

“You Have to Reach Before You can Teach”: A Study of Teacher Candidates’ Journeys of

Community Teaching

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Abstract

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Initiatives to involve communities in preservice teacher education programs are not new. Neither are attempts to provide preservice teachers with experiences in communities. However, there are fewer research accounts of preservice teachers experiences in programs where teacher educators establish “equal status” (Seidl & Friend, 2002) partnerships and work towards solidarity with families and communities; the people who personally have the most at stake in public education. The dissertation, organized into three articles—one literature review co-written with Lorena Guillén and two empirical studies—presents analysis to illustrate the possibilities and institutional constraints that became visible as teacher educators and mentors from local families and communities worked together to prepare *community teachers* (Murrell, 2001; Murrell, 2015). It also presents recommendations about how teacher education programs can develop *sensitivities rather than calluses* (Cuban, 1969) and be (and stay) *conscious* (Coates, 2014).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My story really begins in the farmland of Ontario, Canada; the red dirt of Virginia; and in two small towns near Naples, Italy. My four grandparents arrived in Detroit, Michigan for economic and political reasons.

I am from my grandpa Henry who “interviewed” at GM. After standing in a line as long as the block he finally got to the end. He was asked if he knew how to work a machine on the assembly line. He said no, and was turned away. And, he got back in line and the 2nd time around, he told them yes.

I am from my grandma Stella who played Scottish bagpipes to wake up her daughters on the weekend for chores and rearranged all her heavy furniture using a baseball bat for leverage.

I am from my grandma Rose who swore after loosing her father and her husband at Detroit Steel that none of her five sons would work there.

I am from my grandpa Tony, also known as Frank, who after his son planted seeds in the garden off season, secretly planted fruits and vegetables from the shop for him to find the next day.

I am from parents who were the first in their family or generation to go to college and worked so hard for my brother and me.

I am from my brother who always felt that school was not for him and worked harder at it than anyone I ever saw.

I am from my uncles who always ask if I’m working hard and being good and I answer, “I’m a Napolitan. Is there any way of being?” And, they laugh.

I am from these people. I will be the first in my family to get a PhD. When I look back at where I came from, I hope I honor them with my own work and who I am in the world.

I sometimes feel that have been on an uncharted path as a doctoral student. In special education, yet, working in general education. A friend of foundations, but not in foundations. I am across many areas, sometimes without a home. For that reason, I see my dissertation as a work that spans across places – work that is informed by history, by culture, by experience, by who we are and what we bring to teaching.

I would like to thank Joe Jenkins for always being the same man who I met as a SPED/TEP student who stood in front of our small cohort and said, “I have been where you are before with other students. You can do this.” Your constant graciousness, kindness, humor, and curiosity define our experiences together. You are a model of the kind of teacher I work to be.

To Ken Zeichner, my unending gratitude for giving me, someone who nervously set up a meeting with you about family visits after Karen Harris’ suggestion, a chance to be a part of building a ‘strand.’ The ‘strand’ gave me an opportunity to see a real home for myself in academia in work that honors teacher candidates, families and communities through community teaching. Thank you for being an encyclopedic resource and for giving us all the chance to build something together that I believe really did make a difference.

To Nancy Beadie, who even with my FOF standing entrusted a course to me, one that had meant so much to me as a student myself. Who challenged me (and her other course attendees) to always see history, ever present and active, in education. History matters to teaching and teacher education. Also, whenever I start a course and bring the pile of books we will be using throughout the quarter, I will always give a referential nod to you.

To the other members of our team. I simply would not be here without you. Lorena Guillén, Michael Bowman, Kerry Cooley-Stroum, and Dawn Bennett. Jolyn Gardner, you are

awesome! A special thanks also goes to Karen Harris and Jill Heiney-Smith for being champions of us and the work we were trying to do, in so many ways.

My gratitude goes to all of my students who taught me so much. A particular thanks for the teacher candidates who were participants in this study. With so much coursework, teaching, and their own lives, the time they took to talk with me about their work and learning was deeply appreciated. I hope what I have written here honors who you are, what you bring, and what you taught me.

Also, I could not have gotten through this process without Mary Beth Canty who wrote with me as many days as we could meet for the final stretch and Alison Marti who encouraged me to finish and offered real support when I was ready to walk away.

Lastly to Amit Saxena and Sabine Saxena. My champions. For all the time I missed with our family to write this, and all the times I had to say I couldn't play, to you, Sabine, I tribute this work. Thank you, so much, for your love and support. Especially to Sabine who as a six year old, still has a lot of school to go through. I hope some of your education includes community teaching put forth by the teacher candidates in this study, and the love and honor the community and family mentors demonstrated in our collective work together.

DEDICATION

To Sabine.

And to all of the teachers in my life. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION

In questioning what traditionally has defined education, Howard Becker (1998) wrote, “Education, conventionally defined, consists of knowledgeable people teaching people who are less knowledgeable, and typically, not surprisingly, less powerful and less well placed (children or immigrants, for instance) and doing it in schools” (p. 143). Teacher education has similar parallels when looking at whose knowledge counts when it comes to the preparation of teachers (Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015). Including the voices of local mentors from families and communities in the teacher education program, which provides the context for the research in this dissertation, was an effort to broaden who was included in *whose knowledge counts* in teacher education.

