



Social Justice in Teacher Education: Naming Discrimination to Promote Transformative Action

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...[M]any teachers have not had sustained contact with people of diverse backgrounds, nor have they learned about people different from themselves in other ways. As a result, it is no surprise that some teachers have negative perceptions, biases, and racist attitudes about the students they teach, and about the students' families, cultures and communities...it is only by confronting the ones that get in the way of student learning that change will occur. (Nieto, 2005, pp. 217-218)

Introduction

Scholars largely agree that teacher education programs could transform pedagogical practices through a) reflection on individual, school, society and institutional practices, and b) action on these reflections to enhance attitudes, beliefs and curriculum (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Gay, 2010; King, Hollins, & Hayman, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Malewski, 2008; Nieto, 2005; Shade, Kelly & Oberg, 1998; Sleeter, 2001; Young, 2011, Zeichner, 2009). One tactic is to enhance teacher candidates' critical reflection during their college coursework. This study focused on using curriculum to develop social consciousness among teacher candidates (Reed, 2009). In this case study (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2005), I have examined the ways in which twenty teacher candidates reflected on discrimination and proposed emancipatory action to promote more just schools and societies.

This case study focused on the overarching question, "How do teacher candidates reflect on discrimination to promote transformative action?" and examined one assignment, composed of two written papers. At the beginning of the semester, the teacher candidates wrote a paper in which they identified discriminatory acts they had experienced or observed. Then, at the end of the semester, the teacher candidates wrote another paper and incorporated readings and class discussions to illustrate how they could transform the incidents to have emancipatory outcomes. Some of the teacher candidates described contemporary situations in which they could enact change; most described past discriminatory acts so the transformative actions they proposed were hypothetical. The purpose of this activity was to demonstrate how the teacher candidates could identify and access resources they could use to promote more equity in school and community settings.

In this paper, I use social justice pedagogy as a theoretical framework and critical incident analysis as a methodology. I provide demographics for the teacher candidates and instructors involved. Teaching for social justice is as much about the environment created as it is about the lessons taught, so I describe the course readings and classroom pedagogy. I explain the main

data for this study, the two written assignments used to engage the teacher candidates in critical incident analysis. I present five teacher candidate narratives that include varied ways of discussing identified themes of discrimination, agency, and privilege. Finally, I recommend specific strategies and approaches that college professors could use to engage more teacher candidates to analyze incidents of discrimination and promote emancipatory outcomes.

Theoretical Framework: Social Justice Pedagogy

This project was informed by research and literature, including culturally relevant pedagogy, multicultural education, social justice, and agency. The research on culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural education demonstrates a need for teacher educators to examine their programs and practices and advocate dispositions throughout their coursework, such as: 1) academic achievement, 2) cultural consciousness, 3) critical/sociopolitical awareness, 4) commitment and skills to act as allies/agents of change, 5) constructivist views of learning, 6) dedication to bridging school to home, and 7) dedication to learning about students' histories (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay, 2002; Kendall, 2006; King, Hollins & Hayman, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001; Shade, Kelly & Oberg, 1998; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Social justice pedagogy can be understood within the context of multicultural education which builds on an objective "to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate in cross-cultural interactions" which could lead to "personal social, and civic action that will help make our nation more democratic and just" (Banks, 2003, pp. vii-viii). Social justice pedagogy also involves "exploring the social construction of unequal hierarchies, which result in a social groups' differential access to power and privilege" (Lewis, 2001, p. 189). By taking on social justice pedagogy, each individual is challenged to understand what it means to create classroom communities with access, equity, quality, and opportunity to learn as a fundamental goal.

Components of social justice pedagogy include social relations, instructional strategies, and curriculum (Zeichner, 2009). Three goals common in the literature of social justice pedagogy include: ensuring that all students flourish, preparing students for active democratic participation, and creating a more just society (Russo & Fairbrother, 2009). Ensuring that all students flourish focuses on student achievement inside and outside of the classroom. Preparing students for democratic participation is both a process in which people have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward others, their society, and the broader world in which they live (Bell, 2007). The purpose of the exercise used in the study was to accomplish all three goals.

Agency is the conscious role educators play when they focus on social change and acting as allies for the collective benefit of all, especially those in disadvantaged positions from themselves (Kendall, 2006; Moore, 2008). Inden (2000) defined human agency as "the power of people to act purposively and reflectively...to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, though not necessarily from the same point of view" (p. 23). In this way, agency functions as a way to re-examine a situation with possible aims of empowerment and transformation. Agency becomes action to effect change that promotes equity.

Agency and social justice pedagogy were essential to the assignments in this study. Adams, Bell & Griffin (2007) promoted social justice pedagogy to explore how the teacher candidates identified and proposed to transform incidents of discrimination. With social justice as a foundation, these assignments "require[d] a moral and ethical attitude toward equity and possi-

bility and a belief in the capacity of people as agents who can act to transform their world” (p. 13). Combining these two notions, agency and social justice, the goal of the two papers was to identify and reflect on inequitable and discriminatory acts in order to transform them to create more just schools and societies. Within a social justice pedagogy framework, equity (fairness and justice) becomes a focus over equality (sameness) for students of marginalized populations who need support in order to succeed. The framework goes further and requires educators to provide more to those with limited access so that they have a fair chance at success.

Through analyzing incidents of discrimination, the teacher candidates considered social contexts and then determined what actions they would use to address these inequities. “Moving beyond thought and words to action...” social justice pedagogy models “social responsibility and critical engagement in community and global issues” (Peterson, 2003, p. 367). In see-judge-act Freirian style, social justice pedagogy promotes change through identifying injustices. Drawing on Freire’s notion of conscientization (Freire, 1970), social justice promotes heightened social consciousness and awareness that renders injustice unendurable and necessitates actions to enact transformational equitable change.

The concepts of individual and institutional discrimination and agency were utilized to analyze the interviews in the study. Within a social justice pedagogy frame, individual discrimination “refers to the behavior of individual members of a race/ethnic group that is intended to have a differential and/or harmful effect on the members of another race/ethnic group” (Pincus, 1994, p. 82). Individual discrimination describes oppression as being maintained “by attitudes or behaviors of individual persons. These attitudes and behaviors can be conscious or unconscious, but their effects are equally destructive” (Adams, et. al., 2007, p. 39).

