Good and Just Teaching: The Case for Social Justice in Teacher Education

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A particularly controversial aspect of teacher preparation is the increasing number of teacher preparation programs that emphasize "social justice" as part of the curriculum. This article examines how students in a program with a social justice agenda understood the concept and how their understandings played out in practice. Using interviews and observations, we show that teacher candidates focused on ensuring pupils' learning rather than merely boosting their self-esteem or spreading political ideologies, as critics of the social justice agenda suggest. In classrooms, candidates concentrated on teaching content and skills but also had a critical perspective, built on pupils' cultural resources, and attempted to reach every pupil. We argue that teaching for social justice, or what we title "good and just teaching," reflects an essential purpose of teaching in a democratic society in which the teacher is an advocate for students whose work supports larger efforts for social change.

Over the last decade, there has been unprecedented national attention to teacher quality. In particular, there have been intense debates about how, when, and where teachers should be prepared to teach and about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they should have. In many instances, these debates reflect larger, often competing, political agendas as well as different underlying ideas about the purposes of education in a democratic society.

An especially controversial aspect of teacher preparation is the increasing number of college- and university-based teacher preparation programs that emphasize "social justice" as part of the curriculum. Both those within and outside the teacher education community have criticized the social justice agenda in teacher education. One major criticism is that social justice is an ambiguous concept that is widespread but undertheorized and vague (e.g., McDonald and Zeichner 2008; North 2006; Zeichner 2006), which increases

Electronically published February 27, 2009
American Journal of Education 115 (May 2009)
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0195-6744/2009/11503-0001$10.00

the likelihood that it exists in name only (Grant and Agosto 2008). In the absence of a clear definition, descriptions of practice that some educators would suggest exemplify "teaching for social justice" are labeled "just good teaching" by other educators. This "ambiguity critique" of social justice in teacher education is important in part because it is attached to many different agendas and because it is often the prelude to more damning criticisms. For example, some critics charge that when teacher preparation programs focus on social justice, they either ignore traditional educational goals related to subject matter knowledge and teachers' responsibility for students' learning or intentionally indoctrinate teacher candidates into a particular ideology rather than focusing on professional competence (Cochran-Smith et al. 2008). From the perspective of these critiques, the worst case scenario, of course, is that teacher education programs with a social justice agenda do both: they neglect students' learning while imposing a particular political ideology.

This article examines how teacher candidates in a program with a stated social justice agenda understood this concept and how their understandings played out in classrooms and in the learning opportunities they created for their students during the preservice period and the beginning of the first year of teaching. Using analyses of in-depth interview data, we show that when teachers responded to questions regarding the meaning of social justice, they

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referred explicitly and repeatedly to ensuring that all students learned, rather than focusing "simply" on boosting their self-esteem or making sure that everybody "felt good," as many contemporary critics of social justice charge. We also point to the absence of a party line or groupthink mentality in the data, which responds to another frequent critique of social justice in teacher education. Further, drawing on analyses of classroom observational data and the classroom assignments and lessons teachers created, we show that once inside classrooms, these new teachers paid a great deal of attention to academic content and skills, at the same time that they critiqued content, encouraged students to question traditional ideas, built on students' cultural and linguistic resources, and attempted to reach every student.

We use these analyses to challenge contemporary critiques of social justice agendas in teacher education, suggesting that the critiques are largely based on false dichotomies between social justice and knowledge/learning, on one hand, and flawed assumptions about teacher education as a neutral and value-free enterprise, on the other. Instead, we point out that teacher education for social justice is an agenda that not only does not shortchange attention to students' learning but in fact makes enhancing students' learning and their life chances its core commitment. We argue that teaching for social justice, or what we title here "good and just teaching," reflects a central and essential purpose of teaching in a democratic society, wherein the teacher is an advocate for students whose work supports larger efforts for social change.

This article begins by briefly clarifying the concept of teacher education for social justice and outlining its major critiques. Next the article describes the larger qualitative case studies (QCS) research project from which it draws, laying out the general 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 the preservice period and the early months of the first year of teaching, explores what teachers said in response to questions about the idea of teaching for social justice. The second analysis, which is based on observational data during the same period, examines what teachers actually did in classrooms as they took on responsibility for planning lessons, interacting with students, and assessing what students were learning. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of this research, in particular what it means for current debates about the theme of social justice in teacher education programs.

Preparing Teachers to Teach for Social Justice

The idea of preparing teachers to teach for social justice is prevalent in a number of teacher education programs, partnerships, recruitment efforts, and

other initiatives. Over the years, these local efforts have been loosely linked through national organizations such as the National Association for Multicultural Education, the Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education, the National Network for Educational Renewal, and several committees and special interest groups of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and the American Education Research Association. Institutional efforts have been encouraged by AACTE, which began to promote attention to diversity in teacher education in the early 1970s, and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, which incorporated preparing teachers for diversity in its 1976 standards and, although this was removed in 2006, included social justice as a desirable professional disposition in its 2000 standards.

Despite its widespread appeal, there is great variation in how the term "social justice" is used in teacher education, and, as noted in the introduction to this article, critics have rightly argued that the concept is ambiguous and undertheorized. With full awareness of these limitations, however, it is possible to identify some of the central ideas behind the theme of social justice in teacher education, as it is usually portrayed. In most of the key published literature on this topic, a distributive notion of justice is either implicit or explicit (Cochran-Smith 2008, forthcoming; North 2006). That is, it is assumed that the bottom line of teaching is enhancing students' learning and their life chances by challenging the inequities of school and society (e.g., Adams et al. 1997; Ayers et al. 1998; Cochran-Smith 1999, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al. 2002; Michelli and Keiser 2005; Oakes and Lipton 1999; Villegas and Lucas 2002; Zeichner 2003). This perspective is based on recognition of significant disparities in the distribution of educational opportunities, resources, achievement, and positive outcomes between minority or low-income students and their white, middle-class counterparts. This recognition of disparities is coupled with the position that teachers can and should be both educators and advocates who are committed to the democratic ideal and to diminishing existing inequities in school and society by helping to redistribute educational opportunities. Based on these assumptions, teacher education for social justice has the deliberate intention during the preservice period of providing the social, intellectual, and organizational contexts that prepare teachers to teach for social justice in K–12 educational settings and also support them as they try to live out this commitment as educators.

From the perspective of social justice, teaching practice involves an amalgam of knowledge; interpretive frameworks; teaching strategies, methods, and skills; and advocacy with and for students, parents, colleagues, and communities. This includes the pedagogical strategies and methods teachers use as well as how they think about their work and interpret what is going on in schools and classrooms. It also involves how teachers pose questions, make decisions,

and form relationships with students and how they work with colleagues, families, communities, and social groups. A conception of K–12 teaching practice that is consistent with social justice includes critique of universalist views of knowledge (Grant and Wieczorek 2000), which do not adequately account for the knowledge traditions and experiences of marginalized groups (King 2008). From this perspective, part of teacher education is preparing new teachers to challenge the cultural biases of curriculum, educational policies and practices, and school norms (Howe 1997).

