

ACTION RESEARCH TO INFORM CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This action research focuses on teacher educators' practices, grounded in critical pedagogy and democracy education. The goal was to identify teacher educators' key instructional practices that exemplified critical pedagogy while teaching an elementary social studies methods course. We examined student work products and instructors' materials in order to inform future practice in teacher education. Analysis of sources included preservice teachers' work products along with instructional planning documents. Documents were initially coded independently before comparing analytic notes. Once themes were identified, early findings were triangulated using observation notes collected during class sessions and survey data gathered at the end of the semester. Conclusions highlight instructional practices that demonstrate shifts in preservice teachers' understanding around two themes: (1) building relevant relationships and (2) understanding the importance of including multiple perspectives. This action research makes a valuable contribution to understanding how teacher educators might leverage routinely used instructional practice (e.g., reflection folders and the jigsaw reading strategy) as critical pedagogy. Given current

crises that once again reveal persistent inequities in society, this work is timely for those ready to (re)commit to placing equity, access, and diversity at the forefront.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, preservice teacher education, critical elementary education, teacher action research

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In the wake of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement, questions of race, racism, and access have reemerged in both education spaces and greater society. The impact of the global pandemic on our neediest communities and civil unrest across the country—in response to ongoing systemic racism and police brutality directed at Black communities—is an urgent reminder that there is much more work to be done in and outside of schools. Educators in K–16 settings can no longer support educational neutrality that privileges Eurocentric and White supremacist ideologies. At this critical juncture, teacher educators must guide preservice teachers’ engagement with difficult and uncomfortable conversations about race, racism, access, and their role in disrupting the status quo. Social studies education is a viable pathway for change. This article highlights two well-worn instructional practices (reflection folders and the jigsaw reading strategy) that can be employed as critical pedagogy in teacher education.

In this action research project, teacher educators conducted a document analysis of preservice teachers’ work products with the goal of understanding how to better prepare preservice teachers to engage with controversial social issues through critical pedagogy and democracy education frameworks. This study documents successful teaching experiences, unpacks important challenges, and informs a deeper understanding of teaching and learning to achieve equity and access in teacher preparation. This work is currently situated within elementary social studies education, but we believe the practices are adaptable for any content area and educational level.

SITUATING THE PROBLEM

As an emphasis on privatizing public services, individualistic achievement, and narrow definitions of knowledge continues to permeate educational spaces, teacher educators must highlight teaching within a justice orientation (Dougherty, 2017; Sleeter, 2011, 2014). Gaps in educational opportunities and achievement between historically privileged and historically marginalized students continue to reveal systemic inequities (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). For this reason, a shift away from “individualism and market competition” must occur (Sleeter, 2011, p. 8). As such, teacher educators are uniquely positioned to adapt widely accepted instructional practices in ways that highlight aspects of critical pedagogy, such as dialectic approaches that provide space to understand and disrupt power dynamics (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Darder, 2003; Sleeter, 2011, 2014). Further, teacher educators should become skilled at facilitating learning that guides preservice teachers to examine their ability and willingness to address issues such as race, class, ability, and gender biases as these arise in classrooms every day. Understanding how their personal views impact teaching holds the potential to develop preservice teachers’ critical epistemology to create learning environments where multiple forms of knowledge and inquiry are valued (Zeichner, 2015, 2016).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The theoretical framing for this action research centered critical pedagogy as the goal in our teaching. Working as co-instructors, we designed experiences so preservice teachers could engage in text-based *dialogue*. Secondly, we engaged routines to support preservice teachers in moving beyond reflection to *reflexivity* when thinking about social studies teaching. Given the course context, we also found it useful to employ democratic education principles, such as building mutual responsibility and studying topics related to struggles for equity and justice throughout history.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Critical pedagogy seeks to address issues of justice equity in educational spaces by highlighting the importance of students under-