Individual discrimination involves individual acts of overt, explicit discriminatory acts and/or subtle micro-aggressions. This might include racial jokes or comments, a form of discrimination that explicitly or implicitly oppresses historically marginalized people. The teacher candidates described individual discrimination when they identified individual instances of discrimination. One example included a fellow teacher of a teacher candidate relating that he no longer made home visits, no matter how well or poorly a student was achieving, because he believed it was a waste of time. The teacher was talking through a cultural deficit model. This overt discriminatory language referring to “those students” is explicit yet ambiguous, for the teacher is not directly naming race/ethnicity or class, but is referencing students from historically marginalized identities.

Institutional discrimination “refers to the policies of majority institutions, and the behavior of the individuals who implement these policies and control these institutions, that are intended to have a differential and/or harmful effect on minority groups. A major goal of institutional discrimination is to keep minority groups in subordinate positions within society” (Pincus, 1994, p. 83). Institutional discrimination is defined as the network of institutional structures, policies, and practices that repeatedly create advantages for certain populations, while creating discrimination, oppression, and disadvantages for historically marginalized populations. Adams, et. al. (2007) defined “institutional levels of oppression” as occurring when “social institutions codify oppression in laws, policies, practices, and norms. As with behaviors and attitudes at the individual level, institutional policies and practices that maintain and enforce oppression are both intentional and unintentional” (p. 40).

Institutional discrimination is grounded in practices and processes that are often difficult to identify. Examples of institutional discrimination could include systems of hiring practices or racial profiling. Institutional policies within such systems claim to be objective and neutral, yet

as narratives from this study demonstrate historically marginalized groups are disproportionately targeted. The teacher candidates demonstrated acts of institutional discrimination when they identified systems of discrimination; one example from a narrative in this study illustrated that school hallway passing policies required students of color to show passes while not requiring white students to show passes.

Methodology: Critical Incident Analysis

As Catherine Riessman (1993) stated, “The construction of any work always bears the mark of the person who created it” (p. v). As the author of this paper, I position myself through the following lenses: a) my views as an individual within communities; and b), my views as a researcher within an institution. I am a middle-class, white, bilingual, visually disabled woman who grew up in the Midwestern region of the United States. I now work in a College of Education at a large (approximately 24,000) 4 year public city university in the southwestern United States. Throughout my scholarship and teaching, I am committed to using power and privilege to address issues of social justice and equity. I believe personal stories, particularly those of historically marginalized populations, unlock knowledge to interrupt inequities that exist. I use narrative inquiry as a methodology in my research to illuminate meaning from lived experiences and to privilege voices, particularly voices of historically marginalized populations in the United States (e.g., Indigenous people).

I wanted to create a semester long activity for teacher candidates to use their lives as text. I had completed a similar study with one class as an instructor at a liberal arts college the year before and wanted a) to be the sole researcher, b) collect data at a public university, and c), have a larger applicant pool (three classes). Twenty-one teacher candidates agreed to voluntarily participate; twenty completed both interviews. For the study, the teacher candidates wrote two four-five page papers. In the first paper, the teacher candidates identified an incident of discrimination they had observed or experienced (See Appendix A: First Paper). They shared this first text with their classmates to learn about each other’s lived experiences with discrimination as well as received and provided feedback to one another. Then they interviewed me about the incident. Next, they had about eight weeks of class in which they read books and articles about power and privilege in school and society that addressed inequity through issues like race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sex/gender, disability, and sexual orientation.

In the second paper, the teacher candidates revisited the initial identified discrimination and, through class readings and discussions, proposed how the story could be transformed to end more equitably, with fairness and justice (See Appendix B: Second Paper). They incorporated readings to justify their choices. The teacher candidates again shared their papers with other classmates to receive and provide feedback. Then they interviewed me a second time. The entire assignment was intended to promote social justice, to encourage the teacher candidates to identify ways in which they could transform discrimination, using agency to create more equitable outcomes in school and broad social contexts. I wanted them to see how they could envision and enact change. Interviews about the written papers were the one constant for the teacher candidates in all three courses, so I focused on these interview responses for the analysis. Through the papers, students engaged in critical incident analysis (Tripp, 1993).

“Critical incident work is one way we can assist the [teacher candidate] to extend to cognitive skills of reflection and critical analysis” (Burgum & Bridge, 1997, p. 1). Often, the process is challenging because the participant needs time and tools to rethink what happened and how

incidents could have ended differently, more equitably, had different people, abilities or interactions been present. Critical incidents “are indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures. These incidents appear to be ‘typical’ rather than ‘critical’ at first sight, but are rendered critical through analysis” (Tripp, 1993, p. 25).

Developing expertise requires opportunities to apply and integrate theory with practice. The critical incident analysis encouraged through both papers was meant to provide students the opportunity to apply and integrate theory with practice. They were asked to identify discrimination and then use knowledge gained through readings/discussions to interrupt the discrimination and make the incident end more equitably. Fitts and Posner (1967) described a three-stage theory of expertise development: 1) cognitive stage, 2) associative stage, and 3) autonomous stage. In the cognitive stage, knowledge like concepts, procedures, and jargon are acquired. During the associative stage, knowledge is integrated with less deliberation, so continual application is important to become more familiar with how and why to apply certain concepts to particular practices. During the final autonomous stage, knowledge and behaviors are integrated. Drawing on this model, social justice outcomes are developed by first acquiring knowledge and next having time to apply knowledge to practice in contexts that support equitable outcomes. This research project purposively underscored this sequential process and first had students identify discrimination and then make transformative choices to reflect equitable outcomes with the intent that through this practice they would gain skills and access tools necessary in future situations.

Through critical incident analysis, the papers allowed teacher candidates to engage in “reading the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 32). They analyzed incidents that could benefit some and disadvantage others through implicit and explicit discrimination. This critical reflection was meant to promote awareness of everyday discriminatory practices that the teacher candidates previously may have never questioned. In addition, the critical reflection was intended to empower the teacher candidates to identify societal injustices and then apply class readings and discussions to propose action in order to transform these injustices.