As we described in the introduction, this social justice agenda in teacher education has been criticized by those outside teacher education and by some insiders on a number of grounds. In addition to the critique that the idea is ambiguous and undertheorized, for example, we have identified the "knowledge critique," the "ideology critique," and the "free speech critique," each of which is connected to larger political agendas in different ways (Cochran-Smith et al. 2008). In addition, the research on teacher education for social justice has also been critiqued. One major critique is that the research is primarily small scale and qualitative and thus difficult to generalize, and another is that it fails to attend to outcomes. For example, Sleeter (2001) concluded that the research base on preparing teachers for historically underserved classrooms was inadequate due to the preponderance of small-scale action research studies and little emphasis on results. Along somewhat different lines, in a review of research on preparing teachers for diversity, Hollins and Guzman (2005) found that studies addressed candidates' attitudes and beliefs but not their actions in the classroom. In a synthesis of research on preparation for linguistic diversity, Lucas and Grinberg (2008) also found a heavy emphasis on attitudes and beliefs, with little description of actual programs or empirical examination of the impact on teachers' or students' learning. In the larger QCS project from which our analyses for this article are drawn, we have tried to be responsive to these critiques in two ways. We have followed teacher candidates throughout the entire preservice period and through the first two years of teaching in order to see how beliefs and practices develop over time. Second, in order to pay attention to teacher performance and outcomes for students, we have concentrated on both what teacher candidates (and then teachers) say about their understandings of social justice as well as what they do in classrooms, including the kinds of learning opportunities they make available to their students.

Description of the Study

The analysis described in this article is part of the QCS project, one of six studies in a portfolio created by the evidence team of the Boston College

Teachers for a New Era (TNE) initiative.[1] Boston College has approximately 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students, with the Lynch School of Education (LSOE) preparing 250–70 undergraduate and graduate teacher candidates per year. Its mission includes an explicit commitment to preparing teachers to teach for social justice by focusing on teachers' and students' learning. Five underlying themes guide the work of the teacher education program at Boston College, although each course in the program addresses them differently. The themes are promoting social justice, constructing knowledge, inquiring into practice, affirming diversity, and collaborating with others. Of particular relevance to the investigation here is social justice, which has been the overarching theme of the program for more than a decade.

Many faculty members have engaged in deliberative inquiry into their own practice over the course of several years to further understand and articulate the social justice vision of the program. What emerged from their work was an understanding of teaching for social justice as "an activity with political dimensions . . . [in which] all educators [are] responsible for challenging inequities in the social order and working with others to establish a more just society."[2] A central goal of teaching for social justice as articulated by the faculty of the program is to improve students' learning and enhance their life chances by challenging school and societal inequities.

In addition to methods, courses, and practica that link theories, research, and practice, teacher candidates at Boston College take courses in the social contexts and purposes of education, teaching students with diverse needs (including courses in bilingualism and diverse learners), and human learning/development. All candidates have at least one teaching placement in a school with a diverse population, and elementary education teacher candidates complete a fieldwork project with bilingual students. The capstone inquiry project requires candidates to pose a question about the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning, collect multiple data sources, and interpret these in terms of guidelines for practice and commitments to social justice.[3]

QCS Research Framework and Design

The larger QCS project is a set of longitudinal case studies examining relationships over a three-year period among teacher candidates' entry characteristics; their learning in course work and fieldwork; their developing perceptions of teaching, pupil learning, and social justice; their teaching practices during the student teaching period and as first- and second-year teachers; their pupils' learning; and their overall efforts to teach for social justice. The analyses reported in this article focus on data from the preservice period and

the first few months of the first year of teaching. Specifically these questions are addressed:

What are teacher candidates'/first-year teachers' understandings of what it means to teach for social justice, and how do these relate to classroom teaching? That is, what do teachers say about teaching for social justice?

How do these understandings play out in practice? That is, what do teacher candidates/first-year teachers actually do in classroom contexts?

What are the implications of these findings for understanding the theme of social justice in preservice teacher education?

Participants

From a pool of approximately 150 master's level teacher candidates, 12 volunteer participants who reflected the demographic characteristics of the larger population in terms of school level, certification area, race/ethnicity, gender, age, and career pattern (see table 1) were recruited. Except for one candidate who took a leave from the program and one who decided not to enter teaching, all took and passed the Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure and thus would be considered "highly qualified teachers" according to the federal mandate. This study was conducted at the university where the researchers work; however, none of those who collected and analyzed data for the analyses reported in this article were the instructors or supervisors of the research participants.

Data Sources

For the larger QCS project, data sources for the preservice year included, for each candidate, (*a*) six structured interviews, (*b*) five structured classroom observations, (*c*) interviews with course instructors and supervisors, and (*d*) a collection of candidates' work and program materials. Data sources for the first year of teaching included (*a*) three structured interviews, (*b*) four structured classroom observations, and (*c*) interviews with principals and mentors. During both years, multiple full-class sets of pupils' work were collected. Each interview followed a different protocol consistent with the changing nature of participants' experiences during teacher preparation and the first year of teaching. Complete interview protocols, which were piloted and revised by the research group as a whole, are available at the Boston College TNE Web-site.[4] Structured observations, which were also piloted and revised by the full research group, were based on a multipart observation protocol, with an emphasis on

TABLE 1

Participant Information

Participant	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Undergraduate Major	Career before Program?	Program of Study	Student Teaching	First-Year Teaching
Craig	White	Male	Math/science	Yes	Sec. science	HS science, urban	MS science, urban
Mark	White	Male	Liberal arts/humanities	Yes	Sec. history	HS history, urban	HS science, urban
Lola	White	Female	Math/science	Yes	Elem. urban	Fifth grade, urban	MS science, urban
Sonia	Hispanic American	Female	Liberal arts/humanities	Yes	Elem. urban	Fourth grade, urban	Second grade, urban
Sylvie	Asian American	Female	Liberal arts/humanities	No	Elem.	Second grade, suburban	Elem. urban
Mara	White	Female	Liberal arts/humanities	Yes	Sec. history	HS history, urban	HS history, suburban
Elizabeth	White	Female	Liberal arts/humanities	No	Sec. English	HS English, urban	HS English, urban
Elsie	White	Female	Liberal arts/humanities	No	Sec. English	HS English, suburban	HS English, suburban
Riley	White	Female	Liberal arts/humanities	No	Elem.	Fourth grade, suburban	Fourth grade, suburban
J. P.	African American	Male	Liberal arts/humanities	No	Elem.	NA; took program leave	NA
Matt	White	Male	Math/science	Yes	Sec. math	HS math, urban	HS math, urban
Kevin	White	Male	Math/science	No	Sec. science	HS science, suburban	Did not teach

NOTE.—Sec. = secondary; HS = high school; MS = middle school; elem. = elementary; NA = not applicable.

content and pedagogy, students' learning and assessment, and teaching for social justice. The complete observation protocol, which is available at the Boston College TNE Web-site, includes description of school resources and context, a chronology of classroom events, scripting (or detailed note taking on classroom activities and interactions) of two-hour observation blocks, and collection of teaching materials.

The first analysis reported in this article (i.e., what teachers said about social justice) focused primarily on participants' responses to interview questions related to social justice across seven interviews that spanned the preservice year and first few months of the first year of teaching. For the second analysis (i.e., what teachers did in classrooms), we selected case material for three participants who reflected the general characteristics of the cohort and whose experiences in the classroom provided insight into the idea of teaching for social justice, as described below.