standing power as produced and reproduced by dominant groups in society in order to oppress people based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other forms of subjugation (Kincheloe, 2008). Critical pedagogy centralizes the idea that knowledge emerges in a two-way exchange between teacher and student, where all should play the role of educator (Freire, 2013). Two key features of critical pedagogy are dialectic practice and reflexivity (Darder, 2003; Freire, 2013). In addition to influencing our course structure, critical pedagogy provided a framework in which we could analyze our practices in order to refine practices that build critical awareness in preservice teachers. Therefore, moving beyond a curriculum of indoctrination requires educators to not only acquire content knowledge, but also unpack their positionality to reflect on their beliefs, values, and how dominant ideology is produced and reproduced (Kincheloe, 2008). One way to accomplish this in the teacher preparation classroom is via dialectic experiences at the intersection of academic content information and trust-building in group work. Strategies that centralize dialogue are key to this goal. Elementary social studies education presents a viable avenue for using critical pedagogy to engender democratic and social justice education because the environment centralizes student development of empathy and knowledge of civic engagement (Banks, 2017; Cuenca, 2017; Dover et al., 2016).

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

Social justice education promotes an understanding of what is fair and just by studying concepts such as discrimination, oppression, privilege, and power (Boyd et al., 2016; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Lemley, 2014; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016). Preservice teachers need exposure to social justice education in order to imagine ways to lessen sociocultural divides that still exist in schools between White, middle-class teachers and a continually diversifying student population (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). In other words, if preservice teachers are to move toward developing a justice-oriented stance, they need learning experiences that demonstrate a connection between pressing social issues and academic content knowledge. Therefore, a democratic learning environment provides opportunities to address and discuss controversial issues, learn the skills needed to foster student

voice in the classroom, gain content knowledge, increase criticality in teaching, and learn how to counter dominant historical narratives (Au, 2009; Hawley, et al., 2016; Kohlmeier & Saye, 2012; McCall, 2004; Tannebaum, 2017).

Grappling with controversial social issues using a pan-disciplinary social studies approach is a key component of addressing the aims of social justice-oriented and democratic education (Hess, 2004; McDonald, 2005). As Misco and Shiveley (2016) point out, “the primary intersection of social justice and social studies can be found in controversial issue education” (p. 189). Learners in K–16 settings benefit from having opportunities to “discuss, deliberate, and resolve” critical social issues that impact participation in a democratic society (Cuenca, 2010, p. 43). Further, democratic practices hinge upon preservice teachers moving beyond a banking model toward an asset-based framework in order to gain criticality, allowing them to examine issues of power and equity within traditional social studies curriculum (Au, 2009; Camicia, 2008; Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Duplass & Crus, 2010; Frederick et al., 2010; Freire, 2013; Hawley et al., 2016; Kohlmeier & Saye, 2012; McCall, 2004; Sanchez; 2010). In turn, preservice teachers may begin thinking more intentionally about the ways they infuse teaching with social justice-oriented content and democratic practices (Zeichner, 2016).

CONTEXT AND COURSE STRUCTURE

The social studies methods course, *Integrating Social Studies in Elementary Classrooms*, was required for all elementary preservice teachers at a midsize university in the Southeastern United States. This action research included 20 preservice teachers (19 females and one male) in their first semester of the program’s professional development sequence. The cohort was also enrolled in a literacy methods course, a seminar, and a field placement consisting of 10 hours of field observation. Self-described racial/ethnic identities of the students included 3 African American students, 3 Latinx students, 1 Chinese student, and 13 White students. The two course instructors, Alarcón and Marhatta, identified as Mexican American and Nepalese American, respectively.

Alarcón had taught the course previously and had engaged in action research to inform a revision of the course structures (Alarcón, 2016). The results of that revision yielded several of the assignments used in the iteration studied for this project. While Marhatta had not taught the course before, she had integrated social studies teaching into her daily practice as a first-grade teacher.

The course used a pan-disciplinary approach to social studies and was designed so that preservice teachers experienced facilitated, purposeful dialogue and structured reflection activities. The three-hour instructional block had four distinct learning rotations: class meeting, jigsaw reading, content-knowledge building, and teacher workshop. We include a brief description of the components here to orient the reader. However, the article's primary focus is on two instructional routines that we position as tools for engendering critical pedagogy: reflection folders and the jigsaw reading strategy. As stated earlier, there is nothing new about these two classroom routines. Because these practices are well worn in education, we felt comfortable pushing ourselves to think about how we could leverage them as supports for critical pedagogy in teacher education.