In creating these assignments, I draw on Tripp’s (1993) contention that any event can be rendered critical after analysis. This was essential to me because some novice teachers enter teaching with limited, if any, experience working with children and families different from their own. I justified using this technique because I believe that if teacher candidates can learn how to consider socio-political factors involved in events where discrimination was experienced or observed, they could identify resources (people, knowledge, skills) available to counter the discrimination and promote more equitable outcomes. Therefore, the critical analysis process could have long-term affects because affective analytical skills are used to develop professional judgment.

I completed four class observations for each class and two individual semi-structured interviews for each voluntary teacher candidate participant in order to explore the emancipatory possibilities that critical incident analysis affords. The class observations informed the questions I asked during the semi-structured interviews and simultaneously provided a space for me to hear how the teacher candidates responded to each other’s incidents. Because most of the teacher candidates in our teacher education program are white, able-bodied and first language English speakers, hearing stories from classmates that did not fit these criteria provided important discussions around individual and institutional discrimination and agency.

Study Participants

Teacher Candidates: Important to understand is the context of the classes and how they reflected/did not reflect the larger predominantly White university. The predominantly White identifier here describes both the student and faculty demographics. On the main campus, where the study took place, the majority of undergraduate teacher candidates tend to be White, middle class, able-bodied women with an increasing number of first generation students. There are typically one to two male students, one to two self-identified students of color (mainly Latino or American Indian), and one student with a disability. These numbers would differ slightly across programs, particularly in the special education program, which tended to have a higher number of students with disabilities. On the main campus, the majority of graduate students tend to again be White, middle class, able-bodied women, with three to four self-identified students of color (mainly Latino and American Indian and sometimes international students). The graduate bilingual multicultural education program often has an increased number of self-identified students of color and second language English speakers. This context begs the question, "How can teacher education candidates understand diversity when there is limited diversity in their own classrooms?" This study purposively intended to begin answering this question, especially through time dedicated in each class to make meaning of each other's lived experiences in the critical incident papers as well as other assignments, readings and discussions.

Participation in the study was voluntary and without extrinsic compensation. Twenty teacher candidates participated in both interviews (eleven graduates and nine undergraduates). Demographics for these twenty teacher candidates included fourteen women and six men. Fifteen of the teacher candidates self-identified as White, one as Filipino American, one as Japanese American, one as Latino, one as Latina, and one as Vietnamese (See Table 1). Of the graduate teacher candidates, three were former classroom teachers.

Instructors: I proposed this study to three university Educational Foundations faculty members committed to social justice issues through their teaching, scholarship, and service. Demographics for the three instructors included one woman and two men. All three self-identified as White. One instructor was a tenured full professor and had taught at the university for 15 years. The other two instructors were assistant professors and had taught for 1.5 years.

Data Collection

I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to visit classrooms, observe teacher candidate interaction, and conduct two to three interviews for each teacher candidate who voluntarily agreed to participate. Teacher candidate volunteers who participated in the study and the three instructors signed a consent form. I will keep consent forms and recordings in a locked file in my university office for five years; then I will destroy this material. I attended each Educational Foundation class four different times to be available for questions and clarification of the assignments and listen to the teacher candidates provide peer feedback for each other's papers. I visited the classes at the beginning of the semester when the instructors described the first writing assignment, identifying an incident of discrimination. At this time, I also described the research study and invited all teacher candidates to participate. I visited the classrooms a second time when the teacher candidates had identified an incident of discrimination and brought their written papers to class to peer edit with their classmates. I sat with the teacher candidates who had volunteered to participate in the study.

I visited the classes a third time when the instructors described the second writing assignment, analyzing the critical incident. I was again available for questions and clarifications. I visited the classes a fourth time when the teacher candidates had completed the second writing assignment and brought their written copies to class for peer editing. During this visit, I again purposively sat in the groups where study participants discussed their papers. Throughout the semester, I interviewed each of the participating teacher candidates after they had completed each assignment and received feedback from their classmates and instructors. I did not see the papers for all of the participants, so I did not use the written papers as a data source.

I created the interview questions for both interviews after I visited the classes and listened to small groups discuss their papers (See Appendix A: First Interview Questions and Appendix B: Second Interview Questions). During the discussions, I noted that some teacher candidates were able to accurately define and apply “discrimination” or “agency.” Others were able to use the same definition but inaccurately applied it to an incident, most often when they (or someone else with privilege) had been unfairly treated. During the interviews, I decided to have them define the terms and clarify how they applied the terms to their incidents. The teacher candidates that inaccurately defined “discrimination” or “agency” as “individual” or “institutional” in their critical incident narratives instead described privileges that they denied or maintained.

Course Readings and Classroom Pedagogy

All three classes addressed educational foundation issues that impact teaching and learning, specifically intersectionalities of historically marginalized identities like race/ethnicity, gender/sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and disability. All of the courses introduced cultural, historical and philosophical contexts of schooling. Main texts for the courses included: *Letters to a young teacher* (Kozol, 2007), *Deculturalization and the struggle for equality: A brief history of the education of dominated cultures in the United States* (Spring, 2007), *Why are the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria* (Tatum, 2003), and *Plato: The republic* (Grube & Reeve, 1992). All of the classes address topics of power and privilege in school and in society. All of the teacher candidates relied on different readings to justify how they made choices to promote transformational and equitable outcomes in the second paper. The following is an example that reflects the way many of the teacher candidates used the readings to inform the choices they made in the second paper:

I incorporated Tatum’s spheres of influence because my sphere would be my peers and the people that I surround myself with and how they show me how to act and talk by modeling it for me. I talked about Kozol’s agency, and being change agents. I used Baldwin’s readings and how, I could be mixing readings up, but I think he really highlighted if we want to see a change and be a change, we have to get out there and speak up. That you have to do it yourself, you can’t, just pass it off on someone else, you have to be out there witnessing and hoping and becoming part of something. (Eileen, personal interview, April 11, 2008)

Findings: Identifying Discrimination and Exercising Agency

After analyzing the teacher candidate narrative responses, I coded when teacher candidates described discrimination and agency as individual or institutional; I noted that most of the

teacher candidates in this study had been unable to describe incidents and reactions to the incidents as either individual or institutional discrimination and agency. So, I added more categories to my findings in order to position the responses of all teacher candidates. For these teacher candidates, I realized their discrimination narratives identified neither individual nor institutional systems of privilege, so I labeled these narratives as “privilege denied.” For the teacher candidates who articulated exercising agency through maintaining the privilege described in the incident, I categorized agency as “privilege maintained.” And for the one anomalous teacher candidate who claimed she had no agency, I labeled this narrative as, “no agency” (See Table 1 and Table 2).

