflection is an effective strategy for preparing socially just teachers (Izadinia, 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2009). However, reflection must be intentionally directed. The following lesson plan reflection questions were revised based on interview data from Rose and M. Overstreet:

1. How do you think the lesson went?
2. How is your buddy reflected in this lesson?
3. How is the world reflected in this lesson?
4. Did your buddy achieve the objective in this lesson? How do you know?
5. What would you revise if you were to teach it again?
6. How does this lesson inform your future practice?

These questions highlight the importance of consistent reflection and evaluation of pedagogy, particularly which voices are being amplified or silenced (Chapter 2, pg. 27). The due dates for lesson plans were changed, as well. In past semesters, lesson plans were due at the beginning of the week before buddy sessions, but to encourage reflection, lesson plans were due after class at the end of the week. Grades on lesson plans were not affected by how TCs answered the reflection questions.

Specific reflection questions followed the chapters from *Cultivating Genius*. For Chapter 1, TCs reflected on these questions: 1) What are your own ideologies and beliefs (Can be about education in general, but then zero in on literacy)? 2) How do you define literacy in your classroom/teaching space? 3) How does Muhammad's Historical Literacy

Framework move students toward liberation? After reading the second chapter, TCs reflected on their personal literacy histories by answering questions such as: 1) What experiences did you have in school that helped you learn about yourself? 2) How do/did you practice literacies at home and in your community? 3) What is the purpose of literacy and language in your life? After reading the third selected chapter, TCs were asked to consider how they select literature to teach their buddies and how they can layer text to enrich teaching and learning. These questions intentionally direct TCs to consider how their identities impact their teaching and the way they understand literacy.

Engaging TCs in Community of Peers and a Local School

The literature indicates that engaging TCs in a community of peers and in a local school context is effective in developing a socially just approach to teaching (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). The way groups, or Learning Communities, were used throughout the semester changed significantly based on the review of the literature as well as the interview with Rose. Both sources emphasized the need for learning to occur in communities of peers. Rose also pointed out the tendency toward individualism in American schools. True jigsaws were used often where each group became experts on a portion of a reading or a concept and were responsible for teaching a new group of their peers. Most of the time, discussions of readings began in small groups so all TCs could participate and learn together. Then a large group discussion would begin with a share-out from the small groups.

Building a class community remained a focus during the semester. We discussed how socially just teachers work to build supportive class communities that are safe, predictable, and where students can expect deep relationships with the teacher and with

one another. Throughout the semester, class often started with different relationship-building strategies and class meeting structures. One day, we started in a circle and shared one thing we were excited about and one thing we were worried about that day. Teacher candidates did not have to share and could pass, but many shared something they were anxious about. One TC came to talk with me after class and shared several challenges she was facing at the time and said she was willing to share because of the classroom community we had built.

The course takes place in a local elementary school, and TCs have the opportunity to work with a primary and intermediate buddy. Throughout the semester, TCs interact with teachers in the building, social workers, and other school personnel. By immersing themselves in a school context, TCs had opportunities to continue where they left off in introductory courses in considering their own educational experiences and how that can manifest itself in teaching, specifically in beliefs held about parents or students.

Discussion and Conclusion

The process of infusing SJ throughout a class required a deep, analytical dive into the syllabus and the purposes of certain instructional techniques. It required me to model and live what I was teaching. I had to constantly reflect on and analyze the way I was teaching and interacting with TCs. I was more aware than ever of the voices that were heard most often in my classroom, especially my own. The following were the ideas that were used to revise the course, *CI 5413: Foundations of Reading*:

- integrating SJ into literacy content (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zeichner, 2009);

- describing and modeling specific SJ pedagogical strategies in literacy instruction (Howard et al., 2018; Muhammad, 2020; Overstreet, 2019);
- providing opportunities for intentional reflection (Izadinia, 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2009);
- engaging TCs in community of peers and a local school (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

Although this is a start, more needs to be done. Programs need to think about teacher education as a collective effort rather than each individual educator doing their own work in their own field. There needs to be a concerted effort toward crafting a unifying understanding of social justice that can be woven throughout the program. Teacher educators should be collaborating and sharing what they are trying in their classrooms. As I was analyzing the syllabi, I realized that there were readings in the introductory level classes that we repeated in Foundations of Reading. How does the discussion look in that class and how can the discussion in my class build on that? If SJ is important, programs need to take the time to make sure it is woven throughout in a cohesive, robust, and rigorous way. This requires not just introductory course instructors telling discipline area instructors what they do, and what should follow. Rather, it requires consistent, ongoing conversations back and forth between instructors, conversations that will result in continual improvement across all coursework.

There might be hesitation that infusing SJ within discipline coursework will take away from teaching content because too much time will be spent on SJ. But I would argue that if we care about SJ, it should be infused in all content that we teach. It should not be a stand-alone topic that is addressed once a semester. If it is indeed a framework

that shapes the way we think about students, how we plan and deliver instruction, and how we cultivate classroom communities, SJ should be a constant topic of conversation.

As alluded to throughout this paper, one of the main problems with SJ in teacher education programs is the narrow focus in how it is defined. Many teacher education programs think of SJ in mainly systemic terms, using language such as "dismantling systems of oppression" and while that is a part of SJ, it does not connect to practice. Teacher candidates can identify the way institutions have oppressed, and continue to oppress, groups of people, but they are unable to identify specific ways to dismantle those systems. However, expanding SJ to include the systems in our own classrooms and how we can change those to provide more equitable and inclusive outcomes—that feels achievable. If TCs understand SJ as creating a safe, predictable classroom where students know they are cared for and can learn content in a way that is culturally relevant to them, that feels like a real way to infuse SJ-DEI into their future classrooms. If we can think about how we can plan instruction to make learning equitable and accessible for all students, that may allow TCs to become socially just educators in the future.

Chapter 4:

A Redesigned Literacy Curriculum Enacted

Teaching in the United States has become an increasingly complex profession. As diversity within classrooms grows, the need for culturally responsive, inclusive, and sustaining classrooms grows as well. Many teacher education (TE) programs have committed to preparing teacher candidates to teach in socially just ways on solid, theoretical foundations. But such programs often fall short of actual implementation or enactment.

This deficit is quite evident in how TE programs teach social justice (SJ) content. Introductory classes carry the bulk of the responsibility for exposing future teachers to the social justice challenges that prevail in American society, but often the conversation stops at this point. This is particularly true once classes become more focused on preparing teacher candidates (TCs) to teach disciplinary content—SJ becomes less of a focus. What is also evident is that many discipline-specific classes could be revised to model what socially just teaching looks like in a particular discipline, with leadership from faculty committed to this goal.

SJ and disciplinary content do not have to be mutually exclusive. In fact, if teacher educators are truly teaching with an SJ lens or a theoretical framework that informs teaching, SJ and content are inextricably linked (Dyches & Boyd, 2017). If TE programs truly seek to prepare TCs to teach in a socially just way, SJ cannot be separated from content because it encompasses everything they will do as a teacher. Social justice informs the ways elementary teachers see and understand their K–6 students, the way

they think about and plan instruction, and how they use resources and assessments to provide equitable and inclusive experiences for all students.

Literature Review

I conducted a broader literature review for this research which can be found in Chapter 2: "Social Justice in Teacher Education Literature." The following summary describes the most relevant literature to this study: 1) how SJ and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are defined and used in my study; 2) how SJ has been implemented in TE programs in previous studies; 3) how SJ has been infused in literacy-specific TE courses; and 4) how self-efficacy is defined and how the research on it can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a TE course.

Definition of Social Justice

Social justice has a variety of definitions and interpretations in the literature. Well-known work in culturally responsive, culturally relevant, and culturally sustaining teaching highlights the assets that students bring to the classroom, as well as the critical need for students to see their culture and experiences in their curriculum (Gay, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Paris, 2012). Some researchers focus on providing care and deep relationships to students (Alvarez, 2019; Noddings, 1984). Others focus on providing physical and mental safety (Alvarez, 2019). Still others understand SJ as preparing students to take on responsibility for their own education or as the dismantling of oppressive structures (Department of Curriculum and Instruction, 2022; Hackman, 2005). Each of these definitions emphasize components of SJ, but there is not one definition that fully encapsulates the term.

Additionally, the usage of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in reference to movements toward SJ has become increasingly popular in the literature and in broader society. Businesses, universities, and other organizations have acknowledged the need for societal and organizational change, many working to increase DEI in their respective spaces (e.g., Bowen et al., 2021; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, 2021; Tisby, 2020). For the purposes of my study, DEI offers further structure when infusing SJ into literacy education by identifying *who* is centered, *what* is taught, and *how* to teach in a way that includes all students. The following definition is my compilation of the work of leading TE researchers and includes aspects of SJ and DEI. I used this definition to guide my research and interpretation of this study:

> Social justice is a comprehensive approach to teaching that encompasses the pedagogies, dispositions, and relationships of individual teachers. It is a dedication and commitment to teaching all students equitably and inclusively. Teachers who are committed to social justice recognize and teach students about inequalities but also work to address those inequalities in their own classrooms (Dyches & Boyd, 2017). Socially just educators consistently reflect on and evaluate their own actions and pedagogy to identify which voices are being amplified and which are silenced. Socially just teachers create classrooms where their students can expect stability, care, and deep learning. These teachers know that there are many influences that inform learners' development (Zygmunt & Clark, 2016) and that each learner brings unique "funds of knowledge" to the classroom, meaning the body of knowledge that is embedded in cultural practices and daily routines and lives of families (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Additionally,

> socially just educators approach conversations about SJ and DEI with understanding, humility, and the ability to listen to others, even if the parties disagree, in order to keep the door open for future conversation (Tisby, 2020). Socially just educators evaluate the culture in their classroom, school, and district to identify and dismantle policies and programs that systematically oppress students. Finally, socially just teaching is an ongoing process for individual teachers that should be aided by professional development and relationships with their peers. (Chapter 2: "Social Justice in Teacher Education Literature," pp. 27-28)

Effective SJ Practices used in Teacher Preparation

Several approaches to SJ teacher preparation are evident in the literature and were incorporated into my redesign of a course called *Foundations of Reading* at a large, R1 midwestern university. Researchers have found that engaging TCs in local communities, especially in communities that are racially, socially, and economically diverse, is effective to prepare socially just teachers by developing critical awareness of their own identities (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015). Scholars have shown that a holistic and practice-based experience aids TCs in making the connection between coursework and practice by providing TCs more time in actual classrooms (Hollins, 2011; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Whipp, 2013 Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015).

Other researchers have demonstrated that engaging in a community of peers is an effective strategy because TCs can learn collaboratively with their fellow TCs through exchanging ideas, problem-solving, and reflecting on teaching in order to improve K–6

student learning and discuss transfer of ideas from coursework to practice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). Researchers also found that when TCs were given opportunities to reexamine values, beliefs, and teaching practices, their professional identities were shaped in a way that reflected a commitment to socially just teaching through the development of sociocultural consciousness (Izadinia, 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2009).

Social Justice in Literacy Education

The literature looking at infusing SJ into literacy education focuses on describing and modeling specific SJ pedagogical strategies in literacy instruction (Howard et al., 2018; Muhammad, 2020; Overstreet, 2019). Muhammad (2020) identified four literacy pursuits: identity, skill, intellect, and criticality. By integrating these pursuits into literacy lesson plans, content is addressed, but learning can be deeper and more critical than focusing solely on skill development. Additionally, Overstreet (2019) found that specific modeling of socially just literacy teaching through think-alouds, role-playing, and simulations were effective in equipping TCs to teach literacy in more socially just ways.

Self-Efficacy

Measuring perceived self-efficacy can be a tool to evaluate the development of TCs and was used in this study to evaluate the development of socially just teaching in TCs. Self-efficacy beliefs, a concept introduced by Bandura (1977), describes the assessment of one's confidence or capability of attaining a certain level of performance on a given task. This is a significant area of study, particularly in TE, because as Tschannen-Moran et al. (2017) explain, the belief or confidence in one's ability to complete a certain task can act as a "powerful driver influencing one's motivation to act,

the effort one puts forth in the endeavor, persistence in that effort, and resilience in the face of setbacks" (p. 438).

For teacher educators, it is critical to understand TCs' self-efficacy beliefs because, as Tschannen-Moran et al. (2017) suggest, the belief in ability has a significant impact on teaching outcomes. For example, a teacher with low confidence in their ability to teach literacy would be more likely to put forth less effort and have lower motivation to face challenges. This teacher would be more likely to give up when a student struggled. However, when compared to a teacher with high self-efficacy in their ability to teach literacy, that teacher would be more likely to put forth more effort, have higher motivation, and higher resilience to challenges, resulting in better outcomes for students. As Tchannen-Moran et al. put it, "[s]elf-efficacy beliefs can therefore become self-fulfilling prophesies, validating either beliefs of capability or of incompetence" (p. 438).

Self-efficacy beliefs can be influenced by four types of experience: vicarious experience, social persuasion, physiological and emotional states, and mastery experience (Bandura, 1997). In vicarious experience, TCs learn and construct their beliefs by watching others teach. This is correlated to the literature suggesting that holistic, practice-based experiences are effective in preparing socially just teachers. By observing a model that they can identify with, TCs' self-efficacy can be impacted positively. Social persuasion, or supportive feedback from supervisors, instructors, or other educators, is likely to increase self-efficacy. The physiological or emotional state of a TC as they prepare to teach can also impact their self-efficacy. Positive emotions contribute to higher self-efficacy whereas negative emotions contribute to lower self-efficacy. Finally, mastery experience ensues when a TC can see improvement in student outcomes as a

result of their teaching. These experiences should be incorporated into TE to impact TCs' self-efficacy beliefs in a positive way.

