

12-31-2014

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Ticknor, A. S. (2014). Preserving Social Justice Identities: Learning from One Pre-service Literacy Teacher. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 53 (4). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol53/iss4/2

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PRESERVING SOCIAL JUSTICE IDENTITIES: LEARNING FROM ONE PRE-SERVICE LITERACY TEACHER

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Abstract

Identities that include social justice stances are important for pre-service teachers to adopt in teacher education so they may meet the needs of all future students. However maintaining a social justice identity can be difficult when pre-service teachers are confronted with an evaluator without a social justice stance. This article examines how one pre-service teacher preserved a social justice identity by actively resisting racial and cultural stereotypes of students in her student teaching field experience. Analysis of language data illustrates that pre-service teachers can enact social justice pedagogy in elementary classrooms and preserve a social justice identity. This report reveals that teacher educators can support pre-service teachers in the process of sustaining social justice identities.



Preserving Social Justice Identities: Learning from One Pre-service Literacy Teacher

Introduction

As public elementary schools become more diverse in terms of student population, U.S. teacher demographics remain relatively stable as White and female (Feistritz, 2011). For pre-service elementary literacy teachers who fit within the demographic majority of U.S. teachers, teacher education program experiences focused on student diversity, such as social class, race, and gender, are deeply important. In the United States, many teacher education programs require pre-service teachers to enroll in multicultural or diversity courses to expose students to develop a broader perspective on culture and diversity. However, simply enrolling in diversity courses alone does not necessarily translate into pre-service teachers taking up critical perspectives in their professional identities. Identities that include critical perspectives or social justice stances are important for pre-service teachers to adopt so they may meet the needs of all future students.

Freire (1968/2000) states that education is never neutral; it is always political, and calls for problem-posing educators. Teachers who take up this call engage in dialogue with students and encourage social action. Social action, which includes reflection and praxis, is action upon the world to create a more socially just world. In this article, I conceptualize social justice education as including both pedagogical and ideological knowledge about systems of inequality in educational environments and working towards equality through social action. This means that social justice educators utilize inclusive pedagogies that provide equitable learning opportunities, exposure to different perspectives, and encourage open-mindedness. Specifically, social justice educators include pedagogies in which students are encouraged to share their unique perspectives and knowledge about the world. Educators who take up this stance and practice these pedagogies do so without stereotypical assumptions about student knowledge or experiences about sociocultural topics like culture, language, and race.

Cochran-Smith (1999) advocates that teacher education programs should prioritize social justice centered education by encouraging prospective teachers to enact social change, be socially responsible, and to implement social justice pedagogy in their future educational settings and more recently, offers a theory for teacher education programs to incorporate social justice principles. Cochran-Smith (2010) states that it is not merely planning activities for pre-service teachers

engagement, but rather, an intellectual approach to “preparation of teachers that acknowledges the social and political contexts in which teaching, learning, schooling, and ideas about justice” (p. 447) are historically located and filled with tension. Cochran-Smith continues to advocate that teacher education programs should prepare teacher candidates to learn to teach for social justice, and as an elementary literacy teacher educator, I echo Cochran-Smith’s continued call for socially just educators and find the need remains relevant (Ticknor, 2012, in press). However, translating program goals into the future practice of graduates is not an easy task (Han, 2013; Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

This article examines how one pre-service teacher developed a social justice identity and resisted pressures to conform to existing literacy pedagogies in a practicum field experience then preserved this identity in a later student teaching experience. Using analyses of in-depth interview data, I show how a pre-service teacher, Tammy, developed an identity as a social justice educator, challenged existing literacy practices in her practicum field experience, and sought alternative pedagogies. Further, drawing on critical discourse analysis of an email written by Tammy, I illustrate how she later preserved a social justice identity by seeking mentors with social justice perspectives when confronted with a competing view of socially just practices during her student teaching field experience.