In this section, I provide five narratives from teacher candidates that reflect the responses from each of the five categories of discrimination and agency illustrated in Table 2. I chose five because of limited space and I wanted to present one from each category in greater detail. I include a) a brief description of the teacher candidate, b) the incident involving discrimination identified by the teacher candidates, and c) the action that the teacher candidates exercised (or proposed to exercise) to provide a more equitable outcome. When they signed the IRB consent form, all teacher candidates chose names they wanted me to use for presentations or written reports. The following teacher candidate response provides an example involving institutional discrimination and individual agency.

“It was just that kid was Latino, I was White”: Institutional Discrimination/Individual Agency

Eileen, a middle-class White undergraduate teacher candidate, wants to become an elementary special education teacher. She would like to set up a business for students with special needs and limited access to services. She grew up in a home where education was revered, yet both her parents worked full time and were limited in their involvement with day-to-day school activities. Her teachers supported her on a daily basis and she was affirmed as an outstanding student, pulled from traditional classes to attend advanced placement (AP) classes.

For our first interview, Eileen explained that when her instructor assigned the first writing assignment to identify an incident of discrimination experienced or observed, she really couldn't think of any examples. Then she decided to recount an event when she decided to cut class because a Latino friend of hers told her she could get away with it because she was White. Eileen questioned her friend's prompting, wondering if she would indeed be treated differently.

She described how discrimination was involved in this situation in the following passage: It was just that kid was Latino, I was White. He looked like a gangster. I looked like a good kid...[H]e was the one who was doing something wrong and I was perfectly fine...But this was like the first, I think, outright discrimination I actually witnessed and, like, the first time I actually realized, Whoa! That was wrong! (Eileen, personal interview, February 28, 2008)

Eileen illuminated her benevolent ignorance to possibilities of discrimination. She described structural instances of discrimination; her classmate knew that the security guard would target him because of his Latino identity. I categorized Eileen's response as institutional discrimination because Eileen's friend knew that no matter which security guard or Latino student was present, the Latino student would be stopped and checked for a pass because of ethnicity. In con-

trast, Eileen would be allowed to go by without being stopped because of her White identity. This recurring pattern alludes to racial profiling that this Latino student knew existed in his school.

During our second interview, I asked Eileen how she exercised agency and she replied:

I decided that I had to be the one to interrupt it because it would only have a greater effect on that person if here is a girl who looks completely innocent and who looks like...she would never do any harm. I think that I had to step in and I had to...make a change because it would catch the person off guard more if I did it...and that it would make the person a little more wary...if I came outright instead of having...some...civil rights activist or talking to an administrator and the administrator talking to the security guard...I don't think it was necessarily that I had any power except that I had emotion, emotion being my power. (Eileen, personal narrative, April 11, 2008)

Through this decision to be “the one to do it all,” Eileen exercises individual agency. She may have encouraged this particular guard to enforce equitable treatment but no official plan or policy would be put in place for all guards dealing with all students. The next example demonstrates individual discrimination and institutional agency.

“I used myself to get the ball rolling and also involved more people”: Individual Discrimination/Institutional Agency

Bobby, a middle-class Latino graduate teacher candidate is a third-generation immigrant. His parents do not hold a higher education degree and continuously supported Bobby throughout school, becoming involved by attending after-school functions and parent-teacher conferences. At the time of the interview, Bobby was pursuing his master's degree in elementary education simultaneous to his work as an in-service teacher at the local public elementary school that he had attended. He described his education as positive and fulfilling. He explained that he was able to access courses and extracurricular activities throughout his education as he had hoped.

At our first interview, Bobby explained the following incident:

My [incident] was about a student that I had in class where there were some concerns I wanted to address. Parent-teacher conference time came around and I thought that'd be the perfect time. However, the parents didn't show up to the conference and so I wanted to go to their house...When I was leaving [my school] some of the teachers...were...asking me where I was going. And I just told them, well, I'm going to go do a conference at the house.... And they just said, “Well, we used to do that. We don't waste our time on stuff like that. (Bobby, personal interview, April 2, 2008)

Bobby's experience as a current teacher and as Latino enabled him to identify structures that both influenced the existence and possible changes for this event. I asked him about the discrimination that was present and he responded:

...where the teachers were saying... “I don't waste my time with that”...I think the student is discriminated against...nobody wants to help them...This was a family that has been in our school for a couple years now and so this was also coming from the teachers that had

these kids before. (Bobby, personal interview, April 2, 2008)

This colleague's decision—to no longer practice home visits because of personal preference—led me to categorize this analysis as individual discrimination. Individual teachers may have been choosing to implement home visits as a productive way to connect the school to community, but it was not an institutional practice and not practiced by this particular teacher.

In our second interview, Bobby described how he could exercise agency in the following passage:

...myself going to the principal and telling him... "Is this something we need to take a look at?"...Presenting literature, talking about it, raising the issues... Stopping to say, "Hey, what are we doing and is it positive? And if it's not, what can we do about it?" So I used myself...to get the ball rolling but then I also involved more people like the counselor and like some people from the university that could come and talk about culture, talk about the different things about schooling... (Bobby, personal interview, June 11, 2008)

Bobby was one teacher candidate who actually was able to enact the transformation he proposed. He discussed concerns about his colleagues with the principal and encouraged the principal to address the situation through school-wide discussion. Bobby's proposed actions involved people that could change policy and practice, which clearly highlighted potential institutional agency.

“The efforts to fix the segregation problems always seemed to me to create more discrimination”: Institutional Discrimination/Institutional Agency

Corina, a working class White graduate teacher candidate, grew up in Lafayette, LA. Her family lived in an all-White neighborhood on the edge of an all-Black neighborhood. Her mother raised her as the youngest of five children; Corina's father died when she was very young. Corina's elementary education started during desegregation efforts. She went to a school, which had predominantly Black students. She was the only White child in her class. Corina said she never felt discriminated against as a child and focused on an incident with her White son going to a predominantly Black school.