CLASS MEETING

Class sessions began in a large circle where everyone could greet one another, review the day's agenda, share observations from field placements in classrooms, and address discussion prompts related to the day's topic. Preservice teachers used class meetings to bring forward issues related to education, social issues, and ideas they were working through in other courses. A key purpose for class meeting was experiencing the dynamics of community building and understanding how the space could be used for integrating academic content that might not be addressed during the school day due to time constraints and the emphasis on math and reading instruction. We emphasized class meetings as a space to integrate social studies teaching daily.

CONTENT-KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

This segment of our time was lecture-based with the goal of reviewing prior learning, building content-based vocabulary, and introducing new concepts. We engaged both individual and cooperative

learning activities. It also included occasional guest speakers and multimedia viewing. This space was also used to model strategies and practice activities to build social studies skills (e.g., studying primary source documents).

JIGSAW READING

The jigsaw reading technique is a research-based cooperative learning strategy developed by Elliot Aronson and his students in the early 1970s. It works by assigning each group member a section of reading material. After this, group members take turns sharing and teaching the essential concepts and ideas to each other. To feel confident and knowledgeable, individuals need adequate time to comprehend and synthesize what they have read. Together, each person contributes to a full understanding. We built the jigsaw reading strategy into our routine for each session. Additionally, we provided jigsaw reading responses (a template used for recording jigsaw reading discussions). Once completed, these documents provided insight into how preservice teachers interpreted texts and how their ideas were developed or challenged. One course text, *A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America* (Takaki, 2012, adapted by Rebecca Stefoff), addressed pervasive dominant historical narratives and provided preservice teachers access to an array of historical counternarratives.

TEACHER WORKSHOP

Preservice teachers used this time to work on assignments together and conference with instructors. Additionally, Marhatta integrated a read-aloud portion to demonstrate ways to use children's literature to spur discussion of social issues, preview learning units, and illustrate various points of view. At the end of each class session, students used reflection folders to record learning moments, pose questions about content or pedagogy, and/or jot down other ideas related to teaching.

METHOD

We employed teacher action research as the method for this study because it yields results aimed at helping educators better understand and develop their practices (Kincheloe, 2012). The study's purpose

was to explore teaching practices that could serve preservice teachers' understanding of critical pedagogy in elementary social studies teaching. This study addressed the question, Which assignments, strategies, and instructional practices expanded understanding of pathways to equity-focused social studies education? As such, document analysis was a useful qualitative research method to interpret and give meaning to documents collected throughout the semester.

DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS

After reviewing work products from all 20 enrolled, we chose samples from 13 preservice teachers. The work products chosen were (1) complete sets of assignments (in other words, no missing work) and (2) demonstrated connections that could be triangulated using observation notes and lesson plans. Because this study aimed to uncover which methods and activities were most useful in demonstrating preservice teachers' learning over time, it was appropriate to select the 13 samples for further analysis. This article focuses on the usefulness of reflection folders and jigsaw reading strategies for future courses.

Once the final 13 participants were selected, we conducted an open-ended follow-up survey as a mode of member checking. Survey topics included preservice teachers' understanding of critical pedagogy, ideas for incorporating new knowledge into teaching practices, and understanding the need for advancing multiple perspectives. Table 1 illustrates the types of work products collected and analyzed.

Upon completing two rounds of independent and collaborative coding, we landed on two focal points to refine for future practice—the jigsaw reading strategy and the reflection folder routine. Not only did the preservice teachers' work in these activities help us to see the ways they articulated their experiences over time, but they are also useable in a wide range of teacher education coursework. The use of reflection folders and the jigsaw reading strategy was intended to build capacity for dialogic and collaborative learning and to facilitate a new understanding of difficult concepts. We are not making generalizable claims about preservice teachers' learning outcomes. However, we did note shifts in thinking around two themes: (1) building relevant relationships with students and their families and (2) valuing multiple

perspectives. Our action research served as a catalyst for future course revision and raised more questions for future study.