The work of including families and communities in teacher education is tenuous and fragile; there also are fewer examples available to us (Broussard, 2000; Boyle-Baise & McIntyre, 2008; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Evans, 2013; Hyland & Meacham, 2004; Sleeter, 2001; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996; Zeichner, Payne & Brayko, 2015). Yet, these examples are of immense importance.

Every year as a coach/university supervisor of teacher candidates I had requests from teacher candidates to see a ‘different’ way of teaching. These requests were usually about seeing student-centered approaches with opportunities for experiential learning built in. I knew just the teacher, Nate (pseudonym), who *teaches against the grain* (Cochran-Smith, 1991). I had the pleasure of being his grade level teammate while I was still in the classroom.

During one of these observations, the teacher candidate, John (pseudonym), noticed that while the science lab was occurring, there was a student off to the side building an elaborate system out of Legos. John leaned over and asked what the student was doing. Knowing Nate and

his ways in the classroom, I suggested that we ask Nate after the lesson.

When we had a chance to sit down, John asked about the seemingly off-task student. Nate smiled and explained that the student builds. He then began to tell us about how this student had come to him at the beginning of the year, rarely engaging with anyone, or anything in the classroom. So a few days into the school year, as is his habit, he made a positive phone call home expressing to the family how eager he was to work with and get to know this student better. The parents, a bit taken aback by the positive nature of the phone call, soon began to engage with Nate as he questioned them. “What does your son like to do when he’s at home? What is he good at?” he asked. The parents replied, “He likes to build.”

So after that day, Nate worked to make building a part of the accommodation he could provide this student each day. If they were writing personal narratives, the student got to build “the set” and talk through this story. If they were working on ecosystems, as they were the day the TC and I visited, he built the system rather than drawing it in his science notebook. Through all this building, the student himself became known in the classroom for his talent and expertise. Nate remarked that it was a month before he really saw him interact with any of his classmates and the more he got to talk about building, the more a part of the classroom community he became.

Nate made a couple of interesting moves. He first had a belief system that kids deserve chances to engage in school in multiple ways. Nate was committed to the idea that students should have access to thought provoking and content rich curriculum. Nate worked each day to connect his instruction to his students’ lives, interests and experiences. He also knew, reinforced by his knowledge and experience as a parent that unless he asked, there was information that only families could provide.

In Mike Rose's (1995) *Possible Lives*, he wrote:

Public education is bountiful, crowded, messy, contradictory, exuberant, tragic, frustrating, and remarkable. We need an expanded vocabulary, adequate to both the daily joy and daily sorry of our public schools. And we are in desperate need of rich, detailed images of possibility (p. 4).

Rose's words could also describe teacher education. In that final sentence stating our *need for rich and detailed images of possibility*, also holds a call for us all to better understand possibilities happening in our programs, each day.

Particular to our work in the Community Teaching strand and other efforts like it, it was important to better understand: 1) how other research accounts discuss efforts to prepare teacher candidates who are positioned to work in respectful and collaborative ways with families and communities, and 2) how teacher candidates, in the program I was a part of, took up community teaching (Murrell, 2001, 2015). To that end, this dissertation is organized into three articles—prepared for journal publication—as an effort to address these areas:

Article 1—Towards solidarity: A literature review of partnerships with families and communities in preservice teacher education programs. This article was co-written with Lorena Guillén. We addressed these two research questions in looking at teacher education programs that partner with families and/or communities and/or local community organizations:

1. How are teacher education programs distributed across the three approaches of *involvement, engagement, and solidarity*?
2. What does the mediation of preservice teachers' experiences and the quality of relationships between the programs and communities look like?

Article 2—“You have to reach before you can teach”: A study of teacher candidates journeys of community teaching, is an empirical article accounting how teacher candidates took up community teaching in a variety of ways.

Article 3—Showing the seams: Teacher candidates’ experiences of programmatic tensions, is the second empirical article. It discusses several tensions that teacher candidates experienced in the program in relation to the Community Teaching (CT) strand.

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Towards Solidarity: Selected literature review of partnerships with families and communities in
preservice teacher education programs

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Abstract

In this review of 44 articles, focused on the last 25 years, examples of partnerships between families, communities, and preservice teacher education programs are categorized utilizing a typology that consists of three approaches named: teacher-family-community *involvement*, teacher-family-community *engagement*, and teacher-family-community *solidarity* (Zeichner, Bowman, Napolitan, Guillén, Bennett, Cooley-Stroum, 2015). Additionally the authors examine mediation, quality of relationships, and preservice teacher learning in a selection of studies demonstrative of each approach. This review crosses political and programmatic boundaries—political ones through the inclusion of literature from English speaking communities throughout the world, and programmatic examples from early childhood, bilingual, special education and general education teacher education programs.

Introduction

...it is imperative that universities and colleges recognize they cannot prepare multiculturally competent teachers without help. Communities can and must become integral partners in this effort.

—Barbara Seidl and Gloria Friend, p. 142, 2002

We began our own journey partnering with families and communities in a teacher education program in 2012. We were working as teaching assistants in a small team that also included a faculty member, a research assistant, and mentors from local families and communities in a university-based teacher education program. Our task was deceptively simple; consider ways to bring in voices from families and communities throughout our region to serve as community educators to preservice teachers enrolled in our elementary and secondary teacher education programs.

Given our experiences and perspectives as former public school teachers, working in collaboration with mentors and elders from families and communities in our area was a tremendous honor. However, tensions revealed themselves around hierarchical knowledge structures in the university where this work was situated. In a program already squeezed for time, tensions also arose about the value of collaboration and relationships between teacher educators and community and family partners.