Data Analysis

To examine understandings of teaching for social justice, we focused on responses to in-depth interviews in which participants were asked about or explicitly spoke about social justice. We were informed by what Hill et al. (1997) call a "consensual" approach to qualitative data analysis. Hill and colleagues suggest that like other forms of qualitative research, consensual research focuses on natural settings, examines process as well as outcomes, is concerned with the meanings of participants, and uses inductive analyses, so theories and explanations are built from the bottom up rather than testing hypotheses from the top down. However, consensual qualitative research is different from some other qualitative approaches in that all the data are collected using the same protocols to provide consistency across responses, and a team of researchers works together to arrive at "consensus judgments" (521). This labor-intensive approach to data analysis is methodologically consistent with other developments in collaborative qualitative research, wherein groups of researchers work together on case study analyses. Although time consuming, this process has the advantage of generating a larger number of cases than a single researcher can complete, while maintaining the integrity of themes and ideas that emerge inductively.

Using a process of continual rereading of the corpus of interview data (Erickson 1986), we developed 27 codes representing discrete ideas about social justice within four categories with thematic affinity. Interview codes for each participant were organized into matrices, which revealed the themes that were salient over time for individuals. We used these themes to identify the teachers for the three case studies. The cases were selected because they represented

a range of teaching approaches and ideas about pupils' learning and also raised issues about teaching for social justice, such as what this really looks like in classrooms and how it differs from other kinds of practices. Partly in response to critiques that previous research has concentrated on teachers' attitudes and neglected their actions, our focus cases drew heavily on classroom observations, lesson and unit plans, inquiry projects completed during the preservice period, and the tasks and assignments teachers created. Case data were analyzed using the selection of critical incidents and triangulation across data sources.

Learning to Teach for Social Justice: What Teacher Candidates Said

As we have noted, some critics suggest that "teaching for social justice" is so widely used in teacher education that it is practically meaningless (Zeichner 2006). To the contrary, we found that the candidates in this study expressed a number of clear and thoughtful understandings of teaching for social justice.

Across 79 interviews, teacher candidates made 206 separate comments directly related to teaching for social justice, which clustered around four larger themes.[5] For example, when teacher candidates were asked about social justice, there were many references to building relationships with pupils and also to respecting and working with parents. We included both these codes in the thematic category "relationships and respect." The four themes, listed in table 2 along with all the codes by theme, were:

Pupil learning.—ideas about making sure pupils learn, preparing pupils, accommodating and differentiating instruction, promoting critical thinking, and holding pupils to high expectations;

Relationships and respect.—ideas about building relationships with pupils and their families, developing a culture of respect, and caring for pupils;

Teacher as activist.—ideas about advocating for pupils, engaging in community work, building coalitions, and participating in activism;

Recognizing inequities.—ideas about racial and economic inequities, connecting curriculum to issues of oppression, breaking down racial or class barriers, and seeing the job of the teacher as a change agent.

As indicated by the 27 different codes, teacher candidates spoke about topics as wide ranging as confronting race and inequity, holding pupils to high expectations, building relationships with parents, and teaching basic skills. However, some ideas were embraced by every teacher candidate, while others were less frequently mentioned. Still others, such as teaching about democracy and civic engagement, which are central to some definitions of teaching for

social justice (e.g., Michelli 2005; Westheimer and Kahne 2004), were largely absent from candidates' responses.

Learning as the Bottom Line

Contrary to charges that teacher education for social justice concentrates on "touchy-feely" goals (Schrag 1999) and ignores learning (Will 2006), we found that every single participant in the study emphasized pupil learning when asked what it means to teach for social justice. The teachers emphasized affirming and building on differences, teaching basic skills, promoting critical thinking, expanding pupils' worldviews, and maintaining high expectations for all pupils. These reflect important and complex ideas about learning.

Many participants mentioned the teacher's responsibility to make sure all pupils learned, which is especially challenging given the broad range of skills, abilities, and experiences in today's classrooms. One explained that social justice meant attending to the pupils who otherwise might be lost in the busyness of classroom life: "I think that means not letting anyone fall through the cracks. I think everybody deserves an equal chance . . . 'cause I think for certain teachers, if they had students with a disability or English wasn't their first language or maybe they came from a home that education wasn't emphasized, they'd probably be more difficult to teach. . . . I think the emphasis here [in the program] is to kind of reach out to those kids and find ways to make them learn and enjoy learning" (Riley, interview 1). Some teachers spoke specifically about what kinds of learning were important and why, and two explicitly linked teaching basic skills to social justice, as this example illustrates: "[I want] to minimize the gap between . . . minority adults and white adults in terms of jobs that they hold and the amount of money that they have, and having the races be able to work together and having them all have educations that allow them do that. . . . So that's why I'm here . . . but I don't explicitly think about it when I'm doing this math thing like 'Ah yes this is going to get [a particular pupil] into a nice little house with a fence'" (Lola, interview 5). It is clear from quotations like this one that when teachers were asked about social justice, they focused on subject matter knowledge and on creating learning opportunities and building on their pupils' knowledge and skills. But they also were aware of how these learning opportunities would influence their pupil's life chances in ways that might, in turn, have positive ramifications for society.

Other respondents emphasized promoting critical thinking or exposing pupils to multiple viewpoints as essential parts of teaching for social justice. One secondary teacher explained: "I think that I would get nervous if students just read things and said 'OK I get it.' OK, then answer this question for me

TABLE 2

Themes, Codes, and Definitions Related to Social Justice Interview Data

Theme	Code	Description Emphasis
Pupil learning	Curriculum applicable	Teacher as making curriculum relevant and applicable to the pupils
	Accommodate/differentiate	Idea of accommodating different learners and differentiating instruction
	Everybody learns	Teacher responsible for making sure pupils learn
	Promote engagement	Importance of engaging pupils
	Multiple viewpoints	Importance of exposing pupils to multiple viewpoints, encouraging them to consider other perspectives, and expanding ideas and opportunities
	Critical thinking	Critical thinking and deep questioning
	Prepare future	Preparing pupils for a successful future
	Basic skills	Importance of teaching basic skills
	Social/cultural contexts	Knowing and understanding pupils' social and cultural contexts
	High expectations	Holding pupils to high expectations and pushing kids to meet those goals
	Same expectations	Holding same expectations for all pupils
Relationships and respect	Be fair	Being fair to all pupils in the classroom; not showing favorites
	Relationships pupils	Building relationships with the pupils
	Parents	Respecting and working with parents
	Culture of respect	Promoting a culture of respect among pupils and between pupil and teacher
	Care	Knowing and caring for pupils
Teacher as activist	Collaborations/coalitions	Importance of participating in collaborations/coalitions to support pupils and improve schools
	Advocate for pupils	Role of the teacher in serving as an advocate for pupils
	Activism	Idea that the teacher should participate in activism
	Community work	Role of the teacher in doing community work/volunteering or getting pupils engaged in such activities
Recognizing inequities	Change agent	Teacher as a change agent, making a difference in society
	Challenge canon	Challenging the canon or altering the standard curriculum
	Gender	The role gender plays in the classroom
	Class/race struggle in curriculum	How teachers might highlight class/race struggle and social inequities as part of the curriculum

TABLE 2 (*Continued*)

Theme	Code	Description Emphasis
	Connections to oppression	Ways to connect curriculum to real world examples of oppression and exploitation
	Break down barriers	Breaking down racial or class barriers for pupils
	Challenge stereotypes	Challenging pupils' stereotypes or biases related to race, class, gender, or sexual orientation

because I think the more questions they ask, the more I'll know that they are really trying to understand on a deeper level, and I think that will help in their future in whatever they pursue after high school, be it in college or just a profession" (Elizabeth, interview 1). Comments like this one suggest that teacher candidates/teachers linked the development of strong thinking skills to improved life chances. Some teacher candidates, surprised at how little experience their pupils had had outside their own neighborhoods, were also interested in exposing them to the world beyond.