It is important to understand the self-efficacy trends that have been measured in the research. Shaw et al. (2007) found that TCs entered their reading methods class with fairly high levels of self-efficacy and that their self-efficacy increased as their knowledge of content increased, and they were able to apply their knowledge in a practicum setting. However, self-efficacy gains are not necessarily made in a linear way. Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) found that many TCs experience an "implementation dip" in which their self-efficacy decreased as a result of learning more about the complexity of the subject. Self-efficacy can be a helpful indicator when evaluating the development of TCs and helped mark the development of socially just teaching practices in literacy in this study.

Purpose of the Present Study

SJ is a crucial issue to address in TE, especially in the realm of literacy education. After completing significant background research and analysis of pre-existing introductory curricula in an elementary education program (see Part 1 of my study in Chapter 3: "A Process to Redesign Literacy Curriculum with Social Justice Focus"), this article shifts the focus to what happens when the curriculum for an introductory course in literacy education is revised to infuse SJ concepts across the curriculum and enact them in the classroom. Thus, the purpose of Part Two of my dissertation study is to understand what TCs state prior to and after they participate in the revised literacy course as follows: (1) Are SJ-DEI ideas taken up (or not) by TCs as they participate in a literacy course? (2) What are TCs' perceived levels of self-efficacy in terms of enacting SJ-DEI pedagogies

in literacy? and (3) How is self-efficacy manifested in TCs' literacy practices when constructing lessons and working with K–6 youth in practicum settings after a revised curriculum is enacted? The following research question guided the work for Part Two of my study: *How do teacher candidates' knowledge and perceived self-efficacy about using SJ-DEI concepts change after participating in a redesigned course?*

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

A compilation of conceptual frameworks informed this research, particularly pedagogical moves, how findings were interpreted, and how the study was designed. To begin, I drew upon Dyches and Boyd's (2017) framework, Social Justice Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (SJPCK), which guides my work, particularly with the undergirding assumption that teaching practices are never neutral and that teaching should never be isolated from social justice knowledge. Dyches and Boyd (2017) acknowledge that "something *happens* when a teacher translates content for student consumption" (p. 479). A teacher's understanding and teaching of content is significantly impacted by their beliefs about social justice. Social justice practice should not be separated from content knowledge; rather, it should inform and shape content knowledge and teaching practices. In addition, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1998), Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2001), and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012) are all helpful frameworks when considering specific, socially just pedagogical moves and practices. I used these frameworks as I worked to understand how TCs enact their knowledge of SJ in their pedagogy and how SJ is integrated into their content knowledge.

Pragmatism serves as the theoretical framework informing this work, particularly in the use of case study as a methodology. Pragmatism focuses on the outcomes of the

research—the actions, situations, and consequences of inquiry rather than being wedded to a particular method (Creswell, 2007). Researchers focus on the questions being asked or the problem being studied and choosing methods that aligns with answering those questions. Pragmatism places a great deal of importance on the specific context in which the research takes place with particular attention paid to a problem in a specific place and potential solutions. Specificity and transferability, rather than generalizability, are the goals of pragmatism, with a usable, specific outcome. According to Dillon et al. (2018, pragmatism "calls for a personal commitment to revision, reflection, and inquiry, which is not only more important than the latest 'scientific truth'; pragmatists argue that it leads to the only sort of truth that is both useful and justifiable" (p. 13). The work produced by this study is a revised curriculum with practical application for preparing TCs for more socially just teaching in literacy.

Methodology

Study Design

To answer my research question using a pragmatic theoretical lens, I used a holistic case study (Yin, 1984). Case studies are concerned with the global nature and outcome of a particular context, in this case, the learning and teaching practices of TCs in *Foundations of Reading* during and after they experience a revised curriculum (Yin, 1984, p. 49). Yin's case study strategy guided this work, specifically regarding the initial design and data collection. In this study, there was a clearly identifiable case with boundaries, and purposeful sampling of key informant TCs (Creswell, 2007, p. 75). The case was defined as one section of the Fall 2021 *Foundations of Reading*, which included TCs who chose to enroll in the class and chose to participate in the study.

Researcher Role

My role as researcher was as a participant—because I taught the class—and as a participant observer—because I observed and recorded data about myself and about the TCs in the class. Since I was the instructor for this class and had an evaluative role, it was critical that TCs understood that their grade in the class was not dependent on whether they agreed to participate in the study. To keep my roles as instructor and researcher separate, I asked all TCs to complete a consent form on the first day of the semester after explaining my research interests and their potential role as participants. I explained that while I will open consent forms to begin my recursive analysis, what I collected for research will not impact grades. TCs who volunteered as key informants agreed to an additional consent form (for interviews and examination of their lesson plans) and were assured that their grades were not impacted by their participation in or withdrawal from this study.

To ensure continuous reflection on my roles as a researcher and teacher, I completed reflexive memos after each class period. In these memos, I reflected on how my experiences and biases may impact how I thought about the TCs in my class and how I interpreted data. For example, I considered my own experiences with reading as an elementary student and how that impacts the way I think about reading as an adult. I enjoyed reading and learning to read came easily to me. Because of this positive experience, I continue to think about reading very positively. But I recognize that TCs in my class may not have had good experiences learning to read and that could impact their attitudes about teaching reading.

Site and Context Description

The focus of my study was one section of the Fall 2021 *Foundations of Reading* offered at a large midwestern university. The class is scheduled after two foundations of elementary education courses and is a precursor to two additional literacy methods courses. Multiple sections of *Foundations of Reading* are regularly offered each semester, and the class meets two days a week from 8:00 am–12:20 pm. During the semester-long experience, TCs participated in structured university class sessions, whole group and small group discussions, and the accompanying practica where they each taught literacy lessons to two elementary school students ("buddies") at two different grade levels, twice a week for 30-minute sessions.

The class provided a clearly defined case with boundaries, including a start date, specific days and times, and a clear ending when the semester closed out (September 7, 2021 through December 14, 2021). This study primarily took place at a local elementary school located in a large Midwestern city where I taught the class in a spare classroom, and where the accompanying practicum took place. The elementary school serves approximately 450 pre-K through 5th grade students, and 80% of elementary students enrolled at the school identify as Black. Additionally, 83% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The selection of this partner school—because of the student demographics—was critical to the revised curriculum focused on SJ and DEI concepts that I implemented.

Participants

This study focused on one section of TCs taking *Foundations of Reading* in Fall 2021. I observed and studied all consenting participants (n=22) during class sessions as

they moved through activities, discussions, and practica. I did not record any observations of TCs who did not consent to participate. Participants in this study were representative of many TE program populations as the majority were white females (18). Additionally, two white male students and four female students representing Hispanic and Asian ethnicities were enrolled in the class.

Key to my study, I wanted to further understand three individual TCs' experiences in the class. These participants, referred to as "key informants," were selected via purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling "focuses on selecting information-rich cases [or participants] whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). I selected key informants purposively using *maximum variation sampling* in order to bring as much variety to the participant group as possible. Maximum variation sampling "aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation" (Patton, 2002, p. 235). These four candidates represented differing backgrounds and provided the study with varying viewpoints and ways of experiencing the class which allowed for shared patterns to emerge. Recruiting four key informants ensured that if one dropped out, I would still have three remaining.

Key informants were chosen according to the following criteria, ranked in order of importance:

1. Participants must have been currently enrolled in *Foundations of Reading*.
2. Participants gave consent to participate in the study.
3. Participants were chosen based on willingness to discuss their understanding of and experience with SJ-DEI, as well as their own beliefs and situated knowledge.

4. Participants represented different ethnicities and racial backgrounds.
5. When possible, participants that represented multiple gender identities were selected.

Table 3

Key Informant Demographics

Teacher Candidate	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Pseudonym
TC 1	White	Female	Katie
TC 2*	White	Female	Geraldine
TC 3	Hispanic	Female	Susie
TC 4	White	Female	Martha

*Teacher Candidate 2 withdrew from the study for personal reasons after interview 1

Data Collection

Case study methodologies can be challenging because data collection procedures cannot be routinized (Yin, 1984, p. 62). Yet, such studies can be carefully designed and described for fellow researchers. To address this, I developed and articulated my data collection and analysis strategies and outlined procedures to enable me to gather data that is credible and complete in portraying the phenomena under study. Additionally, multiple data sources, both quantitative and qualitative, provided breadth and depth and an additional capacity to triangulate the data. This was done not to come to one "answer" or understanding of the phenomena under study, but rather to allow a more complete and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon or issue being studied. Multiple data sources allowed me to find patterns, as well as identify events that did not fit within a previously identified pattern, which is also important for clarity and consistency (Patton, 2002).

Data sources for this case study included primary data in the form of (1) pre- and post- questionnaires that all TCs in the course completed, including three questions

measuring TCs' self-efficacy and two open-ended questions exploring TCs' understanding of SJ [see Appendix C]; (2) semi-structured interviews completed by key informants at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester [see Appendix D]; and (3) student lesson plans written and taught by the key informants. Secondary data included my field notes from observations of group and class discussions. Any jottings or other physical artifacts were locked in a filing cabinet until the time when they need to be destroyed. An overview of each data source is in Table 4 below. More description about my data collection and analysis follows the table.

Table 4

Data Collection

Type of Data:	Description:	Storage Strategy:	Estimated Time of Collection:
Semi-Structured Interviews (Primary):	Conduct focused, semi-structured interviews with 3 TCs using the same list of questions for all interviews but allowing room for conversation (1 additional TC will be selected as an alternate.)	Recorded via otter.ai Transcripts stored in Box	3 times- beginning, middle, and end of semester
Documents (Primary):	Pre- and post-questionnaires with open-ended writing response - "What does social justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion mean for you? How do you see these ideas intersecting with literacy? What does it mean to be a social justice educator?"	Google Forms - export responses and de-identify	Beginning and end of semester
Physical Artifacts (Primary):	TC lesson plans	Downloaded from Canvas, de-identified, stored in Box	Weekly
Fieldnotes (Secondary):	Researcher records observations of whole and small group discussions	Recorded as jottings in small notebook;	Weekly

	written up as a fieldnote, coded as DO, stored in Box	
TC reflections - class assignment	Downloaded from Canvas, de-identified, stored in Box	Weekly

Pre- and post-questionnaires, focused on measuring perceived self-efficacy, offered a benchmark with which to compare responses throughout the semester and were given on the first and last day of the semester. The questions on the pre- and post-questionnaires remained consistent from the beginning to the end of the semester and were "phrased in terms of *can do* rather than *will do*" to measure perceived capability rather than intention (Bandura, 2006, p. 308). This data collection tool was administered in a Google Form. Data collected from the pre-questionnaire were used to plan learning experiences during the semester and also used throughout the semester for cross-case analysis. At the end of the semester, pre- and post-questionnaire data offered insight into changes in TCs' self-efficacy. Open-ended responses disclosed changes in the ways TCs defined and understood SJ.

Interviews with key informants accompanied the pre- and post-questionnaires and lesson plans and provided an opportunity to uncover TCs' understandings of SJ-DEI and how those ideas intersected with teaching literacy. Each of the key informants were interviewed three times during the semester and followed a semi-structured format. Specifically, I used an interview guide listing the questions to be explored during the interview [See Appendix D]. This enabled me to remain focused on the identified topics during the interview, use the key informants' time efficiently, and allow for a response or

follow-up question as needed (Patton, 2002). The following table indicates the timeline and purpose of each interview:

Table 5

Interview Timeline and Purpose

Interview #	Timeline for Interview	Purpose
1	Within the first two weeks of the semester	Establish a relationship and familiarity with the participant, as well as to gain an initial understanding of how participants understand SJ-DEI in a literacy context.
2	Between the sixth and eighth weeks	Gain an understanding of how informants are or are not infusing SJ-DEI practices discussed in class into their lesson plans. Lesson plans were selected by informants to discuss and used by the researcher to probe comprehension or observed teaching practices.
3	Final week of class	Gain understanding of key informants' learning throughout the semester and how or if their thinking and confidence in teaching in a way that promotes SJ had changed. Lesson plans were selected and used by the researcher to probe comprehension or observed teaching practices.

Data Analysis

The data collection and analysis in my qualitative study remained ongoing and recursive (Patton, 2002). This meant analysis began each day immediately after data collection, and the findings helped shape and inform future data collection. This process was particularly important for observations that took place during each class session (whole class and small group activities), and which were recorded in field notes. I typed field notes based on jottings, and analytic memos initiated analysis and interpretation, and were coded with inductive coding (Emerson et al., 2011). After each class session, I completed a field log which included all fieldwork activities, an analytic memo, a

reflexive memo, and any follow-up activities. Fieldwork activities briefly described what the topics were in class that day. The analytic memo served as a place to begin to interpret ideas.

I began to identify patterns among TCs as they moved through the day's activities, and I began to speculate about what I heard and saw, as well as cross-examine patterns from previous days. The reflexive memo mainly focused on my own teaching, specifically on how I worked to infuse SJ and DEI through various class activities, what seemed to work well, what I might do differently in the future and why, and to examine my own biases. These memos were also an opportunity to reflect on behaviors I noticed in TCs that may have been connected to their initial understanding of SJ-DEI.

After I collected interview data, I transcribed all interviews as soon as possible and analyzed these data by reading each individual key informant's responses separately, then across the group, looking for key ideas in the responses, and writing theoretical memos illuminating emerging patterns (Madison, 2020). Miles et al. (2020) suggest using two coding cycles to analyze the raw data collected in a qualitative study. The first cycle focused on coding patterns that emerged in the data using In Vivo Coding which was developed from the participants' language to prioritize and value the voices of participants in the study (Miles et al., 2020). Additionally, In Vivo Coding allowed me to analyze the data inductively, starting with the raw data and looking for patterns that emerged versus assigning a list of a priori codes.