I asked how discrimination was present in the incident. She responded:

Discrimination is about skin color. When I went to register my son to go to that school I was handed a packet to fill out. Boom, he was in. And they had several Black parents there that were trying to get their children into school but they had to be put on a waiting list...So [my son] was going to have an opportunity to go to this arts and technology academy which was going to be completely different curriculum than any other public school...and he could go because he was White. The Black kids that lived closer...were going to have to go to a different school further from their home because of trying to meet the racial quota. (Corina, personal interview, February 28, 2008)

Corina explained that she and her son both benefitted as White children going to predominantly Black schools; her son was able to access the great resources the school offered. She further explained:

The first part of the story, discrimination in that time period [when I was a child] was against Blacks. But I think the part of my story I am trying to bring out is that efforts, the efforts to fix the segregation problems always seem to me in both experiences to create more problems, to create more discrimination. (Corina, personal interview, February 28, 2008)

I categorized this description as institutional discrimination because Corina noted systems of discrimination based on racial/ethnic identity. Corina was aware of historical oppression towards Blacks in the early 1970s, yet also elaborated on the fact that through an effort to remediate discrimination at a surface level (quotas) in the early 2000s, the institution wound up creating more discriminatory practices that continually disadvantaged the Black children based on their ethnic identity.

In our second interview, Corina described that she would practice agency in the following way:

The secretary who was having to deal with all these people coming in and having to listen to the irate Black parents...it's kind of that house slave mentality...having to enforce rules that you don't necessarily think are right but that's your position. And the way I chose to interrupt it is through her and having her say she agrees with the Black parents who are irate and empower them to know how to act and demand equity through the school board members and the federal judge. The White parents would join as well, making demands for all Black children interested to gain education through this special program to have access to it. So it would be in collaboration with one another as concerned for the neighborhood. And this may not affect a change in that year, but if enough people spoke up it would affect a change in the way other schools would have been handled. (Corina, personal interview, May 8, 2008)

I categorized this proposition as institutional agency because it involved all constituents (parents) concerned around a similar issue that dealt with systemic issues of righting inequitable programs being offered limitedly to those it claimed to serve, minority black students.

These first three examples demonstrated what I had hoped when creating the purpose of the assignment: to engage discussion and reflection around individual discrimination/agency and institutional discrimination/agency. A total of nine of the twenty teacher candidates fell into these categories. The next two categories represented the responses of eleven teacher candidates in the study who completed the assignment and demonstrated a shift from individual and institutional discrimination and agency (see Table 1 and Table 2). These responses were more aligned with the following categories: privilege maintained, privilege denied, and no agency. The next teacher candidate described individual discrimination and chose to exercise no agency.

“I argued that it wasn’t interruptible”: Individual Discrimination/No Agency

Chie, a middle-class Japanese American undergraduate teacher candidate explained that she had been homeschooled until high school. Both of her parents were college graduates; her American mother, a stay-at-home mom, attended an American university; her Japanese father, a businessman, attended a Japanese university. Her parents encouraged her to excel in academics

as well as have an understanding of her Japanese heritage. She attended Arizona Gakuen, a Japanese school for businessmen's children in the United States, kindergarten thru sixth grade, which met once a week on Saturdays. The Arizona Gakuen school exists to ensure Japanese children can effectively be educated coming from and returning to Japan. And, for third grade, she lived with her grandparents in Japan. For high school, she chose, against her mom's wishes, to go to public school.

During our first interview, she explained that in the public high school, she struggled to feel accepted. She joined a theater troupe and narrated the discrimination that was identified in an incident that involved one of her friends from this troupe:

It was the story about the theater troupe and we were doing the fundraiser and a couple of the kids that were doing the fundraiser went up to the cafeteria and got talked down to and poked at with sticks and spit at. So the discrimination was against these kids, but one kid in particular because he got hit again. (Chie, personal interview, February 29, 2008)

This response about discrimination describes a discriminatory act inflicted on a person involved in a theatre group, yet not a policy enforced in school, so I labeled it as individual discrimination.

For our second interview, I asked Chie what agency she exercised to address this discrimination. She replied:

I argued that it couldn't be addressed, essentially. Kids are going to bully. There is really nothing we can do about it. Sure, we can have the principal talk to them. We can call their parents, have the parents informed of what happened, have the parents deal with the situation. We can suspend them. But what's that going to do in the long run? Nothing. More so than anything else, I think that that sort of verbal punishment, you know, I'm going to tell you off, usually angers the attacker and has them just take out more aggression on their victims in the future. (Chie, personal interview, May 7, 2008)

Chie had several ideas how to address the situation, yet she chose not to engage any of these ideas for her written narrative because she felt the effort would be futile. She was the only teacher candidate who chose not to engage and perhaps produce a more equitable ending. I wonder if she understood how non-action could equate with acquiescence which might have inspired her to act. This fifth and final teacher candidate described discrimination as privilege denied and action as privilege maintained.

“All I wanted to do was dance”: Privilege Denied/Privilege Maintained

Kate, a White, middle-class graduate teacher candidate, is the youngest of five children. She grew up on the east coast of the United States in a town of 7,000. She explained that her family was well respected in the community. She further explained how the community thought her family was rich because they lived in a big old house, yet she added how her parents saved and restored the entire house themselves. She described the community as not acknowledging the hard work in which her parents engaged to provide her family's simple amenities. Her father was a teacher, and education was highly regarded in her family. Success in school and participation in multiple extracurricular activities was expected.