This article begins by briefly reviewing literature related to cultivating social justice perspectives and pedagogy in teacher education programs. Next the article describes the research design as well as specific data collection and analysis techniques used. The article then presents two analyses. The first, which is based on interview data during three months of pre-service field experience, examines Tammy’s developing identity as a social justice educator. The second analysis, which is based on an email Tammy wrote to me during her student teaching internship, closely examines how she resisted local pressures to conform to existing literacy practices and (mis)conceptualizations of socially just pedagogies to preserve her identity as a social justice educator. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of this research, in particular what it means for teacher education faculty interested in cultivating social justice perspectives and pedagogies.

Cultivating Social Justice Perspectives and Pedagogies in Teacher Education Programs

Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, and McQuillan (2009) examined the ways in which graduates from a teacher education program with a

stated social justice agenda developed and enacted socially just pedagogy in their classrooms. The researchers state that good and just teaching involves both pedagogical knowledge as well as ideological knowledge about how systems of inequality in educational environments can be cultivated in teacher education programs. According to Mills (2009), pre-service teachers who already possess dispositions compatible with social justice are more likely to take up program goals of social justice education. Garmon (2004) identifies these dispositions as openness, self-awareness/self-reflectiveness, and a commitment to social justice. Garmon continues that “even the best-designed teacher preparation programs may be ineffective in developing appropriate multicultural awareness and sensitivity” (p. 212) if pre-service teachers do not hold dispositions for social justice centered pedagogy. However, pre-service teachers can develop a social justice perspective when guided and supported by teacher educators committed to social justice teaching (Ticknor, 2012, in press).

Many scholars agree that a value of social justice pedagogy can be developed in teacher education programs with deliberate planning for students to interact with diverse cultural groups and critically reflect with guidance by supportive mentors in teacher education programs (Bleicher, 2011; Connor, 2010; Farnsworth, 2010; Han, 2013; Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007; Mills, 2012; Olmedo, 1997; Seidl & Conley, 2009; Ticknor, 2012; Ticknor, in press). Lynn and Smith-Maddox (2007) advocate the use of small group inquiry as a method for novice teachers to reflect about emerging identities as social justice educators and “to do the kind of reflecting and thinking out loud that would move them toward the type of teacher they wanted to be” (p. 98). Elsewhere (Ticknor, 2012, 2014-b, in press; Ticknor & Cavendish, in press), I advocate for critical reflection about pedagogy in methods courses and in peer small groups. Additionally, Han (2013) calls for teacher education programs to provide a consistent thread of critical pedagogy for pre-service teachers, space to talk openly about cultural identities and its impact in teaching and learning, and opportunities for diverse field placements.

Field experiences that cultivate social justice stances can translate into pedagogical practices when classroom teachers enact similar practices. Opportunities to approximate critical literacy teaching in field experiences with supportive mentors provide spaces for pre-service teachers to try out critical pedagogy with children (Mosely, 2010). Mills (2012) recommends carefully selecting “supervising teachers whose dispositions are reflective of those we wish to see in our future teachers” (p. 8) to act as teacher mentors. Unfortunately many

teacher education programs do not have access to an endless pool of classroom teachers to select the right mentors as advocated by Mills. In cases where teachers without social justice identities are selected, pre-service teacher stances on social justice are in danger of disruption or challenge. This may result in limited opportunities to attempt critical pedagogy and pressures to succumb and conform to existing structures and literacy pedagogy. When social justice mentors are absent or inconsistent in teacher education program experiences, sustaining a social justice identity may be difficult for pre-service teachers (Ticknor, 2012).

In the larger qualitative project from which my analyses for this article are drawn, I have tried to be responsive to the issue of absent mentors in two ways. First, my research design provides a community of learners for which support at both the peer and mentor level is nurtured, and relationships are developed over an extended amount of time (Ticknor & Cavendish, in press). Second, the structure of small group in-depth interviews, or lingering conversations (Ticknor, 2012), encourage participants to continue conversations and rehearse agency by talking with group members in a safe environment (Ticknor, 2014-a).