My analysis moved towards interpretation as I developed pattern codes during my second cycle which were inferential or explanatory rather than primarily descriptive or summative, pulling material from the first cycle into "more meaningful units of analysis"

(Miles et al., 2020, p. 79). Pattern codes included 1) categories or themes and 2) concepts or theoretical constructs. These emerged from repeated words or phrases evident in first cycle coding. When a particular pattern code was identified during second cycle coding, I wrote an analytic memo to expand on it (Miles et al., 2020, p. 81). I retained and revisited these memos, and they became the basis for thematic write-ups at the end of the study. Additionally, Miles et al. (2020) state that "a Pattern Code does not get discounted, but rather gets *qualified"* (p. 81). In other words, if data emerge that do not fit a pattern exactly, the pattern can be expanded or clarified. This way, a researcher can avoid the tendency to ignore non-conforming data.

Validity and reliability are addressed by qualitative researchers in specific ways to ensure consistency in data collection and interpretation. To ensure validity and reliability for this study, I enlisted the participation of a colleague as a research partner. This colleague taught *Foundations of Reading* in previous semesters and was familiar with the content and previous syllabus. This individual was also skilled as a qualitative researcher and understood the purpose of my study. My research partner joined class twice during the semester to record observations and then discuss them with me after class. This process helped ensure the validity and reliability of my observations and resulting interpretation by providing a check for consistency in observation data.

I also employed member checks with key informants to provide an additional check for validity and reliability. I emailed completed interview transcriptions and analytic memos to key informants for their review and feedback. I wanted to ensure that key informants felt I had accurately captured their experiences and their responses to my questions. Finally, any TC that was enrolled in the section of *Foundations of Reading* that

was part of this study was invited to read and provide feedback on my interpretation of the data. This was accomplished by offering periodic reminders for any TCs that were interested to request a copy of my work.

Findings and Interpretation

The following section explores the findings and my interpretation of the data collected during this study. The first section explores TCs' initial understandings of SJ and DEI and how those intersect with literacy through analysis of pre-*Foundations of Reading* questionnaire data and early interview responses with key informants. The second section explores TCs' changing understandings of SJ and DEI, through analysis of post-*Foundations of Reading* questionnaire data and second and third interviews with key informants. The third and final section explores changes in TCs' perceived self-efficacy on three tasks related to SJ and DEI, measured at the beginning and end of the Fall 2021 semester.

Part I: Pre-Course Questionnaire and Interviews—Analysis and Interpretation

In the following sections, I identify two overarching themes that emerged after the analysis of the pre-questionnaires and initial interviews— "Defining SJ" and "Children's Books as Vehicles to Discuss SJ." Within each theme, subthemes emerged, as well. In the following sections, I describe each theme and subtheme, then instantiate these with examples from questionnaires and interviews.

The first theme and subthemes indicated a wide, varied, and interrelated understanding of SJ among TCs which is consistent with the review of the literature. The second theme and subthemes indicated an understanding of enacting SJ that was limited to using children's books. The following table indicates the number of TC responses that

reflected each theme and subtheme. The table also includes illustrative data samples. Following the table, these themes are described in more depth and supported by data.

Table 6

Themes Identified in Pre-Questionnaire and First Interview Analysis

Theme	Number of TC Responses	In Vivo Examples
#1. Defining Social Justice and DEI	22	"To me, social justice, equity, and inclusion means everyone's needs are being met somehow and there is an understanding and appreciations of everyone's differences." "Social justice, equity, and inclusion means that every student is offered opportunities that will help them succeed [to] the best of their ability no matter the background they come from."
Subthemes to Defining Social Justice		
1. Identity	9	"Be the facilitator of change." "Advocating for others when their rights are being taken away." "Allowing all voices to be heard."
2. Respect	7	"It means seeing everyone as their own individual and respecting them for exactly who they are." "It means respecting everyones [*sic*] differences." "Treating everyone equally with respect."
3. Acceptance	7	"Inclusion is making sure students are accepted and appreciated for all the knowledge they bring into our spaces." "It means to include everyone no matter what background, ethnicity, culture, etc. they have."
4. Dismantling Systems and Interrogating Bias	6	"Acknowledging my positionality and biases and challenging myself to interrogate the systems/traditions/precedents that oppress marginalized groups." "It means ensuring the content we learn in class works to dismantle systems of oppression and to celebrate multiculturalism and all students' experiences. Not only does it mean teaching and learning about power and oppression, but it also means teaching and learning in a

		way that combats some of these oppressions ingrained in the school system."
#2. Children's Books as Vehicles to Discuss SJ	8	"The stories and setting and characters that we expose our students to in a classroom setting can shape their understanding and perception of the world around them." "There is a lot of subjects [*sic*] of children's books that can help with social justice and diversity, and inclusion that can help a lot for children."
Sub-Themes to Children's Books		
1. Primarily Focused on Race	9	"Highlighting white people and many people of color are not being represented in books." "Ensuring that a wide range of BIPOC stories and authors are represented." "Children's books today have more main characters of animals than people of color."
2. Power in Position as Teacher	3	"As an educator I believe it is important to represent all members of the classroom community in your curriculum as well as educate them on all aspects of the world around them in a respectful manner." "It is crucial that those in power regarding literacy choose to use it as a tool for societal progress."
3. Access	3	"Some children have access to multitudes of books or one-on-one contact with parents who read to them or can spend time practicing writing. However, some children may only get limited time with parents or may not have access to the same resources. Children who do not have many resources at home may seem slower to learn than others but it is important to remember that they have just as much potential to become great readers and writers as their peers, they just may need extra time or assistance to get there."
4. Perspective-Taking	2	"See and understand the stories of other humans who may look different or experience the world through a different lens."

Theme #1—Defining Social Justice and DEI

As was evident from the literature defining SJ and DEI, TCs initial understanding of these terms was wide with various foci. Nine TC responses described how SJ and DEI influenced their identities as future teachers, using terms such as "facilitator," "advocate for change," or "world changers." TCs also defined SJ and DEI by equating those terms with other concepts such as respect, acceptance, and dismantling systems. Each of these definitions is examined in further detail below with data clips to illustrate, as well as my interpretation.

Subtheme 1—Identity. The first subtheme to emerge during analysis was the idea of SJ and DEI as TCs facilitating change or advocating for those without a voice. This was evident as nine responses illustrated this theme. For example, in the first set of interviews, key informants used terms such as "make an impact" and "shape students." Martha, a White TC who served as one of the key informants, stated:

> I think teaching is important to me [because] I was going to be able to . . . make an impact on the students' lives. I really want to be able to . . . be a part of . . . those things that aren't just . . . the learning objectives and stuff like that, more like morals, . . . please and thank yous [*sic*], and all of those kinds of things. I also just . . . really like being a part of . . . their development and being able to . . . I always wanted to be, make some type of . . . impact or some type of long-lasting effect. And I just didn't want to be with someone for just a few days or something, I wanted to be able to be with them for a long time, and I wanted them . . . to come back and say hi to me. And I wanted to . . . go to graduation parties,

> and I wanted to be able to . . . see . . . a lifelong thing instead of just having that impact for . . . a few days or . . . a season and be done.

In this case, making an impact was centered on students remembering her, even after they were no longer in her class. When asked to expand on what was meant by shaping students, Susie, a Hispanic TC who served as a key informant, explained,

> I felt like I could make more of a difference teaching younger grades to open their minds because we have a lot of problems. That's when you can shape them the most, I feel like. And having empathy and compassion, and I feel like it's important to teach with that and about that. I just feel like I can make a difference, and I really love kids.

Susie's understanding of socially just teaching was centered on helping students change their thinking and developing traits such as empathy and compassion. Additionally, informants mentioned developing classroom communities that center student relationships, to get to know student needs, and advocate for them. One TC stated in the open-ended response that SJ and DEI are, "[a]dvocating for others when their rights are being taken away" and another described SJ and DEI as, "[a]llowing all voices to be heard." In this way, TCs sought to find ways to advocate for those who have been silenced.

Another term, "world changers," was offered by Geraldine, a White TC who served as a key informant, in her initial interview in reference to the introductory classes all TCs took before *Foundations of Reading*:

> So, the lessons that we were talking about in that introductory class were about . . . racial and social justice. They were about shaping minds. They were making . . .

> everything seemed like we were world changers. And I loved that about it. So, it was just easy to find the importance in what I was doing, and meaning in it, which was . . . so different for me from coming from high school and be[ing] like, I don't know what the world is, and what does it mean to me, but it's just been kind of . . . an ongoing journey of . . . I have to interact with these young kids. And these young kids are the future. And if I can get in there now and teach them . . . how important it is to, not only be . . . a good student and a good academic, but also to be a good person, is going to really . . . hopefully make some change and change the world.

Geraldine's interview response illustrates how being a world changer gave her purpose in teaching. Her understanding of SJ and DEI was focused on how she could influence and shape young minds because they "are the future."

Many people search for purpose in their lives, and for many TCs, becoming a socially just teacher is a way of finding purpose, which is not usually a problem. However, what came to the surface in interviews and in pre-questionnaire analysis was that the end goal for TCs was not necessarily betterment for their students and their lives, but a feeling of accomplishment that TCs did something good with their own lives. The focus on making an impact focuses primarily on the TC and how what they do in their classrooms will make them feel at the end of their teaching career. Additionally, the focus on advocating for those without a voice, especially as most of the TCs that volunteered to be interviewed were White females, can become rather problematic when TCs believe it is their job to speak *for* those without a voice rather than *equipping* communities that have been historically silenced to use their own voices. Making an impact and advocating

can easily shift the focus to that of "White savior"—the focus moves from K–6 students and onto teachers representing already empowered majorities.

Additionally, being a world changer is not necessarily problematic but can easily shift the focus to the teacher doing the work of SJ and DEI rather than a more just outcome for their K–6 students in their educational and personal lives. The emphasis on being a world changer is an idea that is emphasized in introductory classes and throughout the program, but my analysis of TCs' responses and interviews indicates that it can have two negative outcomes: 1) TCs feel overwhelmed with the weight of changing the world, and/or 2) TCs will inevitably feel the discouragement that comes when they do not see the change they hope for within school sites and their teaching, at least not right away. The following interview clips illustrate these two potential outcomes. In her initial interview, Katie, another White TC who served as a key informant, described how she felt after the introductory courses:

> Yeah, like those were really, constantly [talking about] social justice [it] seemed like, every single day, and I took them in the same semester. It . . . was a lot, . . . [and] it was great. It really had a lot of depth. But yeah, it was . . . very intense every day. Really big social justice problems in ed[ucation], and views of . . . the workforce.

Katie described the intensity of learning about SJ problems in education. While she thought the topics were important to discuss, it was overwhelming in some ways. In my second interview with Katie, she described how she was trying to use children's books to bring up issues of SJ and DEI with her buddies:

> Whatever race, but especially since . . . [with] students of color, I understand that . . . history, talking through feelings that connect to oppression, based on race, . . . and I could tell that . . .my student's kind of response to that. Not necessarily the words even but just the theme, she did not want to engage in that story . . . based on that theme. We talked about feelings of the character.
>
> When . . . I tried to do it gently and trying to see if maybe that would be a discussion, we could take . . . "Okay, what do you notice about this page versus this page? Like this class that she took that wasn't inclusive of all races, and this dance class that she took that included her? And what do you notice [about] the difference between her feelings we talked [about] . . .? Why do you think he feels that way?" "I don't know," and then [she] didn't really want to go into it, which is okay.

Katie's attempts to bring up SJ issues with her buddies were met with disinterest. In this case, she is trying to see what happened with her buddies as something positive, although there are hints of discouragement in her response.

I had a similar conversation with Martha about her discouragement with her buddies, particularly in engaging with a book focused on stereotypes of Black men:

> Yeah, I was, I was really excited about . . . the last book I chose. Yeah, that was talking a lot about . . . stereotypes that were . . .present . . . in sports and . . . things that were happening . . . in society and stuff, basketball, . . . And I was really excited to read that, but that was the book that was no noed [*sic*] by my students so I've been trying to . . . listen to them to see what they like, and I'm hoping . . . to find things that . . . talks about . . . stuff like that.

Martha's response indicates that she is not only overwhelmed by trying to shape her buddies' minds, but she is also discouraged that what she has been trying does not seem to be working. Her reading buddies were not engaged with the book she chose, and she was not able to have a conversation about stereotypes.

Subtheme 2: Respect. Seven TCs equated SJ and DEI with respect. One TC wrote in their response, "[i]t means respecting everyones [*sic*] differences." Another TC defined SJ as "treating everyone equally with respect and providing a diverse curriculum and outlook on life." These vague descriptions of SJ and DEI indicate that these TCs have not crafted a personal definition or understanding of these concepts. Respecting others can be a helpful framework for thinking about teaching in a socially just way, but because these TCs were not able to provide any action steps associated with it, this definition lacks real connection to SJ and DEI.

Subtheme 3: Acceptance. Seven TCs defined SJ and DEI as acceptance through equity and inclusion. One TC stated, "[e]quity is different from equality" but did not go on to explain the difference. Four TCs discussed the idea of having an inclusive classroom. For example, one TC stated: "[i]nclude everyone no matter what." Another wrote, "[i]nclusion is making sure students are accepted and appreciated for all the knowledge they bring into our spaces." One TC wrote that SJ is, "ensuring everyone has access to be who they want to be no matter their race, class, gender, or sexuality." The definitions of SJ and DEI in this subtheme indicate that TCs initially understood the terms to mean acceptance of all.