In an effort to further understand this “rub,” as described by one of the community mentors, we researched similar efforts in the teacher education literature, locating 44 articles describing program efforts between communities, families, and teacher educators. We then categorized the articles across the community-based teacher education typology (Zeichner et al,

2015). In the Methods section, we will describe how articles were selected and classified. The typology consists of three approaches named: teacher-family-community *involvement*, teacher-family-community *engagement*, and teacher-family-community *solidarity*.

Teacher-Family-Community *Involvement* refers to actions teacher education programs take that are largely program centric, usually emphasizing historically school centric goals, like preparing preservice teachers for parent-teacher conferences. Families may be invited as guest speakers about a topic determined by the instructor or faculty member. Relationships are primarily one-sided, largely benefitting the program, and/or the preservice teachers themselves.

Teacher-Family-Community *Engagement* refers to actions teacher education programs take to collaboratively work with people in local communities including family members. Community members might be approached to speak about a common-book experience or to help set an agenda for a meeting, like one for an Advisory Council. Relationships are more beneficial to all involved parties in *engagement*, but most of the benefits from the work are to the program.

Teacher-Family-Community *Solidarity* refers to teacher education programs, families and communities coming together and making joint decisions about learning goals and experiences of preservice teachers. University-based programs, as the traditional home for preservice teaching, must take the lead in inviting communities and families into teacher education, establishing relationships of “equal status” (Seidl & Friend, 2002) and working together to disrupt dominant narratives and perspectives. Teacher educators and community mentors working in solidarity could co-construct a syllabus and co-teach a

course for preservice teachers. The work is determined together in a way that realizes mutually beneficial goals.

We engaged in this review as a way to deepen our own understanding of how teacher education programs have worked with families and communities. As teacher educators who are committed to working in solidarity with families and communities, taking the time to examine how programs have been able to design opportunities for the mediation and infusion of knowledge from families and communities while creating relationships of mutual benefit was an important step in our own work. Research suggests that mediation facilitates learning in community experiences (Sleeter, 2001) and that the quality of relationships matter to all people involved in the work (Zeichner et al, 2015); both can facilitate preservice teacher learning. To that end, we posed these two research questions to orient our examination of the literature:

3. How are teacher education programs distributed across the three approaches of *involvement, engagement, and solidarity*?
4. What does the mediation of preservice teachers' experiences and the quality of relationships between the programs and communities look like?

Methods

Data

Our examination of the research surrounding family and community partnerships in teacher education began with a search of the ERIC ProQuest database. ProQuest has a larger selection of studies as compared to ERIC EBSCO, and this allowed for more flexibility in our advanced search. After consulting a research librarian and trying a number of keyword combinations, we

settled on a Boolean selection of “preservice” and “community or family” and “partnership or engagement.” We were interested in more recent literature and limited our selection from 1990 to 2015. An initial search for peer reviewed articles yielded 311 articles. For the purposes of focusing on family and community partnerships, we selected subject filters to exclude articles containing “service learning,” “communities of practice,” “professional development,” “in-service teacher education,” “college faculty” and “faculty development,” narrowing the list to 145 articles.

We would like to add one note on service learning and our decision to exclude it from this literature review. Research has suggested concerns over the reciprocal nature of this work in teacher education (Donahue, Bowyer, & Rosenberg, 2003; Vickers, Harris, & McCarthy, 2004). Although Boyle-Baise and Sleeter (2000) have argued for a community-based service learning experience in teacher education and Zygmunt and Clark (2016) have reasoned for *critical service learning* (p. 14), this developing body of literature is beyond the scope of our current project. However, we included two articles that contained service learning elements (Abrego, Rubin, & Sutterby, 2006; Munter, 2004), because those elements were only one part of an entire set of experiences included in these programs.

Coding and Analysis

An initial reading of the abstracts reduced the number of pertinent studies from 145 to 73 articles. Upon a reading of the literature, we further eliminated 29 articles labeled “disqualified” or “not included” leaving our final count at 44 articles. Articles labeled “not included” were those that included family and community partnerships in their abstracts, but for which we determined that families and communities were not actually included in the study. We felt this

was an important distinction to make. For example, Dotger, Harris, Maher, & Hansel (2011), studied one university-based teacher education classroom where preservice teachers were given the opportunity to work with actors hired to portray “standardized parents” (p. 209). The use of “role play” was substituted for actual relationship that could have been cultivated between students and the families. In this example, relationships with families were only indirectly considered and we therefore categorized this study, and others like it, as ‘not included.’

Our search also yielded five programs we coded as Grow Your Own¹ (GYO) (Irizarry, 2007; Kitchen, J., Hodson, J., & Raynor, M., 2013; Pavel, Banks, & Pavel, 2002; Skinner, 2010; White, Bedonie, de Groat, Lockard, & Honani, 2007). In GYO teacher education models, people who live in the communities in which the programs are situated are significant decision makers in the program. GYOs seemed worthy of their own review. Given this, we identified these programs as beyond the scope of this paper.

It is also worth noting many of the studies included in this review, were conducted by teacher educators who studied their own practices. While there is a strong tradition of practitioner inquiry in research on teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2009), the preponderance of self studies points to the need for more variety across research, including more studies conducted by researchers who are not a part of the program being studied.