REFLECTION FOLDERS: BUILDING RELEVANT RELATIONSHIPS

We incorporated reflection folders for two purposes: to provide preservice teachers with a space to unpack new learning at the end of each session and to foster relationships with them. We also used the folders' content to provide feedback and, when necessary, adjust future lesson plans. The course employed instructional practices that promoted community building while aiming to raise critical awareness simultaneously. Course materials and activities were devised to highlight the importance of forging strong relationships between teachers and students. As the course progressed, preservice teachers consistently noted the importance of knowing students, building trust with students' families, and valuing student voices and viewpoints. The first theme centralized the importance of building relevant and authentic relationships across differences with students, families, and community members. Notably, the preservice teachers were still grappling with how to build out-of-school relationships with families and community members when the course ended, as noted in Beatrice's November entry below. She provides one example of how preservice teachers began to take up this work:

I want to be aware of my students' interest, backgrounds, identities, culture, and situations that they come from and use this to provide an environment of equity, and incorporate these things into the curriculum so that there will be a community of advocates, agents of change, and knowledgeable students in my classroom that can make connections, teach, and learn from each other. (Reflection folder, November)

This excerpt is informative for two reasons. First, it reveals Beatrice's thinking in November (near the end of the course). Second, it demonstrates that using a reflection folder provided Beatrice space to express and record her emerging thoughts. In this excerpt, Beatrice illustrated her belief that building mutually respectful relationships

could lead to the decision-making necessary to create equitable learning environments.

Reflection folders were a useful tool for preservice teachers to grapple with and generate new ideas. When asked about actionable goals for future teaching, Naomi made a connection between student interest and academic learning, stating, “Allowing students to bring up conversations themselves and rearranging the curriculum so that their voices can be heard” (Reflection folder, October). Naomi connects with Beatrice’s idea by emphasizing the importance of teachers listening to students’ thoughts and ideas. The excerpt also indicated that Naomi used the space of the reflection folder to express ideas about her future teaching. Our commitment to the reflection folder routine allowed us to monitor reflections over time, while simultaneously allowing preservice teachers to keep track of their learning journey. By the end of the semester, work products highlighted heightened priority for building relationships with their future students alongside academic learning. Additionally, preservice teachers sought to construct new knowledge *with* students and understand how to include student interests in educational decision-making.

In addition to expressing ideas about future teaching, the space provided by the reflection folder strategy highlighted the tensions and uncertainties that preservice teachers were grappling with. For example, Anna used her folder as a space to work through uncertainty: “Someone will not agree with you and think you are not a good teacher” (Reflection folder, September). The preservice teacher was responding to a reading that described the benefit of student input and choice. In contrast to the first two examples, this time the folder was a space to voice uncertainty and seek answers. Since reflections folders can be used as a way to record thinking over time, we could respond to Anna’s query and see how her thinking developed. Her entries evidenced a shift away from viewing relationship building as cursory to student learning. Further, we were able to pinpoint the reflection folder as an instructional tool that promoted a deeper understanding of relationship building.

JIGSAW READING: ATTENDING TO MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

The content of the jigsaw reading sheets shed light on the ways that preservice teachers demonstrated initial understanding of including multiple perspectives in both curriculum and instructional practices. Preservice teachers communicated about multiple perspectives in two ways. First, most indicated that considering students' ideas and knowledge is essential. Some preservice teachers also came to recognize that creating space for narratives outside of and/or counter to dominant cultural and historical narratives is also important. However, it should be noted that only two students shared ideas that actually challenged the ways the dominant narrative is circulated in schools. We point to the jigsaw reading strategy as an instructional pathway for guiding preservice teachers to understand multiple perspectives via text-based learning.

Our analysis showed preservice teachers began to value multiple perspectives connected through the reading of the Steffoff and Takaki (2012) text. After reading about immigration across a variety of contexts and timeframes, Shirley posed, "When thinking of immigration, we should examine history to understand the reasons for people's migration, support their integration into society, and address common consequences immigrants face once they arrive" (Jigsaw 3, September). This example indicated that Shirley grasped the complexity of immigration in terms of building social studies content knowledge and the myriad ways her students may have experienced this issue in their own lives.