During our first interview, Kate described her incident in the following passage:

My [incident] was about transferring to a different school, Catholic high school, from a public school 'cause my dad thought the education in my home school was not up to snuff...There were a lot of activities that the [Catholic school] didn't have...that they still had at my home school and part of the deal with my parents was that if I decided that I was going to go to this school that I got to do activities at my home school. (Kate, personal interview, March 7, 2008)

Kate's response indicated her focus on being able to switch schools. The change seemed natural to her, especially since the academics were more rigorous at the school to which she would transfer. Her father, a retired teacher and president of the school board, would continue to pay taxes for the public schools. Since the activities were at the public school, her parents agreed that she should be able to continue to access those activities. I asked her how discrimination was present in her story and she responded:

So I got discriminated against because instead of them taking it out on...the appropriate people, I was being...almost like blackballed just because...all I wanted to do was dance... They saw it was something much different...making a point about the district and what was going on. And how could you take your kid away from here? We don't get much money allocated by the state to us anyway and...once one goes another one will go... (Kate, personal interview, March 7, 2008)

Framed in individual terms, Kate felt victimized by other people who did not support her decision. With the statement, "We don't get much money allocated by the state to us anyway and...once one goes another one will go..." she believed they feared that her act may have influenced more students to consider making a similar move and negatively impact the school. This response described her lack of acknowledgement that any privilege existed in how losing enrollment could be detrimental for this school, so I labeled this as privilege denied.

During our second interview, I asked Kate how she exercised agency to address this discrimination and she replied:

[To address this], my dad was president of the school board [at the home school] and it was a big deal. Because he figured out a way through the laws of the district because he still paid school taxes to make it so I was able to play all sorts of extracurricular activities and still participate in my home school. (Kate, personal interview, May 6, 2008)

To Kate, her father's position on the school board enabled her to switch schools as well as maintain access to the public school services. Through this action, Kate maintained her privilege, so I identified this as privilege maintained. I provided illustrative examples of these five categories in order to provide interview excerpts and in depth responses. In the next section, I will return to the twenty teacher candidates' responses and summarize these findings (See Table 1 and Table 2).

Discussion: Discrimination, Agency, and Privilege

This study revealed that some teacher candidates entered the university with limited, if any, exposure to underrepresented populations and lived experiences of marginalization and its implications. With this limited exposure, and therefore limited opportunity to determine how to react and interact, teacher candidates may lack the necessary preparation to advocate for students from underrepresented populations that are increasingly present in the PK-12 classrooms (Banks, 2003; King, Hollins & Hayman, 1997). In describing the data, I noted three facets regarding differences between teacher candidate responses: a) one teacher candidate could not envision transforming pedagogical practices, b) some teacher candidates were more likely to narrate stories from positions of privilege being denied/maintained, and c) few teacher candidates were able to talk about agency in terms of institutional systems.

An anomaly was the one teacher candidate who explained that she had no agency to counter the discrimination she described. She identified the inequitable treatment of a student, yet she passively accepted this behavior and claimed it could not be rectified. Her resistance to take action leads me to wonder how some teacher candidates can learn to envision how they could intentionally disrupt the current social order of marginalization (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Moore, 2008).

On the one hand, four teacher candidates were able to articulate exercising agency in terms of institutional agency. Important to note, of these four, three had prior teaching experiences. Perhaps these teaching experiences afforded them opportunities to observe discrimination and identify resources in the school to counter the discrimination with transformative actions. One teacher candidate who articulated institutional agency had experienced the marginalization since her father lost his job and she moved from middle-class to lower-class status. Drawing on their lived experiences, all four teacher candidates believed they could rectify identified discrimination through institutional processes by involving another person to make the change. Some of them had unsuccessfully attempted to mediate the discrimination themselves and knew that collaborative professional knowledge as well as thoughtful practice were required to maximize potential for success (Fairbanks, Duffy, Faircloth, He, Levin, Rohr, & Stein, 2010). In order to most effectively resolve the discrimination, they decided to involve another person, one who often held a more authoritative role.

On the other hand, some teacher candidates were more likely to narrate stories in terms of privilege denied and privilege maintained. Perhaps these teacher candidates had no exposure to disenfranchisement prior to this assignment (Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This may demonstrate a lack of awareness (or denial) of diversity or oppression which led to an inability to advocate change.

Implications: Reflection and Action

Important for this university is the positioning of the Educational Foundations course in the teacher education programs; some teacher candidates enroll in Educational Foundations classes during the first semester of their teacher education programs. Perhaps making this course a standard first semester course in the teacher education program could allow all teacher candidates to start with this foundation. With faculty collaboration, the discussion of inequity and agency could be commenced in the Educational Foundations classes and then extended to other courses and phases of the teacher education programs (Ensign, 2009; Gay, 2010; Milner, 2010).

In this way, this curriculum could include all instructors. The teacher candidates could see this social justice pedagogy woven throughout the teacher education curriculum. Teacher candidates need to understand the magnitude and repercussions of discrimination and the impact on educational policy and practice for privileged and marginalized groups. In this way, they can better understand the dire and immediate need for change in the current social order.

As Goodman (2001) states, “People from privileged groups tend to have little awareness of their own dominant identity, of the privilege it affords them, of the oppression suffered by the corresponding disadvantaged group, and of how they perpetuate it” (p. 24). The teacher candidates in this study did not see privilege and discrimination in the stories that they wrote or in the way that they addressed their stories. Perhaps they did not see privilege and power because assignments so often ask them to focus on individual experiences. Perhaps they did not see privilege and power because this was the first time they were asked to identify power and privilege and how they and others benefitted (or did not) from them. Or perhaps they did not see privilege and power for another reason entirely. In the end, though, this study underscores how and why teacher educators could use diversity and social justice activities like the one mentioned in this paper to continue the important work of building from individual in order to obtain collective understandings necessary to support *all* students.

This paper assignment elicited important conversations, and yet the paper itself was a focus on the individual whereas the goal for the assignment was to create a broader context and space in which *real engagement* was possible and necessary. This real engagement focuses on a move from individual understandings to gain shared lived experiences and build collective understandings. Additional activities to reach collective understandings that I envision from observing the classroom practice include: (a) acting out scenarios in “theatre of the oppressed” style, (b) group reading/feedback and (c) whole class analysis of individual/institutional discrimination and agency present and absent in the writings.

Teacher educators need to forefront the following actions at the beginning of teacher education programs and then consistently engage teacher candidates in these actions in order to address diversity and social justice pedagogy and practice: (1) define privilege and power, (2) look inward and then outward, (3) research historical, global and social patterns of oppression, and (4) act. I further delineate these actions in the approaches below. These actions encourage teacher educators to first critically engage students in consciousness-raising in order to increase awareness of self and other to focus on individual and interpersonal dynamics and then go farther to address issues of equity, power relations, and institutionalized oppression.