During our second round of review, the remaining 44 articles were individually coded into the three approaches: *involvement*, *engagement*, and *solidarity*. A third round of coding was completed to ensure inter-rater reliability. Though our approaches were pre-identified, codes

¹ “Grow your own” refers to school districts that partner with an institution of higher education to prepare paraprofessionals, school staff, or other members of the local community for the purposes of having them return as certified teachers in the district. This type of deliberate intervention has been in response to the racial, ethnic, and economic demographic mismatch between teachers and their P-12 students (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015; Bireda & Chait, 2011; US Government Department of Education, 2016).

were subjected to a constant comparative method of analysis to further define the features of each approach and to ensure greater validity (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). In order to further define each approach, we designated high and low values within them. These values are: a) Low: relatively lower mediation and consideration for what families and communities bring; and b) High: relatively higher mediation and consideration for what families and communities bring. We determined relationships and mediation were part of this high low value based on Sleeter's (2001) review of experiences for preservice teachers and the importance of relationships when engaging in work involving teacher education programs, families, and communities (Zeichner, et al 2015).

The results of our analysis are organized according to the two research questions posed in the study. After the analysis and coding of articles, the results from our analysis of the first research question were mapped onto a comprehensive chart showing the distribution of articles across the three approaches. In the results related to the second research question, we examined mediation, quality of relationships, and preservice teacher learning.

Results and Discussion

In this section, we discuss the results regarding our research questions. In response to our first research question, we begin by showing the distribution of the 44 articles across the *involvement*, *engagement*, and *solidarity* typology (See Table 1). In categorizing programs, we also noted: 1) the program settings where the 44 studies took place (e.g. elementary, SPED, or secondary teacher education programs) (See Table 2); 2) the range (e.g. higher or lower) in the *involvement* and *engagement* approaches; 3) the distribution of studies over the last 25 years (See Table 3); 4) how some experiences (e.g. home visits) occurred across approaches; and 5) the number of studies in *involvement*, *engagement* and *solidarity* including a typical example of each approach.

In response to our second research question, we present our results with respect to the mediation of preservice teacher learning, and the quality of relationships between the families, communities, and selected university-based teacher educators within each approach. We provide two brief examples of each approach. For the *involvement* and *engagement* approaches, we have examples of a low and high value. Within these two approaches, we designate a study as *low* value when relatively lower mediation and consideration was made for what families and communities bring. We designated it as *high* when relatively higher mediation and consideration was made for what families and communities bring. In the case of *solidarity* we also present two studies, but we found that the characteristics that contribute to *solidarity* are quite stable; that is equal-status relationships, are simply equal-status as well as high quality mediation. Therefore, no studies presented in that section are designated as high or low. Additionally we note preservice teacher learning when the article provides information on such outcomes.

I. How are teacher education programs distributed across the three approaches of involvement, engagement, and solidarity?

Table 1

Study Distribution Across the Community-based Teacher Education Typology

Study	Community-based teacher education typology		
	Involvement	Engagement	Solidarity
Abrego, M.H., Rubin, R., & Sutterby, J. (2006). They call me maestra: Preservice teachers' interactions with parents in a reading tutoring program. <i>Action in Teacher Education</i> , 28(1), 3-12.	√		
Allen, L.V, & Migliore, E. (2005). Supporting students and parents through a school-university partnership. <i>Middle School Journal</i> , 36(3),17-23.	√		
Bennett, T. (2006). Future teachers forge family connections. <i>Young Children</i> , 61, 22-27.			√
Bergman, D.J. (2013). Comparing the Effects of Suburban and Urban Field Placements on Teacher Candidates' Experiences and Perceptions of Family Engagement in Middle and High Schools. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 23(2), 87-112.	√		
Brett, P. (2014). 'The Sacred Spark of Wonder': Local Museums, Australian Curriculum History, and Preservice Primary Teacher Education: A Tasmanian Case Study. <i>Australian Journal of Teacher Education</i> , 39(6), 17-29.		√	

(continued)

Study	Community-based teacher education typology		
	Involvement	Engagement	Solidarity
Capone, A., & Divenere, N. (1996). The evolution of a personnel preparation program: Preparation of family-centered practitioners. <i>Journal of Early Intervention, 20</i> (3), 222-231.			√
Cianca, M., & Wischnowski, M. (2012). Collaborating with parents of students with disabilities. <i>Educational Horizons, 91</i> (1), 26-29.			√
Crim, C., Desjean-Perrotta, B., & Moseley, C. (2012). Partnerships gone wild: Preparing teachers of young children to teach about the natural world. <i>Childhood Education, 85</i> (1), 6-12.			√
Danko-McGhee, K. (2004). The Museum-University Connection: Partners in Early Childhood Art Experiences. <i>Art Education, 57</i> (6), 35-40.	√		
de la Piedra, M.T., & Munter, J.H. (2006). Creating links, "Atando Cabitos:" Connecting, parents, communities, and future teachers on the U.S./Mexico border. <i>The School Community Journal, 16</i> (1), 57- 80.		√	
Dentith, A.M., & McCarry, D. (2003). Community inquiry and curriculum development: A relevant education for teachers about the Vietnam war. <i>The Clearing House, 77</i> (2), 57-61. Donahue, D.M., Bowyer, J., & Rosenberg, D. (2003). Learning with and learning from: Reciprocity in service learning in teacher education. <i>Equity & Excellence in Education, 36</i> (1), 15-27.	√		

(continued)