Across the interviews, elementary and secondary candidates repeatedly talked about holding their pupils to high standards and pushing them to succeed. An elementary candidate described a teacher in her school whom she respected for her "dogged" commitment to pupils' success. She explained that this teacher worked with pupils whom other teachers had given up on, noting, "She's carrying them, and she doesn't give them any breaks, and she really is trying to push these kids to . . . succeed in school" (Lola, interview 4). Throughout the interviews, high expectations were closely tied to candidates' sense of responsibility for the pupils' future opportunities.

Adopting a Critical Stance?

Another common critique of teacher education for social justice is that it is nothing more than loosely veiled indoctrination, purveyed by liberal faculty who want to promote progressive educational ideas and political activism (Crowe 2008; Leo 2005). While the respondents in this study said that social justice was "all around them" in their program, none alluded to the emphasis as indoctrination, and in fact, many were attracted to the program because of this emphasis. In addition, although participants described a range of ways social justice was presented in their courses, none of their comments referred to an antiwhite, anti-Western, or anti-American stance, as some critics have argued is the case when social justice tenets are integrated with subject matter

(Stotsky 1999). Only one participant in the study found the emphasis on social justice irrelevant: "[Social justice] seems to be the basis of everything that we've learned here. And it seems very unpractical in some situations. . . . I'm not in a school where it can be applied . . . and it seems like it's . . . not necessarily a waste, but it's not, not being used and can't be used in a lot of schools. And a lot more emphasis should be put on . . . teaching skills and things that you can use in your classroom that's good for all the students" (Kevin, interview 2). This candidate suggested that teaching for social justice was only relevant in urban, low-income populations, and instead he wanted the program to focus on teaching skills and reaching all pupils. Ironically, finding ways to reach all pupils was exactly how many other candidates defined the program's teaching for social justice mission. Interestingly, although the candidate quoted above completed the program, he decided not to become a teacher.

Despite their interest in teaching for social justice, the teachers in this study seldom offered critiques of the larger structures and arrangements of schooling, such as grading, tracking, and labeling of pupils, even though these kinds of challenges were quite consistent with the stated agenda of the program. The following example, wherein the candidate was critical of her school because Latinos were noticeably absent from honors courses, reflected ideas she encountered in the program but was unusual in our data:

> I've just been wondering about how on earth do I change things. . . . I think you need to work with . . . the individual students and teach them self-advocacy. . . . And also I think you need to work with the parents if there's a real problem. You need to get a constituency who has some weight . . . because as a young teacher I probably won't have much weight. I think you need to either build up a coalition of teachers who will support what you're saying . . . and maybe making *them* the face of it and not trying . . . to lead it yourself, but just getting it going. Or . . . if none of the teachers are listening and all of the Hispanic kids in the classes are failing, talking to their parents and discussing what might be done. (Elsie, interview 2)

This critique of the tracking/grouping system coupled with consideration of what role a teacher might play to challenge the system was one of only two comments coded as "activism" in our interview data.

Educators committed to social justice might be disappointed by the lack of critique of the educational system in candidates' comments about social justice. In fact, in program faculty interviews, which were part of the larger QCS study, most faculty indicated that they had the intention of conveying a critical view of schooling. The lack of structural critique by the candidates may suggest that the critics' claim that programs with a social justice agenda simply in-

doctrinate candidates into a particular political stance is unfounded. In addition, it may also be indicative of today's accountability demands, which make it increasingly difficult for educators to promote critique and encourage activism.

Making a Difference?

Although we did not detect a critical or activist perspective in most participants' responses, we did find that teachers believed their work could make a difference. Yet they understood making a difference in terms of their own classrooms and were skeptical of their ability to influence structural change.

Along these lines, some participants discussed the canon and how they would teach beyond it by using additional texts and reconsidering traditional texts through new lenses. For example, an English major explained that issues of justice could be raised even when studying texts within the canon: "A lot of the courses I've had are the traditional Shakespeare, Dickens, Jane Austen, and . . . people aren't very creative about ways to address [social justice] in those books, so it's a little harder. I think as a teacher I'd like to find ways to address it 'cause I think there are ways to address social justice questions through basically anything if you ask the right questions" (Elsie, interview 1). In these and other comments, teacher candidates demonstrated a desire to reconsider classic texts and present new texts that exposed their pupils to multiple perspectives. Yet, these plans did not extend to trying to alter school or district curricula; the emphasis was on their own classrooms.

Making a difference in one's own classroom was also the theme when one candidate candidly discussed his own class status and race privilege. Although he believed that redistribution of resources would be necessary to improve society, he did not find this a realistic (or desirable) goal for himself:

> If we did redistribute all the wealth and sort of fix all the problems worldwide, you've made the whole world [over] at that point because we're all poor then. . . . I don't want that to happen because we live at the top end of that. Even though I'm not that wealthy. . . . I'm still really comfortable. It's really selfish, and I'm really ashamed of thinking this way, especially when I think about it really rationally and intellectually. It's awful. . . . But there are other ways to make the world a better place, and I feel like education is sort of the one area where someone can go into and actually affect some change in society. (Mark, interview 1)

This statement revealed a deep cynicism about whether those advantaged by the system would ever be willing to promote structural change. However, this

teacher also said that he had to settle for the one area in which he thought he might affect change—in his classroom with his own pupils.

Although another participant acknowledged the existence of unequal access and opportunities, she was concerned about emphasizing inequities, given the impact this might have on pupils' self-confidence and motivation. She described a discussion that occurred among some teacher candidates:

> One of our dialogues . . . was something about how someone had suggested that they were just going to tell their minority students the reason why they were poor, basically, why they were in poverty was because of their race. And I feel like OK, but that's not very constructive, and so I fear 'cause I hate the divide that currently exists between races in this country. . . . But if you teach a kindergartner that or any kid that, how is that possibly not going to make them more bitter toward others, toward the white race in particular, but yet you want them to be strong and to know how best to work the system. (Lola, interview 1)

This teacher's reticence to discuss inequities might have been linked to questions about her own efficacy as a white teacher in a classroom with many pupils of color. However, in her view, she could make a difference not by talking about inequity but by providing pupils a quality education so they could get into the work world and then help make the world a better place. In many interviews, teacher candidates demonstrated their interest in expanding pupils' perspectives, improving their learning, and enhancing their life chances. Yet, they were cynical about their capacity to change schools and society writ large and instead focused on having a positive impact on the pupils they directly touched.