Subtheme 4: Dismantling Systems and Interrogating Bias. Six TCs defined SJ and DEI as actively interrogating, dismantling, and combatting systems of oppression,

either through the content they teach or through "stand[ing] up for what is right inside the classroom and outside of class." By this, TCs meant standing up for groups or students experiencing oppression. The language used by these TCs, such as "combat" and "dismantle" are more suggestive of a battle with people who disagree or are uninformed about issues of SJ, such as racism, classism, or ableism. The focus for these TCs is often on work outside of themselves—they are actively working to take down systems that oppress groups of people. For example, one TC wrote: "[n]ot only does it mean teaching and learning about power and oppression, but it also means teaching and learning in a way that combats some of these oppressions ingrained in the school system." These comments reflect the departmental commitment statement to SJ and indicate that TCs have been exposed to these ideas (Commitment Statement, 2022). TCs' responses indicate a theoretical understanding of SJ and DEI, but they do not yet have clear pedagogical or practical strategies to enact their understanding

Other TCs take a different approach, one that focuses more on personal change and personal reflection. One TC described SJ as "a movement and consistent action in working against biases we all hold and work from unconsciously." Another described SJ as "acknowledging positionality and biases," while another describes SJ as "humbling myself in being willing to change." These comments indicate that TCs' thinking was shaped by the personal reflections and class discussions in the introductory courses, particularly those about their personal experiences and identity.

Theme #2: Children's Books as Vehicles to Discuss SJ

Eight TCs indicated that they understand SJ in literacy as using children's books to talk about SJ topics, such as racism or ableism. The responses that referred to books

did so in a vague way, such as “choose books that include these ideas” and “opening up the space to discuss social justice from the books presented.” This could indicate that prior to their literacy-specific coursework, TCs do not have much particular or actionable knowledge about how to have these conversations with their students or specific books that can be used in instruction. However, they know that there are books that exist that focus on or illuminate issues of social justice. The following data clips illustrate this finding:

> “The stories and setting and characters that we expose our students to in a classroom setting can shape their understanding and perception of the world around them.”
>
> “There is a lot of subjects of children’s books that can help with social justice and diversity, and inclusion that can help a lot for children.”
>
> “I can use stories and resources that are imbedded [*sic*] in social justice.”

These comments reflect the content of the introductory classes as both had a children’s literature project (for more information, see Chapter 3) and indicate that TCs develop an understanding early in their program that teaching literacy in a socially just way is limited to books.

Subtheme 1: Primarily an Issue of Race. Nine TCs think of SJ as primarily a racial issue in relation to children’s books. TCs were particularly focused on representation of children of color in children’s literature. One TC stated that many children’s books “[highlight] white people and many people of color are not being represented in books.” Another TC had a similar response, stating, “[c]hildren’s books today have more main characters of animals than people of color.” One TC used the term

"marginalized groups," and while it can refer to a plethora of communities, it was clearly used to refer to the Black community.

In interviews, racial inequity was discussed by all four informants. For example, Katie stated:

> But those . . . interactions with someone of a different race than me, were not . . . addressed. Not like race and culture in the classroom was not there. [You should] blend into the middle class, White-focused. Otherwise, you're falling behind. And yeah, and that was never addressed.

The concepts of white silence and colorblindness were discussed by all key informants, as well, particularly when discussing their own experiences with children's literature. For example, Susie stated, "I never was read a book about Hispanic people or our family or traditions or our culture. And it's not just me—we didn't really learn much about Asian Americans or African Americans because my whole student body was White. It was very, just White." Martha shared that ideas about race were not "explicitly said" in the school but were apparent in curriculum choices such as authors that were highlighted. Katie also stated that "it wasn't so much about the White-centered focus, White-centric, but, you know, totally about academics."

Bishop's (1990) theory of "windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors" was evident in six TC responses. As Bishop noted, windows are books that allow the reader to see into another's experience, mirrors reflect their own experience, and sliding glass doors allow the reader to walk through and be immersed in the world created by the author. One TC noted that books should "show diverse lives" while another stated that classroom libraries should "not hav[e] single stories." This is a topic that is highly

discussed in a class called *Diversity in Children's Literature*. For many TCs, that class is the first time they are exposed to the idea that children's literature does not represent all children equally (or accurately) and is taken prior to *Foundations of Reading.*

The connections TCs are making to learning across classes that include SJ is a positive feature of their comments. For example, two TCs who discussed representation approached it from a critical lens, pointing out that animals are more represented than people of color in children's literature. One TC noted, the "literacy section in books are highlighting White people and many people of color are not being represented in books." In these responses, representation is solely focused on race and ethnicity. This interpretation could be attributed to the definition of diversity TCs developed prior to the *Foundations of Reading* course. For example, throughout the semester, several books appeared repeatedly in TC lesson plans: *Hair Love*, *Sulwe, Jabari Jumps,* and *Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman.* These choices reflect the idea that a majority of TCs (54%) initially viewed the concept of representation as being only about race based on their book choices.

It is possible that the emphasis on race has shifted in the last two years, particularly in Minnesota, with the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and the civil unrest that followed. Racism, or at least racial bias, has become a much more mainstream topic of conversation, and a new sense of urgency is apparent. While addressing the issue of racism, particularly in education, is critically important, it is also important that other groups are not forgotten in the work towards a more socially just education for all. Diversity can come in many forms, race and ethnicity being one, but

religion, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic diversity, to name a few, should be included in the discussion as well.

Subtheme 2: Power in Position as Teacher. Three TCs mentioned the power that teachers have in their positions, specifically in the books they choose. One TC writes, "[it is] crucial that those in power regarding literacy choose to use it as a tool for societal progress." Another says, "[l]iteracy is a very powerful tool for people to have…we allow so many other voices to be heard and seen." These responses indicate an awareness of the power structures that exist in a classroom setting, with the teacher occupying the position of power and students' often subordinate position. One TC stated, "[t]he media I consume and use in my future classroom needs to be mindful and directly participating in the goals behind SJ and DEI." This could refer to intentionality in the books they use to teach, or it could be about their classroom libraries, but the TCs did not elaborate. Again, the vague and brief nature of the responses to this question indicate that prior to taking the *Foundations of Reading* course, TCs did not feel confident in how they saw SJ and DEI intersecting with literacy.

Subtheme 3: Access. Three TCs pointed out the problem of access in education—that some students have access and others do not, specifically referring to access to books. One TC writes, "[c]hildren who do not have many resources at home may seem slower to learn than others, but it is important to remember that they have just as much potential to become great readers and writers as their peers, they just may need extra time or assistance to get there." This TC seems to equate students from a lower socioeconomic (hence fewer materials in the home) background as having a deficit, e.g.,

"seem slower to learn than others." This student may have been trying to acknowledge that we are the product of many factors, including our environment.

Subtheme 4: Perspective-Taking. Two TCs focused on how literacy can allow a reader to better understand other perspectives. One TC writes, "[students] see and understand the stories of other humans who may look different or experience the world through a different lens." Another TC writes about literacy as "a part of humanity and communication … [literacy] impacts how a learner reads and writes at any age." One TC and one key informant used the term "humans" rather than "individuals" which could be an attempt to use more inclusive language by avoiding gendered language (Zimman, 2017).

Summary of TCs' Initial Understandings Prior to Revised Literacy Course

Two major themes emerged in my analysis of TCs' initial understanding of SJ and DEI, prior to the course. The first theme was to define SJ and DEI, and TCs' definitions included their identities as advocates or world changers, as well as equating SJ and DEI with respect, acceptance, and dismantling systems of oppression. The second theme focused on using children's books as a vehicle for discussing SJ topics.

Part II: Enacting the Revised Curriculum

In the previous article (Chapter 3: "A Process to Redesign Literacy Curriculum with Social Justice Focus"), I described the process to redesign the curriculum for a literacy-focused TE course. The following review of these findings is important as a backdrop to the research described after this section, specifically: *How do teacher candidates' knowledge and perceived self-efficacy about using SJ-DEI concepts change after participating in a redesigned course?*

To understand how and why syllabi redesign seemed to be important to shifting TCs' understanding of SJ, I began by examining syllabi from two TE introductory-level courses to identify the SJ topics raised and discussed. Findings from this analysis indicated that SJ topics such as "Social Construction of Race" and "History of Education," the opportunity gap, intersectionality, and the social construction of identities were taught in the class, but no links were made from the readings or experiences by the instructor to discipline courses that followed the program, nor were there conversations between the introductory course instructors and discipline-specific course instructors to foster links between SJ ideas presented earlier and later in the program. After analyzing the two introductory course syllabi and the interview transcript, I then compared those findings to the syllabus used to guide a K–6 introductory literacy-focused course, *Foundations of Reading*. Through this process, it became evident that the discipline-specific course did not explicitly or systematically address SJ topics throughout the semester. In the syllabus, there was a single class period that focused on culturally relevant teaching, but SJ was not woven throughout the curriculum. Additionally, course objectives and descriptions lacked specific attention to SJ.

Based on these initial analysis and interpretation phases, I identified topics from the introductory classes that could be taken up and woven into the literacy content. For example, I updated the course objectives and description to reflect the infusion of SJ into the teaching of literacy. I replaced some journal article readings with those of comparable and updated content, but that represented the work of more women and BIPOC researchers. In addition, I revised the lesson plan template that is used in the class by adding a section with Muhammad's (2020) literacy pursuits, meaning TCs could work to

incorporate identity, skills, intellect, and criticality into their literacy lessons. I added additional reflection questions meant to encourage TCs to consider how their buddies were being reflected or represented in their lessons, to encourage reflexive teaching.

I made other changes to the class that were reflective not of the syllabus but rather in my practices as a teacher educator. These changes were based on a literature review (see Chapter 2) and analysis (see Chapter 3). For example, based on my interview with Rose, an instructor and designer of an introductory course, as well as a review of the literature on SJ in TE, I made changes to the way SJ was defined as a theoretical-philosophical framework for the *Foundations of Literacy* course. This allowed me to make explicit connections between theory and practice in lectures and impacted the way I designed group work for TC learning. Briefly, I worked to help TCs widen and deepen their understanding of SJ in a way that would be helpful in their future classrooms. For example, I used the idea of equity—providing what each student needs—as a way of teaching for SJ. Then when we discussed literacy assessments, while we did discuss the ways assessments can be extremely problematic such as assuming White cultural competence, TCs began to reconsider how data from literacy assessments can be used to identify areas where their future students need additional support while still acknowledging the problems that exist. In this way TCs began to see that they can plan their instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

In lectures, I made explicit connections between theoretical knowledge and actual practice. For example, when learning about emergent readers, we discussed the importance of writing one's own name, which helps to unlock knowledge of the alphabet, a key to literacy. I made the explicit connection for TCs that this is not only a concept

that is critical to literacy development but that it is also critical to developing a personal identity and value of self. Identity development and value of self are critical components of SJ as seen in culturally relevant pedagogy and the literature on motivation and engagement.

I employed group work to help TCs move towards more socially just teaching as well. I modified group work to require participation of all TC group members for successful completion of the whole task, attempting to shift the focus from individualism to collectivism. For example, I used true jigsaws to share-out assignments where each group was assigned a particular topic on which to become expert and then were put in new groups to teach their colleagues about their topic. With this change, each group member needed to participate because they would be teaching a new group that had no knowledge of their topic.

I incorporated small changes to these group discussions as well. When discussing a required reading, learning communities talked in their groups for an extended period before moving to a large group discussion. This shift allowed TCs who were usually less inclined to contribute during whole group discussions to be a part of their small group discussions. It also made it more likely they would feel comfortable contributing to the large group because they had an opportunity to talk together first. All these actions were intentional on my part, to model practices that fostered beneficial SJ expectations and inclusive climates within classroom settings.

Part III: Analysis and Interpretation Post-Questionnaire and Final Interviews

In the following sections I identify two themes generated from my data analysis and then instantiated with examples from post-questionnaires, using the same open-ended

questions as the pre-course questionnaire and final interview protocol (See Appendix C and D). The first theme that emerged was that TCs defined SJ and DEI as a framework for teaching. Subthemes include pedagogical strategies that can be used to support socially just teaching. The second theme emerged during analysis of final interviews and indicated that TCs were moving from a theoretical understanding of SJ-DEI to feeling confident in their ability to enact socially just pedagogies. Subthemes explore specific practices.

The following table indicates the theme, the number of TC responses that reflected each theme and subtheme and includes data samples to illustrate each theme. Following the table, each theme and subtheme are explored in more depth and supported by additional data.

Table 7

Themes Identified in Post-Questionnaire and Second and Third Interview Analysis

Theme	Number of TC Responses	In Vivo Examples
#1. SJ and DEI as Framework for Teaching	19	"SJ-DEI means learning about and being mindful of someone's identity and background in daily life. It means being open to learning about and discussing topics with various viewpoints. Equity should be practiced rather than equality because everyone deserves the needed resources to meet the level of people with privilege." "Teaching so all students succeed no matter their background. Giving students the tools to succeed in school and life. Accommodating students in lessons and assessments like differentiated instruction for all students. Being a humble teacher. Giving students the opportunity to reflect on their learning. Loving your students and showing them, you care about them. Building relationships with all your students so you learn their interest to use in lesson planning."

Subthemes to SJ-DEI as Teaching Framework

1.	Content and Delivery	17	"SJ-DEI means learning about and being mindful of someone's identity and background in daily life. It means examining lesson content and making sure it's inclusive of all experiences." "Teaching in a way where practices are adjusted to meet the needs of every student. Being aware of personal and societal influences on the students and myself and providing all students with an education that is adjusted to provide equity."
2.	Care, High Expectations and Responsive Teaching	7	"Being a humble teacher … Loving your students and showing them, you care about them. Building relationships with all your students so you learn their interest to use in lesson planning." "It should be part of my pedagogy and should be considered in everything I plan. It means examining lesson content and making sure it's inclusive of all experiences, investigating my own biases, and holding myself accountable to my personal teaching philosophy."
#2. Move from Theoretical Understanding to Practical Enactment of SJ-DEI		3	"What, like, I know the topic of social justice, very like better than I did two years ago. It seems like very practical, but we're always growing … But yeah, I didn't have the logistical like 'what does that look like with this math lesson,' are we to do math but reading. Or reading or phonics."