Methodology

Context of Study

This study took place in an initial licensure preparation program of a four-year teacher education program at a large public university located in the southwest U.S. The university graduates approximately 150 elementary (K-6) teacher candidates each year. The teacher education program did not have a stated social justice agenda, although some faculty did teach from a social justice perspective and encouraged students to take up social justice stances. Each semester students participated in a field experience ranging from 5-15 hours paired with at least one methods course. For example, when students enrolled in the language arts methods course they also completed a 15-hour practicum field experience so they could apply their learning in the field. In the final year of the program, students enrolled in a one-year internship in a classroom. During the first semester of the internship, pre-service teachers spent one day a week observing, assisting, and teaching a minimum of three lessons in the classroom. In the second semester, pre-service teachers shadow the same clinical teacher in all aspects of teaching and are assigned a university supervisor to oversee their internship experience.

Researcher's Role

I identify as a White female from the Midwest region of the U.S, who relocated to Southeastern University as a literacy educator. At the beginning of the study, I taught an elementary language methods course required for initial teaching licensure, in which all participants were enrolled. Teaching from a social justice perspective and designing my section of the course to center on literacy as a social process, critical texts, such as *Girls, Social Class, and Literacy* (Jones, 2006), were required reading. The course included a 15-hour field placement in an elementary classroom for students to practice literacy pedagogy with children. The field experience was designed to occur in kindergarten classrooms at a local elementary with a diverse student population. Classroom teachers were selected based on prior relationships and their willingness to mentor pre-service teachers. Classroom teachers enacted differing pedagogical practices not necessarily in line with teaching for social justice; however, all classroom teachers allowed students to attempt critical pedagogy in their classrooms. I observed each teaching session and provided oral and written feedback to my students.

Course assignments were practical applications of course topics and included a series of written lesson plans with reflections after implementation in the field experience. In-class discussions connected professional readings with attempts to enact critical literacy pedagogies with elementary aged students, critical reflection of these experiences, and social justice and diversity topics in relation to literacy instruction. My goal as instructor was to provide space for students to wrestle with complex issues related to literacy, social justice centered pedagogies, and implementing social justice theories into practice. These conversations continued after the course ended and students became participants in my larger study focused on pre-service teacher identity.

Participant

One participant, Tammy (all names are pseudonyms), is highlighted in this article. Tammy attended Southeastern University directly after completing high school and identified as White and female. Tammy's home community was a suburb of a mid-size city in the southeast approximately 5 hours from the university. After graduation, Tammy returned to her home community for a full-time elementary teaching position.

Tammy was a student in my language arts methods course in the Fall 2011 semester and completed all field experiences in rural communities near Southeastern University. The following semester, Tammy was placed in a third

grade classroom with Jim, a teacher with more than 3 years of classroom experience, to complete 15 hours of practicum for her social studies methods course. Jim was a traditional teacher in the sense that he used test-taking strategies, such as reading a passage and highlighting key information, in each of his lessons and did not encourage students to openly share their knowledge. Tammy described their interactions as positive but also limited. Jim offered Tammy guidance by modeling his routines and teaching practices and offered little feedback about lesson ideas or implementation. The following academic year (August 2012-May 2013) Tammy was a student teacher in a fourth grade classroom with Joan as her clinical teacher. Joan served as Tammy's daily mentor, as well as observed and evaluated Tammy's day-to-day interactions. Tammy described her relationship with Joan as positive and collaborative. Tammy was also observed and evaluated by a university supervisor and an instructional coach from the school district. Each evaluator was to provide written and verbal feedback after each observation, and act as a mentor to Tammy by offering suggestions and recommendations for future instruction during the student teaching internship experience.

Tammy became a participant in the larger study, which investigates how pre-service teachers use language to mediate professional identities in teacher education experiences, after the language arts course ended and continued her participation until she graduated. All participants for the larger study, including Tammy, were selected based on my anticipation that data would be particularly generative since I had already built rapport with these individuals, and their in-class contributions were rich with reflective sharing. After the course ended participants met monthly with me in a small group to talk about their teacher education experiences. Conversations were participant directed and I acted as a facilitator and a resource.