Study	Community-based teacher education typology		
	Involvement	Engagement	Solidarity
Guojónsdóttir, H., Cacciattolo, M., Dakich, E., Davies, A., Kelly, C., & Dalmau, M.C. (2007). Transformative pathways: Inclusive pedagogies in teacher education. <i>Journal of Research on Technology in Education</i> , 40(2), 165-182.	√		
Hampton, E., Liguori, O., & Rippberger, S. (2003). Binational border collaboration in teacher education. <i>Multicultural Education</i> , 11(1), 2-10.		√	
Hedges, H. & Gibbs, C. (2005). Preparation for teacher-parent partnerships: A practical experience with a family. <i>Journal of Early Childhood Education</i> , 26, 115-126.	√		
Hedges, H., & Lee, D. (2010). 'I understood the complexity within diversity': Preparation for partnership with families in early childhood settings. <i>Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education</i> , 38(4), 257-272.	√		
Jacobbe, T., Ross, D.D., & Hensberry K.R. (2012). The effects of a family math night on preservice teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. <i>Urban Education</i> , 47(6), 1160-1182.	√		
Johnson, E.J. (2014). From the classroom to the living room: Eroding academic inequities through home visits. <i>Journal of School Leadership</i> , 24(2), 357-387.		√	

(continued)

Study	Community-based teacher education typology		
	Involvement	Engagement	Solidarity
Johnston, R., & Davis, R. (2008). Negotiating the dilemmas of community-based learning in teacher education. <i>Teaching Education</i> , 19(4), 351-360.	√		
Joseph, D. & Southcott, J. (2012). So much more than just the music: Australian pre-service music teacher education students' attitudes to artists – in-schools. <i>International Journal of Music Education</i> , 31(3) 243–256.		√	
Kidd, J.K., Sánchez, S.Y., & Thorp, E.K. (2005). Cracking the challenge of changing dispositions: Changing the hearts and minds through stories, narratives, and direct cultural interactions. <i>Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education</i> , 26, 347-359.			√
Klug, B., & Hall, J.L. (2002). Opening doors to wisdom: Working together for our children. <i>Action in Teacher Education</i> , 24(2), 34-41.	√		
Lee, R.E., Eckrich, L.T., Lackey, C., & Showalter, B.D. (2010, Summer). Pre-service teacher pathways to urban teaching: A partnership model for nurturing community-based urban teacher preparation. <i>Teacher Education Quarterly</i> , 101-122.			√
McDonald, M., Tyson, K., Brayko, K., Bowman, M., Delport, J., & Shimomura, F. (2011). Innovation and impact in teacher education: Community-based organizations as field placements for preservice teachers. <i>Teachers College Record</i> , 113(8), 1668-1700.	√		

(continued)

Study	Community-based teacher education typology		
	Involvement	Engagement	Solidarity
Mulholland, R., & Blecker, N. (2008). Parents and special educators: Preservice teacher's discussion points. <i>International Journal of Special Education</i> , 23(1), 48-53.		√	
Munsch, T.R., & Boylan, C.R. (2008). Can a week make a difference? Changing perceptions about teaching and living in rural Alaska. <i>The Rural Educator</i> , 29(2), 14-23.		√	
Munter, J.H. (2004). Teacher education in the borderlands: Schools, community, and education for social justice at UTEP. <i>Teacher Education and Practice</i> , 17, 279-298.		√	
Murray, M.M., & Curran, E.M. (2008). Learning together with parents of children with disabilities: Bringing parent-professional partnership education to a new level. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education</i> , 31(1), 59-63.			√
Murray, M., Handyside, L., Straka, L. & Arton-Titus, T. (2013). Parent Empowerment: Connecting with Preservice Special Education Teachers. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 23(1), 145-168.			√
Murrell, P.C. (2007). Toward a social justice in urban education: A model of collaborative cultural inquiry in urban schools. <i>Equity & Excellence in Education</i> , 39(1), 81-90.			√

(continued)

Study	Community-based teacher education typology		
	Involvement	Engagement	Solidarity
Patterson, K.B., Webb, K.W., & Krudwig, K.M. (2009). Family as faculty parents: Influence on teachers' beliefs about family partnerships. <i>Preventing School Failure</i> , 54(1), 41-50.	√		
Pohan, C.A., & Adams, C. (2007). Increasing family involvement and cultural understanding through a university-school partnership. <i>Action in Teacher Education</i> , 22(1), 42-50.	√		
Seidl, B., & Friend, G. (2002). The unification of church and state: Working together to prepare teachers for diverse classrooms. <i>Journal of Teacher Education</i> , 53(2), 142-152.			√
Sobel, D.M., Guierrez, C., Zion, S., & Blanchett, W. (2011). Deepening culturally responsive understandings within a teacher preparation program: it's a process. <i>Teacher Development</i> , 15(4), 435-452.			√
Staikidis, K., Rex, E., Aulisa, G., & Lim, M. (Jan., 2009). Learning outside the box: How Mayan pedagogy informs a community/university partnership. <i>Art Education</i> , 62(1), 20-24, 33.			√
Valadez, G., & Moineau, S. (2010). The ESL family science night: A model for culturally sensitive science education pedagogy. <i>International Journal of Whole Schooling</i> , 6(2), 4-18.	√		

(continued)