Sub-Themes for Move from Theory to Practical Enactment

1.	Socially Just Pedagogy	2	"I was just wanting her to know that, like this is what I saw in her and like to know that that's something. That those qualities and assets that she has."
2.	Continuous Struggle	1	"And so even though I was ready to like have a conversation, and like try to finally practice this, like social, like social justice topic, or like, like, it just didn't, I didn't get to practice it."

Theme #1—SJ and DEI as Framework for Teaching

In both end-of-semester surveys and interviews, nineteen TCs discussed SJ as a framework for teaching, not just a topic being taught. One TC wrote, SJ is "part of every

lesson we teach, found within every moment we are in the school building, and should never be found 'difficult to fit into the lesson.'" Katie stated, "Social justice is a way of teaching. It's not just a topic that you're teaching about. It's . . . a choice [about] how you're going to think about your students, how you're going to interact with them, what you're preparing for them, . . . your content and your lessons, and how you're going about teaching them." This shift in thinking seems to reflect the SJ definition used to revise the *Foundations of Reading* curriculum: SJ is a "comprehensive approach to teaching that encompasses the pedagogies, dispositions, and relationships of individual teachers" (Chapter 2: "Social Justice in Teacher Education Literature," p. 27-28). In addition, the intentional talk and modeling I did to reframe how TCs thought about SJ-DEI was evident in their responses. In interviews, TCs discussed two different ways SJ is infused with their thinking and teaching.

Content and Delivery. One of the ways TCs and key informants discussed infusing SJ into their thinking and teaching was in the content that is selected by centering student identities, interests, and other experiences. Martha described this as "finding something that will resonate with them." She referred to a class discussion we had about decodable texts and ways to make those texts more culturally relevant for students, such as including pictures from the surrounding community to add to the book's topic. Understanding how to foster student identities was another area TCs talked about because of work in the revised *Foundations of Reading* course. For example, Susie described using texts that showed girls in STEM fields, helping to provide an example for girls in their future classes. All informants mentioned motivation, a topic that is centered

in *Foundations of Reading*, and how finding ways to motivate students to read is a form of SJ.

Another way key informants described infusing SJ into their thinking and teaching in final interviews concerned how they thought about the delivery of content. For example, TCs indicated that differentiation can be used to provide equity for students. Katie described differentiating through small group instruction or providing additional strategies for solving a particular literacy problem. Susie related this to motivation, saying "if students work better collaborating . . . why don't we just let them collaborate? Because I know for me, I work better individually, but . . . giving your students an option . . . giving them choice in the books they read . . . I think is a big thing." Susie's comment reflects the power of particular readings within the literacy course and discussing them, not only as a resource for how to teach literacy, but in terms of the way these literacy practices promote SJ and DEI. Susie learned that by giving students open literacy tasks, a task for which there is more than one solution, they are given choice and control over their learning. These methods have been proven to motivate children to read (Turner & Paris, 1995), and TCs began to see that this is another way of equipping students to take on the learning for themselves.

These descriptions clearly tie into the definition of SJ and DEI used as a grounding point for the revised *Foundations of Reading* course. By supporting each child and providing what they need to be successful, TCs can provide an equitable learning experience for all. Differentiation is taught in many programs, but the connection to how this can be a socially just teaching practice within a literacy lesson is not always made. It is a connection that I intentionally linked to introductory classes. By making this

connection clear for TCs, modeling how it is enacted in literacy lessons, and giving TCs the opportunity to try out these ideas during practicum lessons with K–6 youth, TCs now have a specific tool to implement in their future classrooms to make their teaching more socially just.

Care. Seven TCs described creating caring classroom spaces where all students knew they would find value and belonging. Katie stated in her second interview, "[t]hat's what matters, and they know that . . . I care and many of us, all of us, hopefully care about them so . . . that's probably what I will take away most." One TC wrote in their questionnaire response "[t]his means providing a safe, stable classroom and using an asset-based lense [*sic*] when teaching students." This TC is referring to discussions we had in class where I modeled thinking about their future K–6 students' literacy development from an asset-based foundation upon which literacy strengths are identified and built.

We also had class discussions about consistent literacy routines and that stability might not exist in other areas of their K–6 students' lives. However, a classroom space can provide that and allow students to feel safe, particularly through literacy routines such as Reader's Workshop. Additionally, two TCs discussed making sure other needs were being met through providing snacks, a place to take a nap during recess, or as one TC responded, "making a resource page for students and parents where they can find things that will benefit them and readings that they can read."

High Expectations. Along with the development of a caring classroom space was the inclusion of high expectations. Susie stated:

> And I feel like another thing is . . . challenging your students . . . If they want to read a book that is not in their level . . . let them explore and have that challenge, and you can always support them. So . . . challenging students is another one, because . . . sometimes teachers have . . . low expectations for students of color, and . . . we should be having high expectations for all students. And if you want to challenge them, give them a combination—challenge them. And you just need to support them, and they can. Challenge is . . . [not] a bad thing. Challenge your students.

This conversation with Susie reflects research indicating that holding high expectations for students promotes learning (e.g., Robinson & Lubienski, 2011). In the revised course, one of the updated readings discussed the concept of cultivating the joy of learning, particularly through the growth of intellect (Muhammad, 2020). Susie learned that giving students the opportunity to solve real world problems and delve deeper into a particular literacy topic holds students to the high expectation of deep learning and is a socially just practice.

Responsive Teaching. Seven TCs described critical components of responsive teaching: understanding, flexibility, and humility. TCs applied understanding in a few different ways. The first was in understanding a child's physical and emotional state while teaching. Katie described a conversation with her first-grade buddy:

> My first grader has opened up more . . . about being tired with me. And . . . with the emotion wheel . . . I asked . . . How are you right now? It's been better, and I noticed that they're more willing to tell me how they really feel then. Well, how was your day? What are you looking forward to today? How are you right now?

> I have been more, not that I wasn't gentle . . . but I didn't know and then like the next week after because . . . we did that, and it was intentional, and she saw how I reacted, too . . . I'm really glad you told me, you know. It's okay to be [tired]. And . . . she still did a great job . . . She said, "Where's the tired emoji?" . . . right away. And I was like . . ., "Which one do you think looks the most tired?" And she said, "Where's the happy emoji?" And . . . they're right by each other, sometimes we can go through both, right? Or we can cross the circle and feel many [emotions] … that has also been good for me to remember that, like the more intentional questions that we have and the more I don't know. Like, we need to be more responsive to that . . . They might just be really tired that day, [and] it's like yep, I understand how you feel. You're not a machine or a number on an assessment . . .. That was good to know.

Katie realized that she could plan lessons that were responsive to a child's life by including connections to Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Katie still planned literacy activities, but by listening to her buddy and showing understanding, Katie was able to respond appropriately to the buddy.

Katie also described how she changed her approach in her literacy lessons: "I think a strategy that I learned to use, and I think I'll have to work on more, because it really did work, was . . . the first three weeks together [we] just talked together . . . that's how my buddy learned best and [to] grow her trust with me, first in expressing her thoughts, and then so we really . . . learned how to express that." Katie learned again that listening would not only show her buddy that she cared and understood what her buddy

was experiencing, but it would also allow Katie to teach literacy in a more relevant and responsive way.

Another component of responsive teaching that was clear in TC responses was flexibility. One TC stated:

> There are generational and societal traumas and influences that impact every student that walks into the classroom. Not all students will have access to books or the internet at home. Teaching literacy with these aspects in mind involves being flexible and providing the best educational opportunity to each student with these influences in mind.

This TC is considering the experiences and personal interests that K–6 students bring to the classroom and how to respond as a teacher of literacy. Flexibility also encompassed grouping K–6 students for reading instruction: "You can teach in flexible grouping to make sure all students are getting the best instruction tailored to their individual needs." TCs described responsive teachers as those who could provide flexibility when it was needed.

Humility was the last component of responsive teaching that was consistently mentioned. One TC wrote that socially just teaching is "being a humble teacher … Loving your students and showing them, you care about them. Building relationships with all your students so you learn their interest to use in lesson planning." Another TC wrote that teachers "need to be honest and humble … [we] do not know everything." These TCs acknowledged that there were going to be times when they will not handle a situation perfectly and may need to admit that to a student. TCs also acknowledged that they, along with their coworkers, should continuously learn better ways to teach. One TC

included that it is important to "be open to learning about and discussing topics with various viewpoints." This TC described the necessity to have conversations with colleagues about equitable teaching practices that may result in either further conversation or improved teaching.

Theme #2—Theoretical Understanding to Practical Enactment of SJ-DEI

In the first round of interviews, key informants discussed the theoretical understanding they had of SJ and DEI, especially regarding systemic issues such as racism. However, this theoretical understanding lacked the move to practical enactment. Initial interviews also revealed that three key informants understood teaching literacy in a socially just way as reading books about social justice topics. However, the second and third rounds of interviews revealed a change in understanding in which two key informants began to move from a theoretical understanding to a practical one as is evident in the following segment from Katie's final interview:

> I know the topic of social justice . . . better than I did two years ago. It seems . . . very practical, but we're always growing … But yeah, I didn't have the logistical . . . "what does that look like with this math lesson," . . . Or reading or phonics. I still need to teach phonics like, how am I gonna [*sic*] do [it in a socially just way]? So yeah, I think I definitely grew in . . . my perspective of equity [and] DEI. But equity, especially is changed, in what I do, my actions, [what] I provide.

However, one key informant still struggled with her understanding of what it means to teach for social justice. The following subthemes explore the ways in which key informants' understanding of SJ and DEI shifted after the revised curriculum was enacted.

Socially Just Pedagogy. At the beginning of the semester, key informants seemed to have little confidence in their ability to identify a pedagogical practice that could help them enact their vision of SJ and DEI within literacy lessons. However, throughout the second and final round of interviews, key informants began showing growth in this area. This became evident within their lesson plans. I asked each key informant to choose a lesson plan to share, and we had a conversation about ways they were teaching in a socially just way.

Susie, focused on identity in her lesson, one of the pursuits examined in Muhammad's (2020) text, *Cultivating Genius.* Susie described a conversation with her first-grade buddy, Sarah, this way:

> So, I actually had . . . conversations, these are the things that I see in you, what do you see in you? And she would even say . . ., "I'm not funny." And I'm like, "You make me laugh all the time. You are really funny." … I was just wanting her to know that . . . this is what I saw in her and . . .to know that that's something. That those [are] qualities and assets that she has.

This excerpt indicates that Susie realized that her buddy needed to develop a more positive self-concept. As a result, Susie chose a book focusing on character traits, and throughout the book, she and her buddy, Sarah, talked about each characteristic, as well as whether they had those traits. They also drew pictures of themselves with descriptions and characteristics. At the end of this mini-unit, the first-grade buddy was more confident in herself, particularly in her sense of humor, and was able to describe herself.

Susie also talked about her fourth-grade buddy, Steve, and his hesitation to describe himself as intelligent. She thought that one of the reasons for this was that Steve

perceived that most of the work he was doing in school was not personally relevant. Susie decided to focus on author's purpose, based on a fourth-grade ELA standard. But rather than using traditional texts in the lesson, she asked Steve to share three of his favorite songs. After listening to them and analyzing the lyrics ahead of time, Susie chose one of the songs to analyze with Steve. They focused on what the writer of the song was trying to persuade the listener to think about:

> We had a good time. He was reading the lyrics to me, I read to him and we're just talking about . . . the author's purpose about the song so like: Why did he write that song? Why did he feel the need to say something like that? So that was a good thing …but I didn't know . . . what to teach so I was like, I think author's purpose would actually be a good one. So, then I also used . . . *The Man in the Mirror* by Michael Jackson to teach my example you know . . . and then we did it with his song, and then we just had . . . a conversation about it.
>
> [Some of] the lyrics on some of the things that he thought that was a good lesson too, and he actually told me, "You were . . . the best buddy! Nobody's ever used music to teach me!" He really enjoyed that, I think. That was the . . . lesson, where he was super . . . engaged . . . because . . . we're using a song. I was telling him . . . songs are text too, [which] we forget [when] we read books, but like that's text too.

This excerpt indicates that Susie was able to put what she was learning about teaching literacy in a socially just way into action with one of her buddies. She used a text that was relevant to her buddy and addressed Muhammad's (2020) four literacy pursuits: identity, skill, intellect, and criticality. Susie's lesson allowed Steve to learn more about himself

by connecting personally with the song (identity), learn about author's purpose (skill), think deeply about the meaning of the song (intellect), and think critically about what he considers texts (criticality). Susie's lesson example indicates that she has begun to identify specific ways to enact SJ and DEI in her teaching of literacy.

Katie described the ways she integrated art into her writing lessons. After meeting with her buddy, Tara, for a few weeks, Katie realized that Tara often avoided reading, which was likely a result of the difficulty Tara was having with decoding. By talking with Tara and administering a motivation assessment, Katie realized that Tara was very motivated by art. For the next few weeks, Katie and Tara created puppets for one of the books Katie brought in and used the puppets to retell the story. As Katie told it:

> So yeah, she really liked organizing those, and . . . we kept looking at her list . . . from the reading part, going through the evidence, she was getting from the book. She liked having . . . a kinesthetic . . . pile of her list that she needed so that went really well. … I think it just solidified [that] art is really important, in the process as well.

During this literacy lesson, Katie found that Tara was more likely to attempt to read because she was able to integrate reading with art. Not only was Katie learning to provide support for her buddy based on assessment data, but she was also learning that motivating and engaging K–6 students are forms of socially just teaching. Muhammad (2020) would describe this as cultivating joy in learning.