Across the interviews, when asked about teaching for social justice, teachers expressed concerns about how they would meet the range of needs in the classroom, promote critical thinking, and create a challenging yet relevant curriculum. They saw the work of teaching for social justice as implicitly linked to improving pupils' learning and life chances. Yet, as we noted, they did not refer to critical and activist perspectives. We return to this idea at the end of the article.

Learning to Teach for Social Justice: What Teacher Candidates Did

Regardless of what teachers say or believe about social justice, many questions have been raised about whether beliefs have anything to do with practice. In this study, we were interested in both what teachers said about social justice and what they did in classrooms.

Here, we take a closer look at three teachers—one elementary and two

secondary teachers (one who taught humanities and one who taught history). These three reflect the range of general characteristics of the other participants in this study in terms of grade level, subject area, school context, and demographics. However, we selected these three for closer examination because they also represented the range of ways that participants in the study understood and expressed ideas about pupils' learning and because they emphasized different themes related to teaching for social justice and the role of the teacher. We were especially interested in how teacher candidates/teachers with differing views constructed learning opportunities for pupils and how they made decisions about teaching strategies, content, materials, and assessments in their different school contexts.

We used these cases to explore the complexity of learning to teach for social justice, including how the experiences and knowledge teacher candidates brought with them to the program were related to what they learned, how these played out in classrooms during the practicum experience and the first year of teaching, and what this meant for pupils' learning opportunities and accomplishments. In the cases that follow, there are several examples of good teaching practices. For example, teachers use primary sources, facilitate respectful discussion, and create materials that are engaging for students. What these cases illustrate, however, is that the teachers we studied used these strategies based on certain beliefs and ideas about teaching that the teachers themselves identify and literature in the field supports, as grounded in social justice ideals. The cases that follow demonstrate that teaching for social justice is not just about ideas and beliefs, however. Rather, it is the enactment of ideas and beliefs in real practice, with real pupils.

Mara: Not What to Think but How to Think

Seeking more satisfaction from her work, Mara left a New York fashion job two years after college and became a secondary history teacher candidate. Policy makers would find her a paragon of the "highly qualified teacher" with outstanding subject matter knowledge: she was a history major from a selective college and took additional history courses in her master's program. Mara's teaching demonstrated her belief that subject matter content is historically fluid and contestable and that teaching methods should vary, contingent upon the interests and resources of pupils. This perspective contrasts with a knowledge delivery view of teaching, wherein knowledge is regarded as neutral, static, and value-free.

As the excerpts below suggest, Mara's view of history was "the facts plus critique of the facts." She wanted her students to learn what happened in the past and why it happened, as well as whose perspective was represented and

whose was not. These ideas were consistent with the social justice views promoted by the teacher education program, especially her history methods course, but they are dramatically different from a knowledge delivery view For example, in a ninth-grade unit on the Renaissance, Mara wanted pupils to understand history as argument based on evidence, as reflected in her comment about a pupil's homework assignment: "This is kind of a middle one [referring to a pupil's assignment]. He at least makes a statement and then backs it up with evidence. . . . Oh, and I just gave them the 'Galileo versus Luther' paper [which asks] 'Who was more of a threat to the church?' And they're like, 'Well who *was* more of a threat?' And I'm like, 'Well, I have my opinion. But that means nothing. You write a good paper, and you provide me with historical evidence to support your argument, that's an A.' They were like, 'There's no right answer? Wow!'" Mara's view of history was not "anything goes," but she wanted her pupils to know how history was constructed and to entertain multiple perspectives rather than simply receive information from the textbook or the teacher.

When Mara introduced *All Quiet on the Western Front* to a twelfth-grade American history class toward the end of student teaching, she invited opinions for and against war, using a comment-on-comment strategy to ensure that pupils listened to each other and participated.

Mara: Remember, back up your positions. Do it respectfully.

Pupil 1: When I was in middle school, I was really into war. Now I'm not.

Pupil 2: I talked about this with my dad—he was a child of World War II and Vietnam—well he wasn't there, but he was part of a sit-in for president of his college. He says we're heading for the same thing.

Pupil 3: When you see the genocide in Sudan—I can see people fighting. World War I was very abstract; II, too.

Mara: Okay, one at a time. Comment on comment. Back up your positions.

Pupil 4: Canada's army is a peacekeeping army. If everyone did that, we wouldn't have as much trouble. We don't have any support for this [referring to the current war in Iraq]. Our allies think we're nuts. We're in something that really isn't our business.

Pupil 5: I'm really for the war. I don't think people should live here if they wouldn't defend their country.

Pupil 6: Seriously?

Pupil 5: Yes. I think we have to listen to our leaders and be ready to fight for what is right. You can't just hide because you're afraid. You can't have all the advantages and just sit back and criticize.

[Observer's note: It was obvious that most pupils were shocked at this response, and there was a general murmur of surprise.]

Mara: We can have other opinions.

Pupil 5: I support the war in Iraq because this is about freedom from terrorism.

Pupil 7: I feel like its causing instability in our country.

[Observer's note: The conversation continued. Mara recorded comments. The pupils were anxious to be heard and seemed to listen carefully to the others. No one was criticized or derided for any position—although there was obvious surprise at some opinions. It seemed that most pupils assumed that their stance was that of all their peers. Eventually some pupils began to make comparisons to World War II.]

Across interviews and classroom observations, it was clear that Mara wanted pupils to learn not just what to think but how to think, which was consistent with the basic tenets of teaching for social justice in the literature and in her own teacher education program.

We saw this commitment to developing her pupils' critical thinking play out in Mara's practice during both the preservice year and the first year of teaching. As a student teacher, for example, Mara introduced non-text-based images and modeled "historical thinking" in a series of lessons on Islamic history for a ninth-grade world history class. She helped pupils contrast images of Islamic art with American art. This provided all pupils, even those with difficulty reading primary texts, the opportunity to "do history," which she described in her inquiry project: "I believe that all students are capable of learning and deserve the opportunity to learn in a manner that best suits the individual student. Primary sources that are non-text-based allow for greater student participation and more hands-on historical discoveries. This directly correlates with the promotion of social justice and accommodation of diversity." Keeping a tally of discussions and analyzing pupils' writing, Mara tracked improvement in how often pupils observed, used sources, inferred, provided evidence, posed questions, contextualized, corroborated, and generalized when they used visual images as primary sources.

During the first year of teaching, Mara continued to use images of art from many cultures as well as additional primary sources and readings to raise questions about content. For a lesson on "isms," for example, pupils selected quotations from primary sources to create posters about the meanings of key social theories, including social Darwinism, communism, and fascism.

Mara's case not only represents the critical view of knowledge that is part of teaching for social justice, but it also raises questions about the notion of "method" that is consistent with social justice teaching. Bartolome (1994) has argued that heavy reliance on the right method is based on a "narrow and mechanistic view of instruction" rather than one that takes into account "the sociohistorical and political dimensions of education" (3). When teaching and schooling are understood as technical processes, then technical and universal

procedures (i.e., the right teaching methods) are the solutions. From a social justice perspective, however, learning to teach is not regarded as learning the correct implementation of one method but, rather, learning how to provide supports so all pupils have rich opportunities to think, read, and write critically. Mara's classroom practice provides an example of teaching in which content and knowledge are continuously constructed and the act of teaching is about far more than transmitting a static body of knowledge to pupils.