Data Sources and Analysis

Since I was interested in language use in the larger study, all data sources were language based. My primary data source was 11 in-depth small group interviews over three academic semesters. My goal in each 60-90 minute monthly interview was to encourage participant sharing with a focus on participant experiences in the teacher education program and field experiences and develop a safe and trusting community. All participant interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Using a process of continual rereading of the corpus of interview data (Erickson, 1985), I assigned codes based on the emerging themes and patterns in the data. The conversation transcripts were coded and assigned categories based on the emerging themes and patterns in the data. I recorded reflective ethnographic field notes about emerging themes and patterns then followed-up with participants in later interviews. Secondary data sources were also language based and included participant generated written documents, such as course assignments, and my reflective field notes. Secondary data sources were used to triangulate findings. I continually looked for contradictions and tensions that did not fit the categories in the data sets by reviewing the entire data corpus with constant comparison methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1975). Final categories included changes in professional identity confidence, changes in learning relationships, changes in Discourses of “good” teachers, and changes in expected teacher education curricula.

Next, I began a discourse analysis within each category to further investigate how identities, significance, and Discourse models were (re)built in the language data (Gee, 2005). Specifically, I used Gee’s building task of identities and significance and the Discourse model inquiry tool to examine excerpts of language with specific questions to analyze how pre-service teachers built professional identities, assigned significance to literacy events and activities, and invoked Discourse models of effective literacy teaching stances over time. Gee (2011) states that discourse analysis studies “language at use in the world, not just to say things, but to do things” (p. IV, emphasis added). It was the doing of social justice that was of particular interest in examining in the language for this analysis. Next, I organized exemplary episodes, or series of conversational turns representing the same topic or theme (Lewis & Ketter, 2004) to illustrate how social justice topics such as race and culture were talked about in the language data and to investigate what actions the speakers were attempting to convey with her talk.

For this article I conducted another layer of discourse analysis to closely examine the say and do in a written document, an email Tammy sent to me. To conduct this analysis, episodes were organized into stanzas to highlight the say and do of participant language on a given topic, such as social justice pedagogies, or event, a conversation between educators, at one time or place. Gee (2005) states that stanzas are used to signify a group of lines, from transcribed language, devoted to a signal topic or event “at one time or place, or it focuses on a specific character, theme, image, topic, or perspective” (p. 128). When one of these factors

changes, a new stanza is created. Stanzas were named with headers to serve as organizers of the larger text, or the macrostructure, of the topic. The microstructure of the text, or smaller topics, is composed of the individual lines within each stanza.

Findings

This section presents two analyses of Tammy's language. The first is from the in-depth interviews during the first three months of the study and highlights Tammy's developing social justice identity and resistance to conforming to existing literacy practices in her social studies field experience classroom. The second analysis is a close examination of an email Tammy sent to me about an event in her student teaching classroom. The email example illustrates how Tammy actively upheld an identity as a social justice literacy educator when confronted with an evaluator who did not support her stance. For each analysis I offer contextual information of the teaching setting. In the second analysis, I provide an example of language organized into stanzas with headers to organize the microstructure.

Tammy: Resisting Limiting Pedagogy

Tammy often hesitated to speak first in our small group meetings. She seemed to listen and wait for the right opportunity to ask a question, share an experience, or offer her perspectives. When she did speak, she often offered a critical perspective on the topic or introduced a topic worthy of critical consideration. The other members of the group would often agree and ask her questions; however, they did not typically offer critical perspectives. One instance was during the second interview. Participants were discussing upcoming course registration and what concentration courses, or courses outside of the elementary education degree program of study, were deemed the best. Tammy shared that her favorite concentration course was a course about ethics and cultural psychology. Tammy deemed the course her favorite because "I guess I'm just really into that stuff." Tammy went on to explain that she enjoyed the in-class discussions and described the course meetings as "all we do is talk about issues and race and all kinds of stuff. I love it. It's my favorite class." Tammy's interest in "all kinds of stuff," meaning her interest in social justice issues about power and oppression, translated into how she approached teaching, her professional identity, and the kinds of pedagogical practices she hoped to implement in her field experiences.