Study	Community-based teacher education typology		
	Involvement	Engagement	Solidarity
Wiseman, A.M. (2014). Documenting literacy in the community: Preservice teachers' engagement and learning with students outside of School. <i>Multicultural Education</i> , 21(3), 51-55.	√		
Woloshyn, V., Chalmers, H, Bosacki, S. (2005). Creating community-university partnerships in a teacher education program: A case study. <i>Alberta Journal of Educational Research</i> , 51(3), 246-260.	√		
Zygmunt-Fillwalk, E., Malaby, M., & Clausen, J. (Spring, 2010). The imperative of contextual cognizance: Preservice teachers and community engagement in the schools and communities project. <i>Teacher Education Quarterly</i> , 53-67.			√
Total	21	9	14

The articles in this review were categorized by matching design features to the definitions in our typology. Categorizing according to the typology helped us better understand the various ways that teacher education programs involved families and/or communities. In the following paragraphs, the five trends we saw are briefly discussed : 1) the program settings; 2) the range within approaches; 3) the time of publication; 4) how experiences (e.g. home visits) could occur across approaches (e.g. *engagement* or *solidarity*); and 5) the number of studies in each approach including typical examples of *involvement*, *engagement*, and *solidarity*.

Setting

Almost half of the reported partnerships, 20 of 44 articles, were in elementary or early childhood settings; eight were in elementary special education settings. Four out of the eight special education studies were also cross-listed in early elementary preservice teaching programs. By contrast, only three of the 44 studies were grounded in a middle or secondary school setting. Seven studies included both elementary and secondary preservice teacher education programs. Finally, a portion of the programs were subject specific: one focused on preservice art education, one was preservice music education, and five were located in either an English as a second language, bilingual, or bi-national preservice program context.

Table 2
Settings of Programs

Program Setting	Number of Studies
Elementary or Early Education	16
Middle/Secondary Education	3
Combined	7
Special Education*	8
ESL/Bilingual/Binational	5

Unknown	5
<hr/>	
Total	44

**Note: This number includes four studies also identified as early or elementary education*

The range within each approach

Studies could not always be easily categorized by singular approaches because some programs included elements that reflected both lower and higher level values in an approach. This was true for the *involvement* and *engagement* approaches. An example of this range within one study came from Pohan and Adams (2007), where they studied “mock” math nights aimed at providing opportunities for preservice teachers to learn how to involve families in the education of their children. Preservice teachers learned about the goals and purposes of math nights by first participating in a mock family night activity led by their instructor. They later worked alongside clinical professors to develop an activity for an actual math night developed for the hosting school. Although, the ultimate math night was attended by real families and students, family and community members were not involved in the planning. In summary, part of the experience did not involve real families and part of it did, thus it provided an example of a mixed situation within a single study.

Year of publication

There were very few studies about family and community based partnerships in teacher education in the 1980s and 1990s (see Table 2). However, there appeared a steady trend of growth in these studies since 2002 including 2010, where we saw the largest number of these studies (5). We can only speculate as to reasons for this, though we noticed that 2002 is coincidentally the year that the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law. NCLB

stipulated that 100% of students must be proficient in math and science by 2014, along with a focus on communication to families about school performance (NCLB, 2002). Epstein and Sanders (2006) also noted that groups like the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) began to incorporate standards for preservice teachers that require “a comprehensive and practical” understanding and knowledge of families, communities and schools. These policy shifts, and others not noted here, may have contributed to the number of studies seen in the last 10 years.

Table 3
Study distributions across 1990-2014 and the Community-based Teacher Education Typology*

Publication range	Number of Studies			Total
	Involvement	Engagement	Solidarity	
2014-2010	9	3	6	18
2009-2005	6	4	4	14
2004-2000	6	2	2	10
1999-1995			2	2
1994-1990				0
Total	21	9	14	44

*Note: As the selection of articles was completed in early 2015, our search results did not yield any studies published 2015.

Types of experiences across approaches

The kind of experiences preservice teachers had with families and communities were not related to the approach. For example, we found that cross-cultural experiences (e.g. placements in community based organizations) were employed by programs categorized as *involvement*, *engagement* and *solidarity*. Home visits were also found in the *involvement*, *engagement* and *in*

solidarity categories. And guest speakers were found in the *involvement* and *engagement* categories. That is, simply because a program included a particular kind of experience such as cross-cultural opportunity, home visit, or guest speaker, it did not predict the kind of approach.

Number of studies in each approach

In terms of the community-based teacher education typology, 21 of the 44 articles were categorized as an *involvement* approach. An example of a typical program in the *involvement* category was described by New Zealand researchers/teacher educators. This program supported early childhood educators through cross-cultural experiences in home-based education settings, early childhood education settings, teenage parenting services and new entrant classrooms (Hedges & Lee, 2010). The placements were mediated through a seminar led by a faculty member and the preservice teachers discussed their journals, where they kept reflections of their experiences. Preservice teachers in this study reported a better understanding of the complexities of diversity and the importance of partnering with families.

Nine articles were categorized as *engagement*. An example of a typical engagement approach is a study where home visits were part of a practicum course (Johnson, 2014). The course was part of an English-as-a-Second Language and bilingual teacher education program, in rural Washington State. Class time was devoted to preparing preservice teachers in “parental communication techniques, different strategies for setting up the home visits, and culturally appropriate interactions with culturally diverse families” (p. 366). Before, during, and after a home visit, students were asked to write a detailed reflection paper in response to a series of prompts. Course time was used for mediated reflection and remained consistent throughout the experience. After analyzing the preservice teachers’ reflections, the researcher found that: 1)

preservice teachers were still anxious and nervous, and often chose students who had experienced difficulties at school for their home visits despite discussions during the course to avoid focusing on children experiencing difficulties, 2) preservice-parent discussion topics began with academics, and 3) preservice teachers still reported home language was an obstacle, but suggested that bringing gifts or learning phrases in the home language helped to connect with families.