Mark: Reaching the Kids at the Back of the Class

Mark often spoke of being a "troubled student" who was routinely disengaged from school, not because he did not have the skills to do well but because he lacked incentive and initiative. However, after spending his late twenties as a nontraditional college student, Mark found in teaching a career to which he was morally drawn. At the end of his first semester in the teacher education program, Mark stated that he was becoming a teacher because he would "rather be a part of making the world a better place as opposed to doing something else." Mark believed teaching would enable him to pursue the life he desired. He credited his family's financial well-being with allowing him to try, fail, and try again at schooling—a luxury, he admitted, that many of his own pupils would never have. It is likely due to his past that Mark defined teaching for social justice as reaching the pupils "at the back of the room"—pupils who, like himself, were capable of achievement if they were actively engaged by a thoughtful teacher.

Mark often expressed admiration for his cooperating teacher's capacity to motivate disengaged pupils. The pupils who would have been easiest to overlook—the ones who demanded little attention because they sat (or slept) quietly—were the ones who drew Mark's attention. Explaining his definition of teaching for social justice, Mark offered this example from his prepracticum experience: "Instead of just paying lip service to reaching all students, [teaching for social justice means] to actually try and do it. I had some disengaged students in my class, particularly [one student]. . . . But every single day that there was something going on with writing, I made sure he had a pencil and he wasn't sleeping. . . . And if I had to sit on a table in front of him while everyone else worked, I would. . . . So that's how I look at it, in that you're not leaving students behind."

Mark's beliefs were corroborated by actions. During one class discussion, his pupils became deeply engaged in a conversation about intelligent design theory. Excited by the level of pupil participation, Mark created a lesson to provide academic structure for the heated debate by assigning readings about intelligent design from multiple perspectives. The next day, the pupils worked

collaboratively to formulate an argument either in favor of or against including intelligent design theory in the curriculum. As the debate grew intense, Mark mediated the contributions of overzealous pupils and solicited responses from those who had not spoken. Reflecting on the lesson, Mark concluded that this cognitively complex lesson was successful in part because all the pupils were "enthusiastic and interested in the topic," reflecting his goal of reaching all the pupils in the class.

Mark's interest in engaging all pupils was a source of constant reflection and experimentation. He focused his inquiry project on increasing homework completion because, as he noted, it was "critical to student learning." Mark's homework journaling method involved collecting pupils' homework in a basket each day and providing a journal for written explanations for any assignment not submitted.

Mark noted that many of the pupils "blame[d] everyone but themselves for their performance." He believed that having to record an excuse in a journal each day would require disengaged pupils to acknowledge their actions and recognize that they could "influence the outcome of their education." More important, Mark saw the homework journal as an opportunity for dialogue with disengaged pupils. He wrote, "One of the most difficult things for a new teacher to do is to get to know their students, especially those students who are not engaged. . . . I conjectured I would be able to use the dialogue established in the homework notebook as an inroad to reach these students." By delving into pupils' reasons for missing homework, Mark learned about the lives of chronically underperforming pupils. For example, he discussed the challenges facing one pupil who was a single mother and had missed a string of homework assignments because her newborn had been hospitalized. Mark also learned about how his instructional choices affected diverse pupils, including one who wrote that he could not complete the homework because his limited English made the reading inaccessible. From this exchange, Mark learned that all pupils benefited when he defined difficult terms before he assigned readings. With the help of the homework journal, Mark identified what his pupils needed and was able to make specific accommodations for students while maintaining high learning expectations.

Mark concluded that the homework journal only slightly increased the numbers of pupils completing assignments. Yet, he stated that as he gained more experience, he planned to implement other methods for increasing homework completion because it led to increased class engagement. For Mark, engaging all pupils, including those at the back of the class, was central to teaching for social justice.

Ironically perhaps, Mark, who had described teaching for social justice as "not leaving students behind," chose to accept a teaching position outside his field of expertise for his first year of teaching. Although he was fully qualified

and certified to teach social studies, Mark's commitment to disengaged pupils prompted him to accept a year-long substitute position in the urban high school where he had student taught, even though it was in the area of chemistry and physics, for which he was not prepared. Mark was confident he could have secured a secondary social studies job in a local suburban school, but he did not apply because he wanted to remain with the pupils with whom he had begun to build relationships. Several months into his first year of teaching science, Mark reiterated his desire to stay at this particular school, stating simply that "he [knew] more about the pupils."

Mark's case is a troubling one for teacher educators. His acceptance of a position outside his field of teaching runs counter to the ideals of teaching for social justice, wherein ensuring that all pupils have strong teachers and rich learning is paramount. As teacher educators, we are in no way suggesting that teaching out of field was good for Mark or for his students. Mark, however, believed that his commitment to his pupils trumped his lack of subject matter knowledge. While he readily admitted that his lack of content preparation was detrimental to his pupils, he remained hopeful that he could connect with the kids at the back of the class and maintain high expectations for them—even if they did not have high expectations for themselves. He stated, "[Some students] will try to make excuses for their behavior in class or for their lack of homework or their lack of effort because of, like, 'You don't know what [my life] is like.' And I'm like, 'No, I don't, but I know that if I let you slide now, you probably are still going to be where you're at in 10 years. So if you don't want that to be you, you need to do something about it.' . . . The social justice thing is just sort of reminding them [of that] constantly."

Mark's case reflects the reality of chronically underserved schools—often urban schools with many poor and minority pupils. At these schools, the situation is often a forced choice between having no teacher for certain subject areas, on one hand, or having a teacher who is willing to take the job but is not prepared in the subject areas, on the other. Sometimes administrators decide that teachers like Mark, who are fully prepared and certified in some area of teaching and who are committed to working with urban pupils over the long haul, are worth hiring. The inequity, of course, is that affluent schools are not faced with these choices. They routinely (and rightfully) demand—and get—teachers who have strong subject matter knowledge, full teacher preparation, and a strong desire to work with their pupils. Mark's case highlights the complexity of teaching for social justice; it is not enough to be committed to the pupils, nor is it enough to have content knowledge. Teaching for social justice requires knowledge of pupils, content, and pedagogy and a commitment that all pupils and communities should have access to these.

Sonia: Valuing Pupils' Linguistic and Cultural Resources

Sonia grew up in a Texas border city and commuted to Mexico to attend a Montessori elementary school. Her advanced literacy in Spanish and her oral fluency in English allowed for a smooth transition when she began junior high at a private school in Texas. She was ahead of her peers in mathematics and quickly moved from the beginning reading group to the highest reading level by the end of seventh grade. Raised in a Mexican American community where she embraced her cultural background, it was not until Sonia attended university that she became aware of the struggles of young minority pupils.

During her senior year in college, Sonia volunteered in urban schools serving immigrant populations and was able "to see first hand how unjust certain life situations can be, and how education can truly provide a way to better oneself, and one's community." She chose Boston College because of its program that focused on urban education, and she earned certification in teaching English-language learners (ELLs). For her inquiry project, Sonia used dialogue journals to help develop ELLs' writing skills. She stated, "I am committed to social justice through the fair education of immigrants and English language learners. Specifically, I am interested in culturally sensitive strategies aimed at encouraging the acquisition of English for second language learners that encourage, or at the very least, do not discourage the continued development of a student's first language."