Through the jigsaw reading response analysis, preservice teachers described how schools promote a dominant, Western perspective in both the overt and hidden curriculum. Based upon their reading of Mary Cowhey's (2006) text, *Black Ants and Buddhists: Thinking Critically and Teaching Differently in the Primary Grades*, preservice teachers began to identify ways to teach against the grain to make space for multiple perspectives. We also noticed that preservice teachers moved toward including students' background knowledge, experience, and identity in decision-making. For example, Kristen stated, "Students need to see their culture in schools. This should not be a

luxury or afterthought. Students can be challenged by many different types of reading, not only the classics of European white men” (Jigsaw 1, August). Kristen understood that content and materials should be representative of students. Further, Kristen realized that knowledge is constructed in different ways and that diverse forms of texts can be used. This proved a useful starting point for us as instructors for continuing to highlight materials that supported Kristen’s development in this area. Kristen continually acquired new academic content knowledge beyond what she had been taught throughout her PK–12 education. This connection came to light when we triangulated the jigsaw response sheet with notes taken during the jigsaw reading group discussion. And this, in turn, informed our decisions for future class sessions. We discuss the implications for our practices later in the paper.

IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

We found success with our instructional choices. Still, it is essential to unpack some of the challenges that we, as instructors, experienced while supporting preservice teachers’ deepening understanding of establishing relationships and including multiple perspectives in the classroom. Preservice teachers wrote about growth in their understanding of social studies content, critical pedagogy, and social justice education. However, they also identified challenges in teaching contemporary and historical social issues and often wondered how they would handle controversial topics that might surface in their classrooms. In this section, we provide examples of the difficulties reported in reflection folders and jigsaw reading sheets during the semester.

After reading Cowhey’s (2006) text, Naomi grappled with addressing poverty and homelessness with students in elementary school. She wondered, “How can you involve the students in age-appropriate social justice lessons? (1st-2nd graders)” (Jigsaw 2, September). This example confirmed our belief that the jigsaw reading strategy could be used for both content knowledge building and addressing the pedagogical development needed to engage justice-oriented teaching in elementary settings. The question posed demonstrated that while the content was salient, Naomi still needed support thinking through how to develop a justice-oriented teaching practice.

As we continued with this text, the second line of questions about how teachers could address inappropriate student comments surfaced. Preservice teachers often voiced concern that students would make harmful, politically charged, racist, sexist, and/or derogatory statements when discussing controversial topics. Throughout the semester, Marsha wondered how to understand her position around some of these topics and how to address them with elementary students. For example, when talking about ways to support students' democratic citizenship, she stated, "How do you deal with a child confronting you about their parents voting choice? Or even when they ask you about YOUR voting choice?" (Jigsaw 4, October). Marsha felt that schools were supposed to be neutral and that discussion of politics was difficult with young children. She was curious about how to reconcile this idea while still teaching the appropriate content and not silencing students. We used Marsha's excerpt to guide the class meeting discussion the following session and as a prompt for the next jigsaw assignment. For us, this demonstrated evidence that the jigsaw reading strategy could be used to deepen the understanding of critical pedagogy and course content.

Throughout the semester, preservice teachers read material defining the term *grassroots educator* as one who created authentic learning experiences that were based in critical pedagogy and justice-oriented education (Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce, 2014). As preservice teachers' understanding of this concept grew during jigsaw reading discussions, they brought forward discussion about the difficulties of navigating testing, state standards, and curriculum. They often wondered where the space for their own decision-making would come into play. Towards the end of the semester preservice teachers were acknowledging that understanding one's privilege played an important role in whether or not they discussed difficult topics. In addition, they began to understand that students were able to engage with complex texts and have meaningful dialogue about them with the appropriate instructional supports.

Unfortunately, when facilitating discussion around potentially difficult classroom conversations, we sometimes lost teachable moments.