The findings from this study suggest the following approaches for teacher education programs:

1. *Create assignments for teacher candidates to first reflect on their own experiences and how these events have hindered or helped them in school, and next have teacher candidates identify from these experiences the power and privilege dynamics that they possess that can interrupt current inequities.* The teacher candidates in this study did not always position their own privileges and disadvantages in their described incidents. Identifying their privileges and/or disadvantages could help them realize how much or little agency they possess and when they need to involve other resources to transform inequities.

2. *Discuss how exclusions have been made, remade, and legitimized in educational policy and practice.* As shown by this study, it is important to remember that teacher candidates are starting at different points regarding experienced and observed incidents of discrimination, marginalization, and agency. Provide sample incidents of individual and institutional examples of

discrimination to guide teacher candidates to better understand marginalization and its pernicious effects and envision change as a benefit.

3. *Encourage teacher candidates to identify PK-12 students' funds of knowledge*, as described by Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez (2001). Then they can draw on those knowledge bases to value and validate marginalized identities and begin to effectively address existing inequities in order to propose changes for more equitable outcomes. As discussed, most teacher candidates in the study engaged individual and institutional agency by involving another adult. Through a focus on funds of knowledge, teacher candidates could be encouraged to shift the force of change to their students and empower the students to become agents of change for themselves and others.

4. *Standardize a diversity curriculum which establishes concepts and a language of exclusion and inclusion so that all teacher candidates have a common base to discuss inequities.* "Standardize" is not an action I often advocate, but because the teacher candidates enrolled in these educational foundation courses have had different lived experiences (and coursework) prior to the Educational Foundations class, they had different ways of articulating discrimination and enacting transformation. The data from this study demonstrated that, although some teacher candidates can define terms accurately, they struggle to apply them to lived and observed incidents.

5. *Integrate discussions and implementation of transformation to foster professional development for all levels of inquiry.* The teacher candidates who were able to identify discriminatory institutional practices but could not envision challenging this status quo could focus more on discussing the benefits that result from interrupting this inequity. And the teacher candidates who identified institutional marginalization and advocated for action could focus on local struggles where they could continue to identify institutional oppression.

Conclusion: Transforming Discrimination

Further observational studies such as this one are needed to continually look at findings and demonstrate effects on how teacher preparation programs are preparing their teacher candidates to serve the academic, cultural and sociopolitical needs of *all* students. Adams, et. al. (2007) argued that "advantaged and targeted groups have a critical role to play in dismantling oppression and generating visions for a more socially just future" (p. 13). Nieto (2005) explained how teacher educators can encourage prospective and practicing teachers to identify inequities and confront them in order to promote change. This change is possible if teacher educators provide these prospective and practicing teachers with tools and resources to do "this kind of difficult but in the long run, empowering work" (p. 217).

I used the assignments to better understand how teacher candidates could identify and analyze incidents of discrimination. As a result, they could propose actions to produce emancipatory outcomes that counter individual and institutional social inequities. Simultaneously, the assignments promoted peer-to-peer discussion to underscore the varied and similar lived experiences and to develop professional judgment skills.

I expected most students would be able to identify and analyze individual discrimination and individual agency, and others would identify and analyze institutional discrimination and institutional agency. The study's findings had me rethink these original four categories and three categories were added (privilege denied, privilege maintained and no agency). These additional categories illuminated interesting evidence of how persistently the participants connected discrimination to personal incidents in which advantaged people (often themselves) had been treat-

ed unfairly.

This study was based on the premise that effective teaching practices are contingent upon identification and analysis of individual and institutional forms of discrimination and agency (Adams et al., 2007; Gay, 2010). I see discussions around individual and institutional oppression and liberation as a lens through which teacher educators can guide curriculum as well as policy and practice (Gillborn, 2008). The combination of social justice pedagogy and critical incident analysis are intended to provide teacher candidates and practicing teachers with a professional development tool to use in future practice. The teacher candidates successfully began to comprehend “discrimination” and “agency” and various transformative actions to promote more emancipatory outcomes through completing the assignment. However, I concluded that the assignments were more of a consciousness-raising activity that needed further discussion and application throughout their program coursework and practicum to maximize comprehension that could lead to emancipatory action. Preliminary conclusions are that the assignments need to be focused on accurately discerning theoretical definitions and practical applications in order to enhance the social justice pedagogy and critical incident analysis process. Many teacher candidates, for example, could have framed their stories in different ways and accomplished this goal; more support was needed to assist them in articulating these ideas. Maxine Greene (1997) wrote,

To teach for social justice is to teach for enhanced perception and imaginative explorations, for the recognition of social wrongs, of sufferings, of pestilences wherever and whenever they arise. It is to find models in literature and in history of the indigent ones, the ones forever ill at ease, and the loving ones who have taken the sides of the victims of pestilences, whatever their names or places of origin. It is to teach so that the young may be awakened to the joy of working for transformation in the smallest places, so that they may become healers and change their worlds. (p .xiv)

I implore all teacher educators to encourage teacher candidates to purposively analyze and act on educational inequities in order to a) discern between equality/equity and discrimination/marginalization, b) identify marginalizing practices based on personal experiences and observations, and c) challenge current policies and practices to promote transformative actions that can institute change and create emancipator classroom, school and community environments. The disparities in American education continue to divide; we must act now.