Tammy was placed in a local third grade classroom with Jim for her social studies methods field experience. During her hours in Jim's classroom, Tammy

observed his language arts and social studies teaching. In small group interviews Tammy described him as “the Smart Board guy” because each time she observed Jim teach he used the Smart Board to project a written document and model using a highlighter to identify important textual information. For example, after observing a recent language arts lesson she stated, “he’ll put this passage up on his Smart Board and have [the students] highlight key points and answer the questions below...It’s boring.” Instead, Tammy wanted to plan instruction that would engage students through active participation and said, “If I see more highlighting, I’m going to quit. Like, I know that’s what you do in high school, but...[it’s 3rd grade and] really boring.” Tammy also shared that when she asked Jim if his instructional choices were based on test preparation he replied, “Yep. Pretty much” and if he ever “switched [his instruction] up” and had students read independently or discuss the text, he responded, “Nope.” Tammy was disappointed about his limited responses and reflection to her inquiry into his literacy practices as well as limiting student learning opportunities and conversations about text.

Tammy was excited that she would be planning a series of lessons for her social studies methods course centered on the state social studies standard for culture. At the time, the state had yet to fully implement the newly adopted social studies standards; however, the university social studies methods instructors had spent much time and energy into familiarizing their students with the standards. Social studies students were expected to use the standards in their instructional planning whether or not their field placement school district utilized them. Tammy stated that Jim, her practicum classroom teacher, “didn’t even know [culture] was [a social studies standard], because [the school district is] just now switching over [to the state standards] in science and social studies.” Tammy also saw the assignment as a way to try out more engaging pedagogy with Jim’s third grade students. Tammy decided to incorporate music into her lesson in the way of a “tribal song” to “liven it up a little bit” and engage students in learning about local Native American culture.

When Tammy shared her lesson plan with Jim, he responded with surprise and commented, “You’re going to be using songs? I don’t ever sing in the classroom.” Nonetheless, Tammy taught the social studies lessons as planned. Although Tammy was disappointed that she did not receive encouragement about her lesson plans or pedagogical choices, Jim did not impede her planning and allowed her to implement alternative literacy practices that encouraged student participation in his classroom. In this way, Jim acted as neither an advocate nor

an impediment while providing opportunities for Tammy to approximate alternative pedagogies more closely aligned with her identity as a social justice educator. Additionally, as Tammy resisted Jim's limiting literacy pedagogy, she built her confidence as an educator and laid the groundwork for more inclusive literacy practices.

Tammy: Preserving a Social Justice Identity

The following year Tammy began her student teaching in a rural community near Southeastern University. Tammy enjoyed her first semester as a student teacher intern in a fourth grade classroom and looked forward to her second semester experiences. Tammy often described her excitement as related to the positive relationship with her clinical teacher, Joan. Tammy and Joan worked well together and Joan encouraged Tammy to ask questions and plan literacy lessons reflective of her professional stance. Tammy felt supported and encouraged in Joan's classroom to approximate critical pedagogy.

In addition to daily mentoring and encouragement from Joan throughout the year, Tammy was assigned both a university supervisor and a local instructional coach to provide evaluative feedback in the second semester of her internship. Both the supervisor and instructional coach individually observed Tammy teach, then met with her to offer written feedback using university approved rubrics. In addition Jenny, the local instructional coach, acted as a resource for district specific support and guidance. Tammy spoke very little about either her university supervisor or Jenny except when noting that she was assigned an instructional coach to observe lessons and offer feedback. Six weeks into Tammy's second semester of her internship, Jenny observed a shared reading lesson Tammy planned and taught. The shared reading lesson was part of a literacy-based unit Tammy developed about Mexico and Mexican culture. The unit included many interactive literacy activities that encouraged students to engage with multiple texts, create texts based on prior knowledge, share individual knowledge with their peers, and build collective knowledge about the unit topic. Tammy purposefully designed the shared reading lesson to utilize the same whole group format Joan used. Then she built on the structure to include additional meaning-making activities, such as a T-chart of prior knowledge, to create space for students to share individual knowledge and experiences of the unit topic.

In the post-observation conference, Jenny offered Tammy two critiques. The first critique was about the format of the lesson. Jenny recommended that Tammy should have planned a small group format for the shared reading lesson. The

second critique was about student involvement and understanding of student prior cultural knowledge. Jenny recommended that one Hispanic student should act as “the leader,” or expert on the unit topic, for each small group. Tammy did not agree with either of Jenny’s suggestions and actively preserved her identity as a social justice educator.