In other words, there were missed opportunities to redirect or clarify preservice teachers' statements. For example, Jane stated,

Why do some teachers feel that the students might not understand the topics? Or why do they think something could be too hard for a student to understand? Isn't that what teachers are here for, to help students learn.... Teachers should not keep students from learning something because they think they will offend someone. Just think about what is the best way to teach the lesson and lead the discussion and it will work out. (Jigsaw 5, October)

Here Jane points out that some teachers carry preconceived notions that students are unable to have difficult conversations. The excerpt revealed a learning moment around teacher agency. Jane recognized that teachers make conscious choices about what to teach and in what ways. The quotation presented us with the opportunity to introduce strategies for addressing difficult topics with students. However, her statement that "it will work out" was a call for us to reinforce that teachers have the power to make purposeful plans—as opposed to leaving learning and engagement up to chance. To us, this exemplified that the jigsaw reading strategy supports more than reading comprehension and time management, two of the original intents for its use. In addition, the strategy can be used to build a trusting learning environment while tackling complex pedagogical issues, thereby revealing important teaching moments.

DISCUSSION

As anticipated, preservice teachers initially expressed discomfort when discussing systemic oppression, unearned privilege, and counterpoints about the negative impacts of capitalism. Discomfort grew as we practiced identifying dominant historical and cultural narratives pervasive in their schooling experiences. Over time, we supported preservice teachers' emotional responses and facilitated discussions around controversial materials and events. Through the guided use of reflection folders and the jigsaw reading strategy, we addressed complex pedagogical issues to inform our work as teacher educators. The discussion section serves two purposes. First, we share the ways we

enhanced the use of the reflection folders and the jigsaw reading strategy in subsequent semesters. Second, we unpack a nuance for exploration in future teacher research around addressing multiple perspectives with preservice social studies teachers. Over time and via the instructional strategies we employed, we, as instructors, were able to discuss students' shifts in thinking and make adjustments to our approaches. We revealed our planning processes to preservice teachers in order to make the connections between our practices and critical pedagogy clearer. Despite this, descriptions of potential application of practices remained elusive in the preservice teachers' work. As such, we realized the need to supplement content knowledge building with pedagogical awareness in more direct ways. We studied the use of recognizable instructional practices (reflection folders and the jigsaw reading strategy) to inform our work as teacher educators.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

Realizing the usefulness of reflection folders to track shifts in thinking, we recommend creating assignments that engage metacognitive activity by making the exercise more interactive. Each of us has done this separately in our subsequent courses. For example, Alarcón has implemented tasks requiring preservice teachers to monitor their learning by using the reflection folder as a learning artifact. Formative and culminating reflective writing assignments drawing from the reflection folder content were assigned at the middle and end of the semester. The goal was to use burgeoning teacher identity in dialogue with the experienced student identity to discover new and relevant learning related to understanding schooling from multiple vantage points. We aim to refine the process to bring in aspects of understanding how one's identity is situated within the sociohistorical context of schooling and how that matters for teaching.

Marhatta uses the reflection folder as a guide for writing a final learning reflection paper. In addition, she has systematized a method for giving ongoing feedback throughout the semester in order to build content knowledge. Using sticky notes, she models a way of providing feedback and engaging in written dialogue without disrupting the students' own flow. She highlights this simple practice as another way

to enact critical pedagogy in practice because it centralizes rather than overshadows the preservice teachers' voices.

Since the time of this study, our teaching contexts have changed in numerous ways. For example, Alarcón moved to a different university; Alarcón and Marhatta have both added additional courses to their repertoire; and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a major shift to distance learning at our universities. Reflection folders remain a relevant and useful instructional strategy for tracking learning, informing planning, and building relationships with students (particularly those who may be less vocal during class discussion). Currently, we are experimenting with online formats that have the feel of the physical reflection folder. This strategy also holds potential for creating sheltered spaces, in both face-to-face and remote learning environments, for addressing ongoing social issues and their inextricable ties to education.