In addition to viewing pupils' diverse backgrounds as assets rather than deficits, Sonia held high expectations for her pupils. She believed in building a strong community of learners and believed that knowledge is fluid and socially constructed rather than transmitted directly from teacher to pupils (Cochran-Smith 1999). She also viewed the teacher as a facilitator and aspired to guide "students to learn about the world around them . . . learn about themselves . . . learn to learn, and love to learn . . . and to learn to be thinkers." Speaking about teaching diverse populations, she affirmed, "One thing that I feel like I can bring to them is that I'm never going to have a low expectation of them just because they are from a low socioeconomic background or because they speak Spanish. I was in school in Mexico, and I know the Mexican school system produces very smart kids."

Sonia's student teaching placement was in a fourth-grade classroom in an urban school. Acknowledging the various cultures of her pupils, she described the specific backgrounds and mentioned the countries where her pupils and their families came from, including Pakistan, Colombia, Haiti, Cambodia, and El Salvador. To meet their diverse cultural and linguistic needs, Sonia used a variety of instructional methods. She used graphic organizers and drew pictures along with verbal and written instructions in English to scaffold pupils'

learning and provide additional social support. Several of the strategies were consistent with the Sheltered English Instructional methods specifically related to ELLs, which she learned in her courses. However, it was common for Sonia to repeat quickly and discretely the instructions in Spanish to those who were in an emerging stage of learning English. Some would question this practice as a possible violation of the recent Massachusetts policy in which most bilingual education programs were replaced by sheltered English instruction. Sonia was aware of the blurred lines around the policy but believed that providing pupils access to the curriculum was more important. With a commitment to teaching for social justice, Sonia did anything she could to help pupils learn, and she thought it was unfair not to take the time required to translate for her pupils, knowing the difference it could make.

As a student teacher, Sonia created an environment rich in language and discussion. Pupils were expected to justify their thinking, share their experiences, and work in groups. For example, during a mathematics lesson, the pupils learned a part-whole model of fractions by playing a game called Guess My Rule. In this game, a pupil thought of a rule, such as "wearing earrings" or "having shoelaces," then, without revealing the rule, the pupil sorted his or her classmates into those who fit the rule and those who did not. Meanwhile, other pupils tried to guess the rule, then converted the information into a fraction, such as 6/16, to indicate that six out of 16 pupils had shoelaces. In addition to learning fractions, pupils learned about each other. For example, when pupils were sorted into those with long and short hair, the following conversation about a Pakistani girl with a head covering occurred:

> *Pupil 1:* How do we know that Kendra has long hair when it's always covered?
> *Pupil 2:* [quietly] Yeah, why doesn't she just take that off? [slightly louder] Just take it off!
> *Pupil 3:* [disapproving and slightly shocked at the suggestion] No, she can't. . . . It's part of our tradition!
> *Kendra:* Ying, I do have long hair.
> *Pupil 2:* Oh.
> *Pupil 4:* Yeah, I think I saw it in the wind before.
> *Pupil 5:* Me too.
> *Sonia:* Yes, you need to be respectful, Justin. I'm sure Kendra has long hair.

This example, although just a quick conversation, is important. The open environment that Sonia created allowed for dialogue throughout the day. Later, pupils were asked to think of another math rule with a partner, gather the data, and make a graphic representation. As pupils generated questions, one pair came up with the rule "students who speak more than one language," and Sonia immediately commented about that being an interesting rule. One

of the girls replied, "Yeah, I wish I knew another language." Sonia saw her pupils' cultural and linguistic experiences as assets, rather than deficits, and her pupils seemed to share this perspective. By showing that she valued pupils' diversity rather than ignoring it, Sonia established a caring and inclusive environment.

Sonia's cooperating teacher was supportive of her teaching. However, the testing pressures at the school and the mandated and highly scripted curriculum did not make it easy for Sonia to teach the way she wanted. In one interview, Sonia discussed teacher autonomy and curricular mandates in public schools: "I think that sometimes it's just so constraining. It seems like it's so prescriptive or . . . they do everything in their power to give as little discretion to teachers to practice their craft. That to me is really depressing because . . . that's just no faith in the teachers that you're employing . . . no faith in their ability to teach well. It seems like everything gets in the way of good teaching." In Sonia's view, teaching was an intellectual activity in which teachers should have flexibility to meet the needs of pupils rather than simply follow what is prescribed.

During the first year of teaching, Sonia was excited to be at a bilingual school where the majority of the instruction was in Spanish, and the administration and community valued bilingualism. However, she still faced many of the challenges of an urban school. Recognizing the pupils' range of abilities in their native languages, Sonia tried to meet diverse learning needs. She communicated with parents, attempted to make the curriculum culturally relevant for pupils, and provided academic and social support for those who were recent immigrants. Sonia's asset-based approach is a hallmark of teaching for social justice, and it contrasted somewhat with the pressure imposed in many schools to ensure that pupils learn English as quickly as possible, even if this limits the development of pupils' native languages. By espousing pedagogy that valued pupils' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, Sonia's intention was to help pupils acquire academic literacy skills in both Spanish and English.

Good and Just Teaching

As noted, the analyses reported in this article are part of a larger effort to examine over time the understandings and practices of teacher candidates—and then new teachers—who participated in a preparation program with an explicit social justice agenda. We conclude this article by connecting our analyses of what teacher candidates/teachers said about social justice and what they did in classrooms to the larger critiques of the social justice agenda in teacher education that we introduced at the beginning.

Equity, Individuals, and Social Justice

This study was informed by critiques indicating that prior research related to teacher education for social justice generally focused on attitudes and beliefs without connecting teacher preparation to teacher performance. In response to these critiques, we examined not just what teachers said about social justice but also how they taught in classrooms and what kinds of learning opportunities they provided to pupils. Here, we showed that the alleged dichotomy between knowledge/learning, on one hand, and social justice, on the other, is artificial and false. The new teachers we studied focused centrally on students' learning, but their views of learning were different from, and bigger than, the notions implicit in the critiques. From the perspective of social justice, promoting pupils' learning included teaching much of the traditional canon, but it also included teaching pupils to think critically about and challenge the universality of that knowledge. This is dramatically different from the view of knowledge and learning that underlies some critiques of social justice—a view of knowledge as static and fixed and a view of learning as the acquisition of the fixed knowledge in the canon.

Although our data clearly challenge the knowledge-justice dichotomy, we want to be clear that the examples of classroom practice and the interview excerpts we use throughout this article are not intended as exemplars of how we want new teachers to talk about and work for social justice. In fact, as we pointed out above, structural critiques of the arrangements and policies of schooling were conspicuous by their absence from the statements and practices of most of the teachers in this study. As researchers and teacher educators, we were disappointed by these omissions and by the very few examples in our data of teachers as activists or advocates for pupils.

In certain ways, however, this is not surprising. The participants in this study were, after all, student teachers who were guests in other people's classrooms and then new teachers in the first months of teaching, many in schools where there was pressure to prepare pupils for high stakes tests. Further, it requires a major shift in thinking for many teacher candidates to understand the structural and historical aspects of schooling and develop analyses and critiques at the macrolevel. We concede that it may well be unrealistic to expect teachers to work as activists during the preservice period or the early months of the first year of teaching. In fact, although there are some exceptions documented in the literature (Achinstein and Ogawa 2006; Cochran-Smith 1991), most research suggests that it takes several years for teachers to get a handle on the work and move beyond beginner status.