A Continuous Struggle. Not all key informants experienced the same shift in understanding. Martha seemed to struggle to describe her understanding of SJ. While she talked about how her understanding of SJ had changed, meaning that it is "not just

teaching about police brutality and Black Lives Matter" but instead is about centering students and their experiences, she continued to refer to SJ as reading books about SJ issues. She described a book she had chosen for one of her buddy students that was a graphic novel and was written about a kid who played basketball and was from a low-income neighborhood. The book contained several justice issues, such as racism, sports as an escape from poverty, and gang violence, but her buddy did not seem interested in talking about those issues or reading the book. She said later:

> I don't know how I could do it, just because I feel like, you've talked about how . . . sight words, and . . . having the student being the center of all of the . . . learning that they're having. And then . . . being able to . . . go out in the community and being able to . . . pick things from that and being able to . . . just bring everything from the outside in is, I have . . . those things, but I just, I wasn't able to really practice it because . . . the one time I was prepared to do it, . . . they didn't want to read the book anymore. And so even though I was ready to . . . have a conversation, and . . . try to finally practice this . . . social justice topic . . . it just didn't, I didn't get to practice it.

This excerpt indicates Martha's frustration and disappointment that her buddy did not want to engage in a conversation about those topics. She also described how she felt overwhelmed thinking about teaching, particularly literacy, in a socially just way because of all the standards and requirements.

Martha's story is likely very typical for many TCs. They enter a TE program thinking that they want to have an impact on K–6 students and change the world. But when that does not align with their reality, they feel disappointed and let down. Most, if

not all, new teachers feel overwhelmed with everything they must plan and teach in their first year. Martha identified what many TCs will experience, and if SJ is not weaved throughout the classes in a TE program, TCs may leave feeling unprepared to teach in a way that promotes social justice.

Summary of TCs' Shifts in Thinking about SJ and DEI

The post-questionnaire and final interview data indicate that many TCs shifted their thinking about teaching literacy in a socially just way. 86% of TCs surveyed indicated that they now thought of SJ and DEI as a framework for teaching that should not be separated from content. 77% of TCs described ways that SJ and DEI should influence how they teach, from the way they think about their students to the materials chosen. However, not all TCs experienced this same shift, which was illustrated by Martha's responses in her final interview. These findings suggest that while TCs' understanding of SJ and DEI were impacted by the revised curriculum, there is still a critical need to thread those strands through the whole TE program to allow time and opportunity to revisit understanding and practice.

Part IV: Changing Self-Efficacy

The final section will explore the results of the self-efficacy portion of the questionnaire. Self-efficacy was measured on the questionnaire via three specific tasks: 1) teach for social justice; 2) teach in a way that promotes DEI; and 3) teach literacy in a socially just way. The tables below report the number of participants, the mean, and the standard deviation for each question after a pre- and post-*Foundations of Reading* course questionnaire analysis. Graphs follow to illustrate the way TCs' self-efficacy changed from the beginning to the end of the semester.

In Table 8, the means indicate shifts in confidence about TCs' ability to teach for social justice. In the pre-questionnaire, the mean rating was 7.18 and in the post-questionnaire, the mean rating was 8.55. The low standard deviation shows the responses were mainly clustered around the mean, indicating that there was less variation in TCs' self-efficacy ratings.

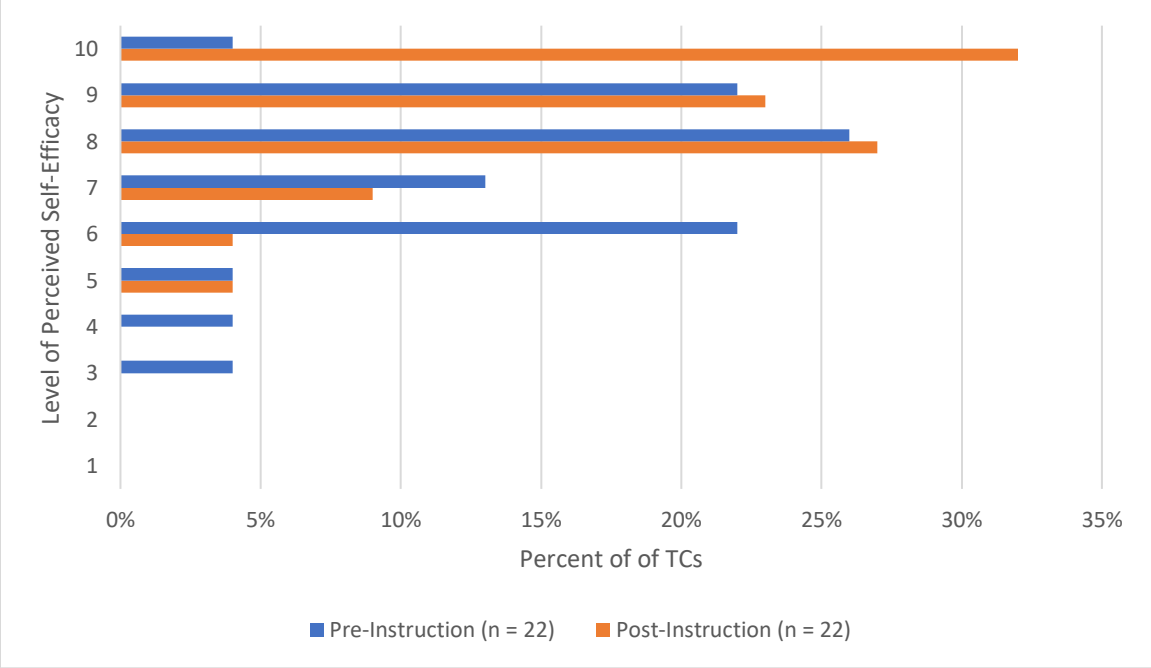
Table 8

Comparison of N for Task 1

	N	M	SD
Pre-Questionnaire	22	7.18	1.790
Post-Questionnaire	22	8.55	1.405

Figure 2

Comparison of Perceived Self-Efficacy for Task 1



In Table 9, the findings are similar. The means indicate shifts in confidence about TCs' ability to teach in a way that promotes DEI. In the pre-questionnaire, the mean rating was 7.32 and in the post-questionnaire, the mean rating was 8.73. The low standard deviation shows the responses were mainly clustered around the mean, indicating less variation in TCs' self-efficacy ratings.

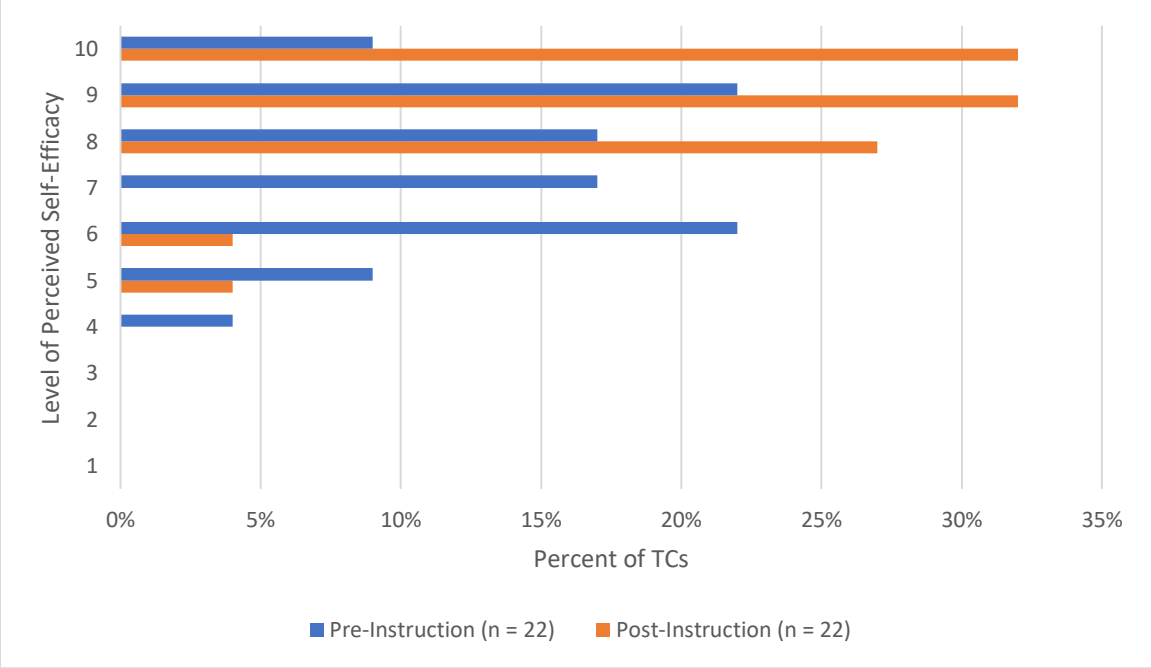
Table 9

Comparison of N for Task 2

	N	M	SD
Pre-Questionnaire	22	7.32	1.701
Post-Questionnaire	22	8.73	1.316

Figure 3

Comparison of Perceived Self-Efficacy for Task 2



In Table 10, the results are slightly different than Tables 4 and 5. The means indicate a positive shift in confidence about TCs' ability to teach literacy in a socially just way. In the pre-questionnaire, the mean rating was 7.14 and in the post-questionnaire, the mean rating was 8.77. The standard deviation on the pre-questionnaire indicates that there was more variation in TC responses. However, the lower standard deviation on the post-questionnaire indicates that most responses were clustered around the mean, indicating that most TCs' self-efficacy rating for this task increased from pre- to post-questionnaire.

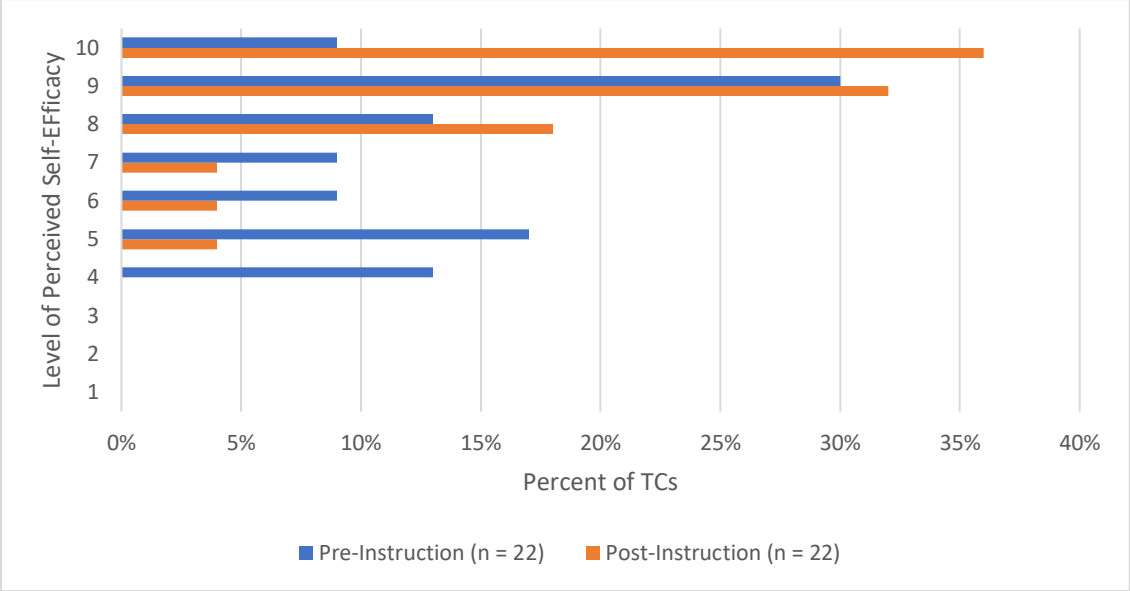
Table 10

Comparison of N for Task 3

	N	M	SD
Pre-Questionnaire	22	7.14	2.100
Post-Questionnaire	22	8.77	1.378

Figure 4

Comparison of Perceived Self-Efficacy for Task 3



Overall, TCs rated their confidence in their ability to teach for social justice, teach in a way that promotes DEI, and teach literacy in a socially just way far lower at the beginning of the semester compared to the end of the course. While the first two items on the questionnaire followed similar trends, the item that was most informative for addressing my research question was what I learned when I analyzed item 3. Specifically, more than 35% of TCs rated themselves as a "10" on a ten-point scale for teaching literacy in a socially just way at the end of the revised *Foundations of Reading* course, compared to less than 10% giving themselves this high rating at the beginning of the course. While these changes in perceived self-efficacy indicate that TCs' overall confidence increased after instruction with the revised curriculum, interviews with three TCs provided a fuller understanding of the ways in which their thinking and perceptions about themselves changed over the course of the semester.

Research in teacher candidate self-efficacy indicates that TCs often rate themselves higher at the beginning of a course and lower at the end of a course (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2017). However, as was discussed in the literature review, Bandura (1997) identified four experiences that can increase self-efficacy, and this course provided TCs with opportunities for positive physiological and emotional states when anticipating future experiences and a mastery experience through the accompanying practicum. This is also consistent with the literature regarding the critical role holistic and practice-based experiences play in preparing TCs (Hollins, 2011; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Whipp, 2013 Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015).

For example, in my last interview with Susie, she described a mastery experience and a positive physiological and emotional state when anticipating future teaching:

> And the writing assessment, I picked out some things for both of my buddies to work on and then like towards the end and even the last spelling inventory, I saw progress. … And then, this was the first time, you can actually like apply [what you're learning], and it's just like this is what it is to be a teacher. And it's like, this makes me more excited to be a teacher.