What categorized this study as *engagement* was the recognition by teacher educators that families have valuable things to teach preservice teachers in unscripted scenarios, where families were “the teacher” and preservice teachers were “the learners.” Johnson (2014) reflected that, “[i]n addition to alleviating pressure on parents, home visits simultaneously demonstrate the educators’ willingness to relinquish authority and learn from their students’ families and communities” (p. 363). This study, and others in *engagement*, also recognized that teacher educators partnering with families and communities is a way to erode “educational inequities” that have been institutionalized through schooling and society (p. 379).

Fourteen of the studies out of 44 were categorized as programs that operated *in solidarity* with families and/or communities. A typical example of *solidarity* was Bennett’s (2006) description of an Eastern Illinois University preparation program for teachers of early childhood students with special needs. Preparation for home visits first began with an in-class role-play, followed by instruction devoted to learning about listening, paraphrasing, and other communication strategies. Instead of one home visit, preservice teachers were required to complete 10 hours of family or community visits as part of a 16 week course on supporting families of children with special needs. The course was co-taught with a parent of a special needs student. Both instructors prioritized establishing trust when conducting home visits. As part of

the course, preservice students were required to complete a journal as well as create a family map for the student of their hosting family, a practice they were introduced to through the social work department. Finally, the instructional team offered guided learning, mentoring, and coaching throughout the 16-week course. The author reported that some families continued to be resources for preservice teachers after the semester was complete. After completing the program, PSTs reported, “A family may have a solution you have not considered. That is the beauty of a partnership” (p. 27).

II. What does the mediation of preservice teachers’ experiences and the quality of relationships between the programs and communities look like in selected programs?

The kind of mediation of preservice teacher learning and quality of relationships between preservice teachers and partnering family and community members (or between teacher educators and partnering family and community members) delineated the approach taken by the teacher education programs. The following studies highlight aspects of the three approaches (*involvement, engagement, and solidarity*) with respect to the mediation of preservice teacher learning, the quality of relationships between preservice teachers and partnering family and/or community members and ultimately to what preservice teachers learned when the authors included it. We describe two studies representing the *involvement* and *engagement* approaches that were selected to represent the range between the lower and higher ends of each approach. These values are: a) Low: relatively lower mediation and consideration for what families and communities bring; and b) High: relatively higher mediation and consideration for what families and communities bring. As stated earlier, studies categorized in the *solidarity* approach did not include such a range.

Involvement

In this approach, knowledge is program-centered and mainly of benefit to those who are part of the teacher education program. When families and communities are included, it is *for* informing teachers, rather than engaging in a relationship defined by mutual benefit, and trust. In examples of programs that were categorized as *involvement*, families and topics about families, were considered in the hopes of better preparing preservice teachers for working with families. However, families and topics about them were considered in ways that were defined by the teacher education programs, with little or no involvement from families themselves.

In a low involvement example, Norris'² (2010) study of in-class panels as part of a brown bag lunch series is an example of a lower *involvement* approach to working with families and communities. Though the series was a forum open for all of the university to attend, the primary audience for this program was a mandated course for early childhood education majors. In focusing on ways preservice teachers can understand families, a panel of five parents who represented different types of family structures were introduced as a way of moving “beyond the textbook” and bringing “families and preservice students face-to-face” (p. 48). The panel began with a powerpoint presentation and was followed by a moderated Q&A in which panelists answered a set of questions. The questions were determined by the teacher educator as a way to keep the panelists “on task” (p. 49).

After the panel, preservice teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire providing feedback to the program and to study the effects of the panel on preservice teacher learning.

² It is not mentioned in the article if the author, who was a faculty member at West Chester University, was also the instructor of the course where this panel took place. Norris (2010) described the attendees on the panel: “The primary audience for this particular program consisted of students in a class entitled Families, Community, and School, a mandatory class for early childhood education majors” (p. 49). There were also students in attendance who voluntarily attended the panel.

Norris found that the PSTs overwhelmingly enjoyed the experience and felt they benefitted from hearing from the perspectives of those with firsthand knowledge. Though the panel was deemed valuable, preservice teachers also noted the need for more discussion time. Preservice teacher journals, though reflective, were not used to deepen understanding through class conversation, nor did the structure allow for more time to interact with the panelists. There were no opportunities for dialog or strengthened relationships beyond the singular brown bag lunch.

In a high involvement example of the *involvement* approach, this study centered around an English Language Arts methods field practicum at a school located on a Native American reservation (Klug & Hall, 2002). The school was one of nine involved in a state-wide initiative to teach native cultures to both in-service and preservice teachers. Community elders were invited to speak to both in-service and pre-service teachers. The program also included opportunities to take an optional native language course. And preservice teachers completed their practicum in the reservation school. The authors specifically mentioned trust and mutual benefit with community as goals for the program, though much of the work was planned and directed by school administrators and university-based educators.

University-based instructors mediated many of these experiences with preservice teacher through in-class discussions. In addition, university-based instructors/authors provided professional development in culturally responsive teaching to preservice teachers and to non-native in-service teachers at the school. In this way, the relationships between the school and the teacher education program were strengthened, though there was “still much tension between the schools and the Native community in this area” (p. 38)(Klug & Hall, 2002).