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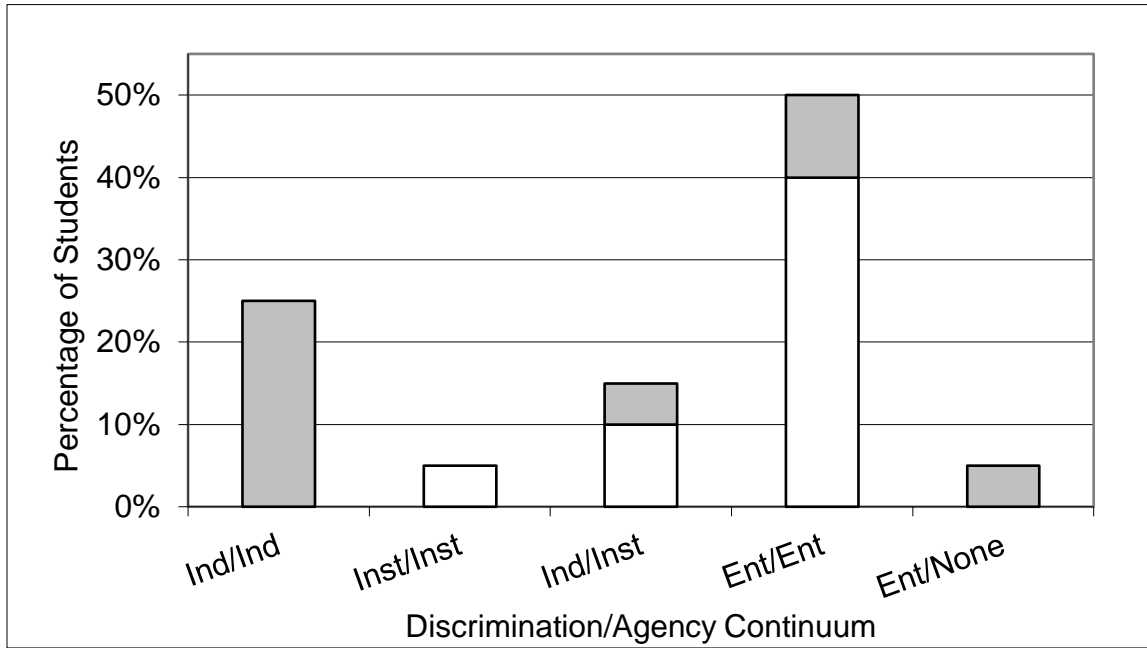
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Table 1: Teacher Candidate Demographics and Placement on Discrimination/Agency Continuum

Name	Grad/Undergrad	Sex	Ethnicity	Discrimination	Agency
Amy	Graduate	F	White	Privilege Denied	Privilege Maintained
Anna	Undergraduate	F	Latina	Individual	Individual
Bobby	Graduate	M	Latino	Institutional	Institutional
Chie	Undergraduate	F	Japanese-American	Privilege Denied	None
Corina	Graduate	F	White	Institutional	Institutional
Eileen	Undergraduate	F	White	Institutional	Individual
Elizabeth	Undergraduate	F	White	Privilege Denied	Privilege Maintained
Jaren	Graduate	F	White	Privilege Denied	Privilege Maintained
Jasper	Graduate	M	White	Individual	Institutional
Kate	Graduate	F	White	Privilege Denied	Privilege Maintained
Katie	Undergraduate	F	White	Institutional	Individual
Laura	Graduate	F	White	Privilege Denied	Privilege Maintained
Lee	Graduate	F	White	Privilege Denied	Privilege Maintained
Libby	Undergraduate	F	White	Individual	Individual
Maureen	Graduate	F	White	Privilege Denied	Privilege Maintained
Megan	Undergraduate	F	White	Individual	Individual
Michael	Graduate	M	Filipino-American	Privilege Denied	Privilege Maintained
Narcissa	Graduate	M	White	Privilege Denied	Privilege Maintained
Ryan	Undergraduate	M	White	Privilege Denied	Privilege Maintained
Vu	Undergraduate	M	Vietnamese	Institutional	Individual

Table 2: Discrimination/Agency Categories for Student Interviews



Ind=Individual
Inst=Institutional
Ent=Entitlement
None=0

Appendix A:

First Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your experiences in education?
2. What was (or is) the general attitude toward education in your household while you were growing up? How involved were your parents/guardians in your education and schools?
3. How did you decide to take this education class? Is education a career you would consider for yourself?
4. What does the term “discrimination” mean to you?
5. Throughout your education, what incidents, if any, do you remember in which you experienced discrimination?
6. What makes a teacher “good”?
7. Which teachers have inspired you? Why?
8. What story did you decide to tell for the class assignment?
9. How do you define “discrimination” in your story? How was “discrimination” present in your story?
10. Tell me what you thought about the teaching story assignment (Writing the paper? Peer-reviewing the paper? Any feedback you received?).

Appendix B:

Second Interview Questions

1. Tell me your biggest hope and your biggest concern as you envision becoming a teacher.
2. Remind me of your teaching/marginalization story and the discrimination you identified within it.
3. How did you decide to interrupt/revisit your story?
4. How do you define agency? How was agency present in your interrupted/revisited story?
5. Which class readings (texts, articles, movies, etc.) stood out most for you this semester?
6. Which discussions stood out most for you this semester?
7. Which readings/discussions were you able to incorporate in your story?
8. If this same incident occurred to you or to someone you knew/cared about today, how would you react?
9. Tell me what you thought about the teaching/marginalization story interrupted/revisited assignment (Writing the paper? Peer-reviewing the paper? Any feedback you received?). Did our first interview influence the way you interrupted/revisited it?
10. Any additional comments about the assignment?
11. When will you be student teaching? Would it be okay for me to contact you during that semester?

Appendix C:

First Paper

Directions: For the first part of this assignment you will write a personal narrative of an incident from your teaching/learning experience that demonstrates the ways in which you observed or experienced discrimination in a school or society setting. This incident could involve issues such as (but not limited to) ethnicity, race, class, language, ability, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or age. As you are writing, provide as much contextual details (participants, setting, tone, behavior, dialogue) as possible. Refrain from any kind of interpretation or analysis. That is, do not discuss *why* you think individuals did particular things or *how* you think individuals were affected by particular actions. You will analyze this story later in the semester, in a second paper, after we've examined different perspectives together. You will be working in groups for this assignment, to learn from each other's experiences and provide feedback for clarity and coherence.

Appendix D:

Second Paper

Directions: Many of our readings and discussions have focused on ethnicity, race, class, language, gender, religion, sexual orientation and age, and their impacts in society, schools and classrooms. Revisit your first paper and alter it to “end” differently; how would you (or how would you ask someone else to assist you to) respond to this incident now? Remember that both the participants and you have agency and a responsibility to act in appropriate ways. Include a “guiding question” that illustrates how you made decisions to rewrite the story. Explain how readings/class discussions influenced your choices. As with the first paper, you will be working in groups to learn from each other’s experiences and provide feedback for clarity and coherence.

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