Susie was able to see student improvement because of her instruction and described positive feelings about being a teacher in the future. Katie describes a similar experience:

> So, when we did that, and I was telling my group it was really fun, we would like I would model writing everything down. Like all the time and if we talked about, or I would draw, I would . . . be okay with drawing too because that's totally valid. We would talk about something and be like oh that's a great thought or just

> random things that I was saying, like, I would draw it out, or just write it down, and my buddy didn't . . . really catch on unless I asked her to. I was like "Oh, can you write with me" and we'd like write side by side um but mid-semester you're talking, and she was like, "We should really write this down."
>
> That made me so happy. Then by the end of semester, she was like trying like new reading with me or like she was willing to at least like try a bigger word or a new word versus not reading it at all or spelling anything at the beginning, so that's my example, I guess.

Katie's experience indicates the positive impact of her teaching on her buddy and excitement about her teaching. These experiences can contribute to an increase in self-efficacy as a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2017).

In summary, the results from this questionnaire likely reflect TCs' self-efficacy accurately. Through the course, TCs gained valuable knowledge, theoretical and pedagogical, and they were able to implement what they were learning in real teaching situations. Additionally, TCs learned specific strategies for infusing SJ and DEI into their practice, giving them confidence and clear direction. Many TCs may have had experiences which cultivated positive changes in self-efficacy because of the course.

Discussion and Implications

The findings in this study reinforce the findings from the literature review but expand on these to show us how and why changes in TCs' thinking and actions occur. TCs have varied understanding of socially just teaching. Some TCs think of SJ as an individual role that they play as teachers, identifying themselves as "world changers." Some TCs understand SJ as the identification and dismantling of systems of oppression.

Many included phrases from the department's commitment statement to social justice (Commitment Statement, 2022). Along those same lines, the granularity with which TCs understand SJ varied widely. Some TCs understood SJ to be a primarily individual issue whereas others described SJ as a society-wide issue. For TCs who understood SJ to be primarily individual, they focused on investigating their bias and positionality whereas those focused on the wider social aspect tended towards more political and social activism.

Teacher educators across the country have moved progressively towards helping TCs grow as socially just educators. The emphasis on looking at current systems and how they may not be serving all students and may, in fact, be oppressing many, is important. Teaching TCs about Paolo Freire and bell hooks and other liberatory scholars who critique education is also important. Giving TCs a solid theoretical understanding of SJ and helping TCs understand why SJ is necessary in education is critical. However, many teacher educators have stopped at this point. Where is the connection between theory and practice?

What has been made evident by this study is that it is possible to help TCs begin to think about how they can teach in a socially just way. One important move in this direction is to help TCs widen their definition of SJ to include more than just dismantling systems of oppression because that may appear overwhelming and seemingly unachievable. Some will probably say that I have not gone far enough in my definition of SJ and DEI and that I should spend more time teaching TCs to dismantle systems of oppression. However, I believe that that focus is not always helpful. For example, one of the areas in literacy education that is often criticized for a lack of attention to equity and

SJ is the topic of literacy assessment. While literacy assessments can be problematic, they can also provide helpful instructional information that can be used to provide more targeted and equitable instruction for K–6 students. Teacher educators need to equip TCs to know what it looks like to teach literacy, or any other discipline, in a socially just way in an elementary school classroom. By widening that lens, teacher educators are allowing TCs to see that teaching for SJ and DEI can, and should, be infused in everything they do.

Many TCs indicated that they felt more confident in their ability to teach for social justice after the redesigned literacy class. However, as was evident from the interview with Martha, thinking about SJ this way is a difficult shift to make and requires consistent application. Teacher educators must ensure that their programs offer a clear definition of SJ that is consistent throughout all classes. Additionally, teacher educators must persistently model socially just teaching practices, make explicit connections between theory and pedagogy, and provide experiences that can increase TC self-efficacy. Without this consistency, TCs are likely to go into their first teaching positions overwhelmed and unprepared to teach in a socially just way.

Conclusion

Preparing socially just teachers requires intentionality. This study has shown that, with intentional planning to infuse SJ throughout a literacy curriculum, TCs' self-efficacy can be increased, and with this increased confidence, TCs are more likely to teach in socially just ways in the future. Teacher educators must make explicit connections between a theoretical understanding of SJ and practical enactment in an elementary classroom setting. However, this does not have to come at the expense of teaching content. Rather, teacher educators who wish to prepare socially just teachers must work

towards consistency in how SJ is defined, how it is woven throughout the program, and how to help TCs make connections between their coursework and their future practice in ways that emphasize the importance of viewing content through a lens of social justice.

Chapter 5:

Synthesis, Implications, and Direction for Future Research

While social justice (SJ) and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are not new topics in the field of education, few research studies have examined how to prepare teacher candidates to teach in socially just ways, particularly in literacy education coursework. Thus, new curriculum is needed to address this gap. In order to develop a literacy-specific course with SJ infused throughout, I conducted a case study where I first examined what curriculum currently exists prior to literacy coursework at one major research university. I then examined the context of the current course and the syllabus. Based on these analyses, I redesigned the literacy syllabus and course experiences to infuse SJ into the content. Last, I piloted the curriculum with one group of teacher candidates.

In my first article, I wrote a review of the teacher education literature that examines how to prepare socially just teacher candidates (TCs). In this review, I found effective strategies for helping TCs develop a socially just perspective, especially through individual reflection on personal identity and holistic preparation. The review also revealed a dearth of literature examining preparing socially just teachers in literacy. In the second article, I described the first part of the case study I conducted. This article examined the context of the case through document analysis of introductory course syllabi in an elementary education program and through an interview with the instructor and designer of the one of these courses. In this paper, I also described the changes I made to the syllabus and course instruction of *CI 5413: Foundations of Reading*,

connecting those changes to the literature and learning from document analysis and interview data. In the third and final article, I detailed what happened when the revised curriculum was implemented. These findings were supported using TC interview data, pre- and post-questionnaire responses, and an open-ended survey.

Summary of the Major Findings

The following sections summarize the major findings in each chapter. Implications from each chapter are explored later in this chapter, and I pose directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Social Justice in Teacher Education Literature

Four major themes emerged in my review of the general teacher education literature focusing on the infusion of SJ-DEI into teacher education programming: 1) reform movements, 2) theoretical foundations, 3) clear vision for socially-just teacher candidates, and 4) pedagogical approaches for integrating SJ.

Three reform movements helped shape and direct teacher education programs interested in preparing teacher candidates to teach in socially just ways (Zeichner, 2009). It is critical to understand this history in order to understand the political and theoretical ideas that influenced and shaped SJ in teacher education (Zeichner & Liston, 1990). Advocates for the first movement, professionalization, intended to elevate the teaching profession, emphasizing the professional preparation teachers encounter. This move towards professionalization resulted in performance-based assessments of teacher candidates, higher expectations for content knowledge, and higher standards for university accreditation. While these changes have had positive impacts on teacher education, an additional outcome is the negative impact on alternative tracks to teaching

which, in turn, negatively impacts the recruitment of teachers of color. Advocates for the second reform movement, deregulation, intended to highlight the expert level of content knowledge that teachers have which should result in less regulation of teaching. Programs influenced by this reform movement are more likely to deemphasize explicit instruction in pedagogy and rely on learning skills in the field, as well as asserting that frameworks such as multicultural education or constructivism could undermine high academic standards. Advocates for the final reform agenda, social justice, focus on preparing teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse schools. While this movement has worked towards more equitable outcomes for all K-12 students in many ways, it has not addressed systemic issues and may deemphasize content knowledge.

Three theoretical foundations have guided teacher education programming, as well. Programs informed by distributive theories (e.g., Rawls, 2001) teach that material goods and services should be redistributed equitably, including educational resources. Programs grounded in recognition theories (e.g., Young, 1990) rely heavily on identifying specific solutions to inequities in education. Finally, some programs use both theories as the foundation for teacher education, often advocating for policy change and individual identification and acknowledgement of systemic inequities.

Another area of focus in the general teacher education literature includes articulating a vision for socially just teacher candidates by addressing the question: What should graduates be able to do when the complete the program? Whipp (2013) identified seven characteristics of socially just teachers:

- [they] hold high academic and behavioral expectations for all in a rigorous curriculum;

- create classroom climates that are warm and demanding;
- affirm and sustain their students' cultural backgrounds by drawing from their 'funds of knowledge' (languages, histories, cultural practices);
- connect with their students' families and communities;
- advocate for curricular and policy changes that promote more equitable educational opportunities;
- help students identify and critique historical and contemporary examples of injustice; and
- empower students to actively work toward social change. (p. 455)

These characteristics were found to be particularly important because they embody the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective, socially just teaching. Finally, researchers have found that SJ must be infused throughout a program rather than remaining siloed in one or two introductory classes, and that TCs must see the explicit connection between social justice and their pedagogy (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2015; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zeichner, 2009).

Researchers in education have identified effective pedagogical approaches for integrating SJ, many of which focus on community. One strategy is engaging TCs in community, particularly local schools (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015). These experiences not only allow TCs to have experiences that develop critical awareness of their own identities and how those may show up in their future classrooms, but they also engage K-12 personnel in schools in the training and development of TCs. Researchers have demonstrated that holistic, practice-based teacher education programs allow TCs to connect their coursework to practice (Hollins, 2011;

Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Whipp, 2013; Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner et al., 2015). In addition to the local community, researchers have found that engaging TCs in a community of peers is also helpful in developing socially just teaching practices and dispositions (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

Other strategies have been found to be effective in the literature. Researchers have found that providing opportunities for intentional reflection, particularly in regard to identities, biases, beliefs, and experiences, can help TCs shape their teaching identities in a socially just way (Izadinia, 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2009). Zeichner (2009) found that analyzing thought-provoking readings, films, and case studies through class discussions are also effective strategies. Additionally, allowing TCs to conduct action research into SJ concepts and practices have proven effective in helping TCs connect coursework with practice.

The literature on literacy education and the integration of SJ-DEI into the specific discipline is limited, but the existing literature focuses on moving TCs from a theoretical understanding of social justice to a pragmatic one. Literacy teacher educators can help TCs make this shift by helping them answer this question: How can I teach this content in a way that promotes social justice and values diversity, equity, and inclusion while also preparing future teachers to teach the discipline well? Two specific strategies emerged in the literature: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Literacy Methods and a Historically Responsive Literacy Framework.

Overstreet (2019) described teaching literacy methods using Culturally Responsive Pedagogy through explicit modeling, privileging culture as curriculum, and disrupting deficit thinking. Overstreet explicitly models Culturally Responsive

Pedagogies during her university classes by thinking aloud about her teaching choices, modeling how she establishes classroom community, and building upon the cultural knowledge of students in her class. Overstreet (2019) privileges culture as curriculum through intentionally choosing books for read-alouds that teach a concept and provide a mirror for students in the class, connecting decodable texts for emergent readers with their local communities, and teaching literacy as a developmental continuum in order to emphasize the assets students bring to the classroom. Finally, Overstreet (2019) works to disrupt deficit thinking by providing thought-provoking readings, facilitating class discussions, and providing intentional reflection questions to help TCs wrestle with how they are being challenged.

Muhammad's (2020) Historically Responsive Literacy (HRL) Framework identifies four pursuits that can be integrated into any literacy lesson that help TCs consider the holistic development of K-12 students. The pursuits of identity, skill development, intellectual development, and criticality help to ground literacy in history and restoring excellence in education for all students. Muhammad's HRL framework provides TCs with specific actions they can take to cultivate a more just educational experience for all students and connects theory with practice.

In summary, researchers in teacher education advocate for integrating SJ-DEI throughout a teacher education program in order to provide TCs with clear connection between theory and practice and to improve the likelihood that they will carry socially just practices into their future classrooms (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2015; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zeichner, 2009). One of the ways to infuse SJ-DEI throughout a

teacher education program is by integrating it into all content areas, modeling for TCs how social justice impacts daily instructional decisions.

Chapter 3: A Process to Redesign Literacy Curriculum with a Social Justice Focus

In Chapter 3, I described the process I used to situate my case study (one section of *Foundations of Reading)* within the larger context of the elementary teacher preparation program at one major research university. I examined the syllabi for two introductory courses that precede *Foundations of Reading* and interviewed an instructor for one of those courses to extend my understanding of choices made in content and pedagogy. In my analysis, I discovered that the introductory courses made explicit connections to SJ in the course objectives, course topics, and readings. The courses helped TCs explore social justice on a personal level by examining their identities and personal experiences and how those may impact their beliefs about education. The courses also aided TCs in their understanding of SJ on a systemic level, considering systems of oppression in schools through topics such as school choice, different school models, and current event presentations.

Through this analysis, I identified specific areas to revise in the *Foundations of Reading* syllabus and delivery of content.

- integrating SJ into literacy content (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zeichner, 2009);
- describing and modeling specific SJ pedagogical strategies in literacy instruction (Howard et al., 2018; Muhammad, 2020; Overstreet, 2019);
- providing opportunities for intentional reflection (Izadinia, 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2009);

- engaging TCs in community of peers and a local school (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014).

I made several changes to the literacy course syllabus, explicitly stating the connection of social justice to the literacy content. Ten of the original required readings were written by White authors, and I replaced or added articles and chapters written by scholars of color. I adjusted lectures to include slides making explicit connections to SJ-DEI within a particular topic, and I made intentional changes to the lesson plan template used in the course to integrate Muhammad's (2020) HRL Framework. I also helped TCs make explicit connections between how literacy assessments can be used to plan equitable instruction and how academic benchmarks, such as writing one's name, can be connected to social justice. Within lesson plans and reading reflections, I created reflection questions to help TCs reflect on their identities, experiences, and beliefs. I included questions that would help them move from this individual focus to how those identities, experiences, and beliefs have shaped their thinking about literacy. Finally, I engaged TCs in a community of peers and a local school community where they were able to connect what their literacy coursework with a practicum experience. Additionally, their learning communities provided a safe space for TCs to engage in cognitive dissonance and emphasized the importance of collaboration, moving them away from the White-centric value of individualism.