The following stanzas are from an email Tammy sent me after Jenny’s observation. Tammy recounts the post-observation conference with Jenny and signals resistance to a conflicting perspective on socially just pedagogical practices. Tammy describes her resistance to stereotypical misconceptions about Hispanic students and actively maintains a social justice identity by explaining her inclusive literacy stance. The first stanza recounts Jenny’s advice to assign a Hispanic student to act as a leader for small group conversations about Mexico. The second and third stanzas explain why Tammy viewed this as stereotypical of Hispanic students, and outlined more inclusive and equitable pedagogical practices Tammy used to encourage students to share knowledge about Mexico. The fourth stanza signals Tammy’s social justice identity. The final stanza illustrates Tammy’s uncertainty about her resistance to a perceived authority.

She suggested

She suggested that
because it was a unit on Mexico
that I should have had one Hispanic student in my class
act as “the leader” of each small group.

I calmly explained

I calmly explained to her
that not every Hispanic student in my class
knows about Mexico. Some of the students do
but just because a student is Hispanic
doesn’t mean they are knowledgeable about Mexico and Mexican culture.

I told her

I told her
I allowed students
who had background knowledge on Mexico to share openly
in the beginning when I did a T-chart
on what they already know
about Mexico and Mexican culture

But I wasn't going to force

But I wasn't going to force the Hispanic kids
to take a more active role in this lesson
just because of the fact that they are Hispanic.

I think she got a little offended

I think she got a little offended when I said this
but I was just saying how I felt.

In this example Tammy calls attention to competing conceptualizations of socially just pedagogy (i.e. Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Cochran-Smith, 2010) in describing how she navigated the event and signals the tensions associated with resistance when enacting socially just pedagogy. Tammy invokes a social justice identity when she critiques Jenny's suggestions and implied stereotypes of Hispanic students. She outlines how her social justice identity translates into literacy pedagogical decisions when she explains her decision making related to accessing knowledge of individual students.

Resisting Jenny's limited view of Hispanic students was not difficult for Tammy; however, resisting instructional practices deemed effective by an evaluator and receiving unjust critique was. Tammy signals this tension in the last stanza. Although Tammy valued Jenny's insight into literacy instruction and was eager to learn from practicing teachers, she did not agree with Jenny's recommendations. Furthermore, Jenny's written evaluation, which was submitted to the university, included unsatisfactory ratings in all categories including each category associated with culture. Tammy was concerned that she may be perceived as an ineffective literacy teacher with little regard for students' culture and cultural experiences. She was also concerned that the evaluation could translate into a poor grade for the entire student teaching internship. Furthermore, since Jenny was an instructional coach for the local school district, Tammy feared that she would not receive a positive recommendation for a future teaching position in the district. Tammy reported that she felt "totally defeated because I don't know how to please everyone."

Tammy was surprised, confused, and frustrated by the evaluation, and she quickly consulted Joan. According to Tammy's email, Joan complimented her on "how well I incorporated not only Mexican culture but African culture as well into my lesson." Additionally, Tammy reported that Joan was "blaming herself for me being scored badly because of the fact that I did exactly what she normally

does for shared reading.” Tammy also sought my support and guidance. Joan and I both agreed that the evaluation was not reflective of Tammy’s teaching or stance as an educator. Nonetheless, resisting Jenny’s advice and pedagogical recommendations came at a high price for Tammy: a negative evaluation and self-doubt as an effective literacy educator.

Discussion and Implications

As noted, the analyses reported in this article are part of a larger effort to examine over time how pre-service teachers use language to mediate professional identities in teacher education experiences. I conclude this article by connecting my analyses of Tammy’s preservation of a social justice identity to the larger conversation of possible roles teacher educators can take on to cultivate social justice perspectives and pedagogies in their students.