The jigsaw reading strategy now includes prompts and small group activities that allow preservice teachers to practice and apply useful strategies to real-world classroom challenges. The initial intent for using the jigsaw reading strategy was to model a literacy method for integrating social studies content in a meaningful way. Much of the content used for jigsaw reading centralized multiple historical perspectives and was useful for widening preservice teachers' notions of social studies education. However, we came to realize the power of using this strategy as additional space for preservice teachers to develop a deeper understanding of the connections between culturally responsive teaching as a form of critical pedagogy and justice-oriented education. As such, we spend more time centralizing the ways that the key feature, dialogue with the aim of co-constructing knowledge, is a pathway to critical pedagogy in action. Further, experiencing dialogue about complex material is a useful scaffold for preservice teachers as they consider how their stances inform understanding. Moving to a distance learning model has presented challenges for incorporating meaningful dialogue during synchronous class meetings because physical distance compromises the dynamic of small group work.

TEACHING ABOUT MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Continued work with preservice teachers over the years has produced recurring questions around their readiness for pushing the boundaries of traditional elementary teaching, particularly regarding including social studies, due to perceived confines around curricular decision-making. The jigsaw reading work products gathered for this study revealed an important nuance to understanding multiple perspectives. As preservice teachers wrote about coming to understand historical narratives that were new to them, they also wrote about how their own perspectives came to bear in accepting or rejecting this new knowledge. As teacher educators, this realization is important because it provides a potential pathway for addressing uncomfortable learning moments early on. It opens the conversation around teacher agency and the power that teachers hold in the learning environment. Becoming acutely aware of one's own perspective, particularly while straddling new and well-known content knowledge, holds the potential for helping preservice teachers move beyond their comfort zones to embrace new learning and reimagine elementary social studies teaching. Further, it is imperative for teacher educators to understand how to leverage their own practices toward a deeper treatment of justice-oriented content and equity pedagogy. As teacher educators, it is crucial to recognize preservice teachers' resistance to difficult conversations that challenge the status-quo so that we can work together in the learning community to lessen ethnic, cultural, and linguistic biases that teachers carry with them into the classroom.

CONCLUSION

We have shared the ways we incorporated well-worn teaching strategies in teacher education to promote critical pedagogy and justice-oriented democratic education. Further, we have suggested ways to engage this work in teacher education so that preservice teachers learn how to examine complex ideas from multiple perspectives in order to carry out equitable public education. We live in an ever-evolving democracy that holds great potential but also suffers from legacies of oppression and violence. In order to reimagine a democratic society where citizens engage in civil disagreement with the goal of social

betterment, elementary education must become a space for teaching critical citizenship skills to our youngest learners. To accomplish this goal, preservice teachers need guided experiences with dialogue and reflection, two key tenets of critical pedagogy.

Action research allowed us to analyze our instructional practices and engage in reflective dialogue that pushed us to refine techniques for embodying critical pedagogy in teacher education. This study highlights the ways teacher educators can support preservice teachers to become adept with discussing pressing, complex social issues in their future classrooms. This work has hopeful implications for teacher educators (across content areas) as we reenvision equity pedagogy in a changing educational landscape.

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TABLE 1

UNIT OF ANALYSIS		DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY OF COLLECTION
Jigsaw reading responses and discussions		Preservice teachers were assigned different chapters and asked to complete a reading response template. Reading response templates were completed before class and during small and whole group discussions.	Five times throughout the semester.
Reflection Folder		After each class session, preservice teachers were asked to reflect on classroom content while making connections to their prior learning and future teaching.	Weekly, at the end of each class session.
Final Assignment	Integrated read aloud	Preservice teachers created an integrated read aloud lesson plan using culturally relevant texts.	Due at the end of the semester.
	Journey Box Project	Preservice teachers researched a social studies topic to uncover a counternarrative through primary and secondary sources.	Due at the end of the semester.
Student Survey Data		Preservice teachers were asked to share their understanding of social studies content, culturally relevant teaching, and social justice education.	Completed at the end of the semester.
Observation Notes		Marhatta regularly recorded notes during class sessions and small group discussions. Both instructors recorded notes during class meetings.	Weekly, during each class session.