Chapter 4: A Redesigned Literacy Curriculum Enacted

In Chapter 4, I described the enactment of the revised *Foundations of Literacy* syllabus and curriculum from Chapter 3. In this case study, I used several data sources including semi-structured interviews, pre- and post-questionnaires with open-ended

writing responses, and TC lesson plans. In my analysis, I found that TCs had a wide and varied understanding of SJ before the course, but that their understanding shifted to a solid, strong understanding of SJ-DEI as a framework for teaching, specifically the teaching of literacy. Self-efficacy in knowledge about literacy and how to teach K-6 youth increased from the beginning to the end of the semester.

At the beginning of the semester, two patterns emerged in how TCs understood SJ: 1) Defining Social Justice and DEI and 2) Children's Books as Vehicles to Discuss SJ. TCs thought of SJ in terms of their own identities or equated SJ with respect, acceptance, and dismantling systems and interrogating bias. These definitions reflected the ways in which SJ had been defined in introductory courses, and while they were not necessarily incorrect, these definitions lacked application and nuance. The second pattern to emerge focused on children's books as a primary vehicle for discussing social justice in the classroom. Nine TCs focused primarily on how race is addressed in children's books. Other subthemes emerged, as well, including the teacher in a position of power, access, and perspective-taking. These definitions reflected the content of introductory courses, and again, while not incorrect, these definitions lacked deeper understanding of social justice in literacy and application.

At the end of the course, two main themes emerged from my analysis of post-questionnaires and final interviews: 1) SJ and DEI as Framework for Teaching and 2) Move from Theoretical Understanding to Practical Enactment of SJ-DEI. Nineteen TCs discussed SJ as a framework for teaching, not just a topic. In using SJ-DEI as a framework for teaching, TCs indicated that it impacts the content and the delivery or instruction. For example, TCs discussed selecting content that resonated with students

and connected with their experiences. TCs described differentiating the delivery of content through the use of small groups or choice in product, which not only allows for more equitable engagement with literacy for all students, but also increases motivation. TCs also described how a SJ-DEI framework results in care, high expectations, and responsive teaching.

The second major theme was a move from theoretical understanding to practical enactment of SJ-DEI for two key informants. In lesson plans, these key informants began to infuse some of the pursuits from Muhammad's (2020) HRL Framework. Additionally, both key informants discussed the ways in which they were able to use literacy assessments to identify areas of strength and areas where students needed additional support. By planning instruction this way, these key informants began to understand that a socially just teacher uses assessment to provide what each child needs to be successful. However, not all informants experienced this shift. One key informant still struggled to describe her understanding of SJ. While she described SJ as centering students and their experiences, she continued to refer to SJ as conducing read-alouds focused on specific topics. She was also overwhelmed by what it means to teach in a socially just way.

Teacher candidates' self-efficacy increased from the beginning to the end of the semester. Throughout the course, TCs gained theoretical and pedagogical knowledge and were able to connect their coursework to real teaching situations. Additionally, TCs learned specific strategies for infusing SJ and DEI into their teaching of literacy, potentially providing clear direction and increasing their confidence.

Implications

Infusing Social Justice Programmatically and Disciplinarily is Required

Researchers (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016; Zeichner, 2009) found that social justice must be carried throughout a teacher education program in order to fully prepare teacher candidates to teach in socially just ways. Additionally, researchers (Mills & Ballanytne, 2016; Whipp, 2013; Zeichner, 2009) agree that programs must adopt a clear definition of social justice that informs the entire program. Most of the research in teacher education has focused on general strategies for infusing social justice and have not explored how this can be done in the disciplines, particularly in literacy. While there have been a few scholars to begin this work (i.e., Muhammad, 2020; Overstreet, 2019), little research has been done into what early teacher education courses introduce in regard to SJ-DEI and how those strands have or have not been continued through later classes.

This dissertation study responded by crafting a clearly articulated (and communicated) definition of SJ-DEI that more clearly defined the concept based on the work of various scholars, as well as including some of the nuances in how DEI can be used to better define and understand SJ and how SJ-DEI can be applied in an educational context. I then applied this research to a literacy-specific course. The findings of this dissertation have important implications for programmatic agreement on definitions, and the importance of weaving SJ and this agreed upon definition throughout the design and teaching of all coursework and experiences, including disciplinary courses.

First, findings reaffirmed the need for a clear, actionable definition at the program level. The current commitment statement to social justice at the R1 university where this

case study took place is laudable. However, while it includes elements of SJ such as identifying systems of oppression, it falls short of providing examples of how SJ can be enacted in a classroom. Additionally, like many teacher education departments, there have been few conversations with all instructors about the goals for teacher candidates to teach in socially just ways. These conversations should occur between instructors at all levels of courses in the teacher education program, particularly including the instructors of specific disciplines. Finally, the definition needs to be shared with TCs early and revisited often throughout the program. Without alignment and agreement on SJ, and continual conversation about these ideas in explicit ways, teacher candidates will lack understanding in how their coursework connects with socially just teaching.

In addition to overall programmatic agreement, researchers and educators in the field of literacy must conduct more research in this area. While the findings of this dissertation add to the literature in literacy education, research that examines multiple universities and their programs, focusing on literacy coursework but stretching beyond those classes into other disciplines, is necessary. In addition, literacy educators must continue to make explicit, planned connections between literacy content and SJ-DEI. It is also critical that literacy instructors, and any instructor in a specific discipline, emphasize that attention to SJ-DEI does not detract from the disciplinary ideas or content that is critical to students' academic learning. TCs need to understand that attention to SJ and DEI further informs content and delivery and ensures that each K-6 student receives the support necessary to their growth.

Intentional Changes Can Shift TC Understanding

As Mills & Ballantyne (2016) found, understanding of social justice and attitudes related to diversity varied widely among TCs. Findings from my dissertation reinforced these ideas as the initial definitions collected in the pre-questionnaire ranged widely, some focusing on how SJ impacts their identities as teachers to equating SJ with respect, acceptance, and interrogating biases. The findings in my dissertation also reflect the literature on social justice in that the definitions had various foci at the beginning of the semester.

I want to acknowledge that SJ and DEI are complex concepts and can be applied differently depending on the situation. However, it is also important for teacher educators that are shaping teacher education programs to identify what it means for graduates of their program to teach in socially just ways. Teacher candidates' initial understandings of social justice, particularly in regard to literacy, were quite limited in scope and lacked direct application. However, after a semester with a revised syllabus and curriculum that was guided by a clearer definition of SJ-DEI, followed by intentional teaching on my part, TCs were beginning to envision how SJ-DEI can be used as a framework and can impact their teaching beyond read-alouds.

With intentional planning, TCs' self-efficacy increased from the beginning to end of the semester. Teacher educators must consistently model socially just teaching practices, make explicit connections between theory and pedagogy, and provide experiences that allow TCs to practice what they are learning. These experiences can include opportunities for positive physiological and emotional states when anticipating

future teaching and mastery experiences in which TCs are able to observe positive outcomes from their teaching.

These intentional curriculum changes can begin to shift TCs' understandings and beliefs about social justice. It is critical to have a definition of SJ-DEI that is accessible for TCs, is referred to intentionally throughout the program, and goes beyond "dismantling systems of oppression" because for many TCs, they leave a program without clear direction into what that translates into in practice. This intentionality can also begin to increase TCs' confidence in their ability to teach literacy in socially just ways.

A key finding from my study is that literacy instructors can help TCs move beyond thinking of SJ-DEI in literacy as solely limited to choosing read-alouds that cover social justice topics such as race or gender. For example, literacy development should be taught in terms of assets to build upon rather than deficits to address. This slight change in thinking moves TCs away from the idea that their future students are in need of saving, and towards the idea that each learner comes with their own strengths to be built upon. Another example is the use of literacy assessments. While assessments can be problematic, literacy instructors can help TCs learn about assessments, understand their strengths and limitations, and determine how to use assessment data as a tool for teaching more equitably—because this approach allows educators to identify areas where K-6 students are strong *and* where they need additional support.

Directions for Future Research

Findings from the case study I presented in my dissertation foster further questions regarding social justice in literacy, programmatic agreement and cohesion, and

continued exploration of socially just pedagogy in elementary grades. One future research study would be to continue to explore how social justice can be infused in literacy education. This case only included one semester and one group of TCs, and continued study would allow for greater expansion and continued alignment with other classes in the teacher education program.

Related to alignment with other courses, another direction for future research would be to explore how teacher education programs can better sequence social justice content throughout a program. Introductory courses often define what social justice will mean for the program and carry the bulk of discussion of social justice topics such as inequity due to race, gender, or socioeconomic status. However, revisiting the definitions of SJ-DEI, or even refining them based on conversations with discipline-specific faculty, rarely occur. In addition, discussions about SJ topics often end with the introductory course and are not carried through in more focused and sophisticated ways in later courses. It could be helpful to see how each course does or does not infuse social justice, look for common threads or points of disagreement, and identify topics that can be carried through later courses. Another potential area of research would be to follow TCs into their first years of teaching to see how or if they enact tenets from university coursework into their classroom contexts.

Finally, because of the varied understandings of social justice held by teacher educators and TCs, more research should be conducted into socially just practices, particularly in elementary school. Critical literacy and critical pedagogy are often discussed as socially just practices, but these are often applied only in secondary

contexts. Continued research into specific pedagogies that can be applied in elementary school classrooms will be critical in preparing socially just teacher candidates.

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Appendix A

General Interview Questions:

- Talk about the overall goals for the course including your choice of specific topics and the order of topics across the semester.
- (Probe: How do you introduce and teach these topics?)
- Do you address SJ issues? If so, how do you define SJ? Talk about the role you see SJ learning taking in teacher candidates (TCs) development as educators?
- Describe the use of SJ concepts within your course. (Probe: What specific ideas about SJ did you want TCs to explore and understand in this class? How did you choose the readings and activities? What specific pedagogical strategies do you use in your classroom to address SJ issues and TCs' learning?)
- What do you feel has/has not been done at the U of MN to intentionally thread SJ concepts throughout the rest of the TE program?
- Did you revise any of the readings, activities, or topics during the pandemic? Is there anything that you would do differently if you were meeting in person?

Specific questions for CI 3211

- On page 1 of the syllabus, you state, "The class focuses on three topics: classroom management, instructional planning, and working with families -- as we wrestle with how these topics fit within a framework of equity." Describe how you designed the class and your goals for addressing these three topics with the selected "framework of equity" in mind.
- On page 4 and 5 of the syllabus, you state, "The expectation for this class is that you notice the privileges you are granted or denied on the basis of your class, race, gender, disability, family status, religion or sexual orientation; come to class prepared to learn from, with, and about each other … We will rely on one another's perspectives in helping us to learn, unlearn, and relearn beliefs, practices, and reactions to the multitude of issues encountered in elementary classrooms and the world." What are your goals for this expectation on a daily basis? What does TC learning look like as a result? How do you set this expectation at the beginning of the semester?
- Cultural Autobiography - page 5 of the syllabus - how do you introduce this topic? What do you hope TCs learn from this assignment?
- Rethinking Elementary Education Responses - page 6 of the syllabus - What key ideas do you plan for TCs to learn from this assignment? How do you weave the ideas gleaned from these readings into content throughout the semester (i.e.,

classroom management project, lesson plan, and unit plan project) to achieve your learning goals?

- Final Reflective Essay - page 7 of the syllabus - What are the core objectives you have for this assignment? What do you hope students will learn or be able to do as a result of this final assignment, and as an extension, the class as a whole?

Appendix B

Course Number:		**SJ Topics Identified:**
Course Description:		
Course Objectives:		
Topics:		
Readings/Sources:		
Assignments/Projects:		

Appendix C

The attached form lists different activities. In the column **Confidence**, rate how confident you are that you can do them **as of now.** Rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 to 10 using the scale given below (Bandura, 2005).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cannot do at all				Moderately certain can do					Highly certain can do	

Teach for social justice.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cannot do at all				Moderately certain can do					Highly certain can do	

Teach in a way that promotes DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cannot do at all				Moderately certain can do					Highly certain can do	

Teach literacy in a socially just way.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cannot do at all				Moderately certain can do					Highly certain can do	

Answer the following open-ended questions.

What does social justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion mean for you?

How do you see these ideas intersecting with literacy?

Appendix D

Interview 1:
Why is teaching important to you?
Is there something about your personal beliefs or values that influenced your decision to teach? Tell me about it.
How does being a teacher fit with how you see yourself as a person?
What do you hope to achieve by becoming a teacher?
How have you experienced social justice in education?
How long do you think you'll stay in teaching?
What is your image of good teaching?
Throughout your time as an elementary ed or early childhood ed major, you've probably heard about social justice on many occasions. Will you describe what that has looked like in different classes you have taken?
How would you describe what the teacher education program at the University of Minnesota would say is an image of good teaching?
Read CEHD commitment statement for social justice. Does the program's philosophy fit with your own values and beliefs? Explain your answer.
How confident do you feel about teaching literacy in a socially just way?

Interview 2 [Research Questions 3 & 4]:
How do you think your teaching is going?
What are your main successes?
What are some of your challenges?
What does your instruction look like right now?
Describe a lesson.
Share one of your recent lesson plans. Why did you choose this particular lesson?
What do you expect from your buddies?
What would you like to continue doing?
What would you like to do differently?
How are you incorporating the Historically Responsive Literacy Framework into your lessons?
How has this experience impacted the way you think about teaching?
How confident do you feel about teaching literacy in a socially just way?

Interview 3 [Research Question 4]:
Describe your understanding of teaching for social justice.
Describe a pedagogical strategy you can use to teach for social justice.
How confident do you feel about teaching literacy in a socially just way?