Findings indicate that maintaining a social justice identity is complex with power relations. Pre-service teacher identities are in a constant state of motion and fraught with tensions. As pre-service teachers negotiate competing discourses of “teacher” in their course work and field experiences, they encounter productive tension needed to construct identities (Ticknor, 2014-b). Tammy did not abandon her identity as a social justice educator even though resisting evaluator recommendations resulted in an unsatisfactory evaluation and a possible low grade and/or a poor professional recommendation. Instead, Tammy quickly sought advice to bolster her literacy instructional decisions that aligned with her identity as a social justice educator. The risk of negative feedback and evaluations calls into question whether protecting a social justice identity is possible, or even advised, for novice teachers. Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) suggest that it may be unrealistic for teacher educators to expect pre-service teachers who are “guests in other people’s classrooms” (p. 372) to resist larger institutional systems of power. Perhaps without easy access to supportive mentors, Tammy may have succumbed to Jenny’s misinformed recommendations about assumed student knowledge and changed her pedagogical decisions when questioning her identity as a “good” teacher.

Findings also suggest that educators may misinterpret socially just teaching practices and continue to perpetuate damaging stereotypes of students and ineffective teaching practices in elementary classrooms. Misinterpreted understandings of socially just practices can lead pre-service teachers to replicate limited perspectives of future students and encourage deficit models of students if not interrupted. Fortunately, Tammy was encouraged to wrestle with complex

educational issues to disrupt cultural assumptions and question pedagogical decisions that did not value students' diverse perspectives and experiences (Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007; Ticknor, in press). By disrupting stereotypes about student cultural knowledge, Tammy was able to position students as knowledgeable in more equitable ways providing students with learning opportunities not possible through other instructional practices.

Findings remind teacher educators that pre-service teachers, such as Tammy, yearn for social justice mentors throughout teacher education programs (Ticknor, 2012, in press). When a conflicting view of social justice was encountered, Tammy actively sought supportive educators to preserve a social justice professional identity in her student teaching setting. Tammy resisted abandoning her identity when confronted with an evaluator who did not agree with her pedagogical decisions nor share her understanding of socially just practices. Instead, Tammy found support and guidance from mentors she trusted and whom she knew held similar perspectives about literacy instruction and students and used the support to enact social justice pedagogy.

Although this report examined language from a single pre-service teacher and generalizations to all pre-service teachers cannot be made, teacher educators and teacher education programs interested in encouraging a social justice perspective in future teachers can learn from this study. First, social justice perspectives can be fostered and maintained in teacher education programs. Cochran-Smith (2010) advocates that teacher education programs should work toward a theory of social justice to inform a theory of practice that leads to teaching for social justice, which in turn informs the theory of the teacher education program. By working together, faculty can ensure a congruent message to students. Second, protecting a social justice identity is fraught with complexities and requires support from educators. The productive tension generated by intersecting multiple identities should not be avoided, but facilitated by teacher educators (Ticknor, 2014-b) and with supportive peer groups (Ticknor, in press). Third, social justice mentors need to be easily accessible. McNerney (2007) reminds teacher educators of the importance of selecting social justice resources and strategies to "mediate the relationships between the curriculum and students in the classroom, and it is their efforts that are likely to make the most immediate difference for students" (p. 270). Pre-service teachers need experienced educators to scaffold and provide opportunities to develop these skills (Mosely, 2010). Fourth, spaces for open and honest conversations about field experience events should be encouraged. Teacher educators can provide space for pre-service teachers

to engage in critical reflection and scaffold developing social justice stances (Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007; Ticknor, 2012, in press). Fifth, agency to use social justice pedagogies can be fostered in field experiences with support from encouraging educators. If teacher educators are committed to enacting socially just pedagogies in an age of reform, we must begin by educating pre-service teachers in our programs to be agents of change (Cochran-Smith, 2010). To ensure that novice teachers are prepared to exercise agency when enacting social justice pedagogies teacher educators need to provide a consistent thread of critical pedagogy (Han, 2013) and mentoring by social justice educators (Ticknor, 2012a, in 2014-b).

Conclusions

Preserving a social justice identity is fraught with complexities for novice teachers. With support from and access to encouraging mentors, pre-service teachers can and do uphold social justice identities. Teacher educators can encourage pre-service teachers to incorporate and sustain a social justice stance in their professional identities to ensure pre-service teachers enter classrooms prepared to teach *all* students.



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