What we found, however, as we have tried to show throughout this article, was that beginning teachers talked about and enacted a commitment to equity and social justice at the individual level, rather than at the policy or broader

political level. Zeichner (2006) criticizes the frequent use of social justice as a term describing teacher education since most programs emphasize individual efforts rather than structural changes in teaching and teacher education. We think, however, that addressing equity and social justice at the individual level may be an important starting point for new teachers.

The Teachers Learning Cooperative (TLC) is a grassroots Philadelphia teacher network that has met weekly in teachers' homes for almost 30 years to explore questions about children and learning. As El-Haj (2003) points out in an insightful analysis, when TLC members meet, they collectively focus on a particular child, a piece of pupil work, a new curriculum, or an assessment: "This attention to the particular represents a very different starting point for redressing educational inequality than most reform policies initiated by school districts, states, or federal legislation. These official reform policies tend to rely instead on a universalist stance that takes a uniform approach to guaranteeing educational equity. . . . TLC practices shift the locus of change from generalized policies that speak in terms of all children (all classrooms and all schools) to specific practices that account for every child (every classroom and every school) with attention to the multiplicity, complexity, and uncertainty that characterize human learning" (818–19). TLC's focus on particular children leads to larger analyses of inequities. These analyses, which are grounded in the particular experiences of individual children, are connected to other theories that locate knowledge building in the everyday world of people's lived experiences.

Although it may be unrealistic to expect teacher candidates and very new teachers to engage in structural critique and work as activists, it may be quite appropriate for preparation programs with a social justice agenda to expect teachers to enact social justice within the everyday world of their own lived experience as beginning teachers who are working within a larger educational system that structures inequity. Part of what this means is ensuring that every pupil has opportunities to learn rich content and engage in critical thinking; the social, intellectual, and organizational supports that make learning possible; and a teacher who holds high learning expectations for everybody. We saw this enacted in the classrooms of the beginning teachers described in the cases, and we see this bedrock commitment to individuals' learning as the beginning of teaching for social justice rather than the endpoint. We think it may function as a bridge for beginning teachers to larger critiques and activism that examine the conditions that create inequity in schools.

Isn't That Just Good Teaching?

The final critique to which we return is the idea that the viewpoints and practices we describe in this article are really "just good teaching" as opposed

to the beginning efforts of teacher candidates and then very new teachers to teach for social justice. There are two ways to answer this question. First, we argue the negative response: no, teaching for social justice is not just good teaching, if the word "just" is intended to mean "simply" or "merely." Teaching for social justice, as we have characterized it here, does indeed involve practices and strategies that many people would label good teaching. But the meaning of "just" as "simply" implies not only that teaching for social justice is commonplace and routine but also that teaching, learning, and schooling are neutral and value-free activities that are not—and should not be—connected to larger political or ideological commitments. To the contrary, teaching for social justice is defined in part by the moral and ethical values to which it is attached and by its strong commitments to improving the life chances of all students, ensuring that all students have rich learning opportunities, and challenging aspects of the system that reinforce inequities. Unfortunately, as is well known by educators in every field and from every perspective, this kind of teaching occurs all too rarely and is especially uncommon in urban and other schools with large numbers of students who are poor, minority, immigrant, or have special learning needs.

Others have made this same argument. In response to those who suggested that culturally responsive pedagogy was simply good teaching, for example, Ladson-Billings (1995) pointed out that it was much more than that in the sense that it depended on the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of teachers' work as much as it did on particular classroom strategies, which varied from teacher to teacher and classroom to classroom. Along somewhat similar lines, Apple (1990) emphasized that the theories and practices involved in teaching occur in the real world of shifting and unequal power relations. Thus, he argued that discussions about what goes on in classrooms are not "the logical equivalent of conversations about the weather" but are, rather, about the "hopes, dreams, fears, and realities—the very lives—of millions of children, parents, and teachers" (viii). And we ourselves (Cochran-Smith 2006) have argued that teacher education for social justice is not neutral but inherently political and values oriented: "Of course teacher education for social justice is political—it has to do with who has power and access to learning and life opportunities. All professional education—whether in law, social service, or education—is value laden and ideological rather than neutral and apolitical" (200).

The second way to respond to the, "Isn't that just good teaching?" question is to argue the affirmative point: yes, teaching for social justice is just good teaching, if one understands the phrase "good teaching" already to encompass within it the idea of good and just teaching. By this we mean that, from the perspective of social justice, embedded in the idea of good teaching is the presupposition that teaching is a profession with certain inalienable purposes,

among them challenging the inequities in access and opportunity that curtail the freedom of some individuals and some groups to obtain a high quality education. When good teaching is conceptualized as challenging educational inequities so that everybody has the kinds of rich learning opportunities that have historically been reserved for the privileged, it links teachers' classroom practices with larger social responsibilities. From this perspective, good teaching, or what we would prefer to call teaching for social justice or even good and just teaching, is classroom practice that provides rich learning opportunities for all students, coupled with larger efforts to question the social, economic, and institutional barriers (within the scope of human agency) that constrain individuals' or groups' life chances. This goal is integral to the very idea of good and just teaching. Just as modern versions of the Hippocratic Oath regarding the preservation of human life are embraced by nearly all medical schools, so too is the idea of good and just teaching integral to the very idea of education itself. From this perspective, then, teaching for social justice is not an option but a crucial and fundamental part of good and just teaching.

Notes

We appreciate the thoughtful criticism and helpful feedback on earlier versions of this article provided by Linda Darling-Hammond, Tom Lasley, Nick Michelli, and Anna Maria Villegas. We are indebted to the teacher candidates/teachers who volunteered to participate in the study in 2005 and have continued to open their classrooms to researchers and talk candidly about their experiences in interviews.

1. Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Patrick McQuillan are coprincipal investigators of the QCS project; core researchers include Joan Barnatt, Lisa D'Souza, Cindy Jong, Karen Shakman, Aubrey Scheopner, Robert Baroz, Kara Mitchell, Dianna Terrell, and Ann Marie Gleeson. TNE is an initiative funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and other funders to change how teacher education is understood and enacted at 11 selected institutions across the nation. During the period when the work described in this article was completed, the Evidence Team included Boston College faculty and administrators, Marilyn Cochran-Smith (chair), Alan Kafka, Fran Loftus, Larry Ludlow, Patrick McQuillan, Joseph Pedulla, and Gerald Pine; TNE administrators, Jane Carter and Jeff Gilligan; and doctoral students, Joan Barnatt, Robert Baroz, Lisa D'Souza, Sarah Enterline, Ann Marie Gleeson, Cindy Jong, Kara Mitchell, Emilie Mitescu, Aubrey Scheopner, Karen Shakman, Yves Fernandez Solomon, and Dianna Terrell.

2. Quoted from LSOE Web-site, http://www.bc.edu/schools/lsoe.

3. Throughout the discussion of data we use "pupils" to refer to K–12 students and "teacher candidates" to refer to the teacher education students who participated in the study.

4. See http://tne.bc.edu.

5. Participant attrition resulted in 10 participants at seven interviews, one at six interviews, and one at three interviews.

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