The fact that the planning was done by the university-based faculty in both of these examples exemplifies the definition of involvement: relatively less equal status relationships between teacher education programs, families and communities and work that is primarily in benefit of the institution. Norris (2010) was lower in involvement given the attention (or lack thereof) to the knowledge families were seen to have—people who seemingly needed to be kept *on task* while visiting the class. For Klug and Hall (2002), although their work was based in the university, this study had more examples of efforts they made towards the inclusion of community knowledge through examples like the optional language course and the inclusion of community elders.

Engagement

Engagement between teacher education programs and families and communities involves a flipping of the traditional involvement script. Authors who described programs that we categorized as engagement also embraced the political positioning of teacher education programs that engage with families and communities, asserting, “that an empowered citizenry requires a new definition of education that combines community development, formal schools, and social change...” (de la Piedra, Munter, & Girón, 2006, p. 58). Another characteristic that led us to categorize a study as *engagement* was when families and communities had some control over what they shared with preservice teachers.

An example of a study at the lower end of *engagement* was a Special Education certification program for preservice teachers in Western Australia. In this study, a mother with a child who had special needs was asked to write up her story and share it with a group of preservice teachers (Forlin & Hopewell, 2006). The authors (it is unclear if they were the

instructors) argued that families should have an “equal voice” and that it was essential for teachers to gain a “fuller understanding” of the experiences and contributions every parent can make (p. 59). The visiting mother was part of an elective class for primary and secondary preservice teachers. In studying the written reflections of participating preservice teachers, the authors found that listening to story built empathy and increased preservice teachers’ knowledge of what families with special needs children face. However, the authors focused on the value this experience to preservice teachers, with a lack of attention paid to the relationship between preservice teachers and the parent who shared her story.

Hampton, Ligouri, & Rippberger (2003) provide an example of *engagement* at the higher end of the approach. The authors reported on a bi-national, border collaboration that functioned as a type of cross-cultural experience for preservice teachers studying at the University of Texas, El Paso and the Anapra School in Juárez, México. Anapra School teachers shared their lesson plans and participated in discussions, even providing food for the visiting preservice teachers. The local school principal gave tours and highlighted the cultural assets of the school and community. Meanwhile, visiting preservice teachers taught as guest instructors in classrooms and interviewed partnering teachers and local families. The partnership was intentionally aimed at preservice teachers’ learning from and honoring local knowledge, and seeing multicultural education through a global lens. In this example, preservice teacher learning was mediated by both their university-based and Anapra-based instructors, through coursework and discussions. This type of shared mediation was a result of the trusting and respectful relationship between the school and university-based educators.

Solidarity

This approach shares many of the same elements as programs using the *engagement* approach, however, we further defined *solidarity* as sustained engagement and mutually beneficial work for preservice teachers and families and communities — emphasizing “equal status” (Seidl & Friend, 2002) relationships. Partnerships working *in solidarity* not only transform the curriculum but sometimes the learning environment of preservice teachers. In this category, families and communities participate as equal partners with faculty and instructors in determining the content and the experiences in which preservice teachers take part.

We found little, if any range, in the degree to which *solidarity* was evidenced in programs within this category. Generally, features of these programs included clearly positioning of family and community members as knowledgeable, and in some instances these members officially taught or co-taught courses with university instructors (Capone & Divenere, 1996; Cianca & Wischnowski, 2012; Kidd, Sánchez, & Thorp, 2005; Winton & DiVenere, 1995). Teacher educators using this approach also talked with the community, listened to what they wanted and worked to co-construct opportunities that involved preservice teachers (Staikidis, Rex, Aulisa, & Lim, 2009; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, Malaby & Clausen, 2010).

A partnership between the teacher education program at Ohio State University and Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, and African American church in Columbus Ohio, provides an excellent example of the quality of relationships between university and their partnering families and communities (Seidl & Friend, 2002). This study was co-authored by both university and community based partners. In describing the nature of their partnership, they emphasized: “...commitments we have to building a mutually beneficial relationship, and the challenges and promises in nurturing trust and attempting reciprocity” (p. 142). Community wisdom specifically regarding antiracist teaching was shared in co-planning meetings. The idea of reciprocity was

very important for researchers, university-based faculty, and community leaders at Mt. Olivet. For example, it was recognized that the community provided “invaluable learning experiences” as well as helped to “mediate those experiences” (p. 147), while preservice teachers provided assistance in the operation of Mt. Olivet programs. Part of the mediation included regular response journals completed by preservice teachers. In addition, the Mt. Olivet community and OSU faculty regularly met with preservice teachers to discuss issues and to help mediate their experiences during the internship. Preservice teachers also committed two to three hours a week for the entire academic year completing an “equal status, long-term, cross-cultural” (p. 148) community-based internship. They worked alongside Mt. Olivet adults to plan and implement programs for children within the community.

An important feature of this program was how the university understood they had to build trust in their relationship with Mt. Olivet church. Teacher educators entered the partnership knowing they were entering a space where the “constant demands of negotiation within a racist society [were] held at bay” (p. 145). This required the university teacher education program representatives to nurture a relationship that worked to “transform damaging social relations” (p. 145). A key finding in this work was the importance of equal status relationships between preservice teachers and the adults at Mt. Olivet Baptist Church. Seidl and Friend (2002) explained:

Equal-status, cross-cultural experiences place students not as helpers within a context but as learners and participants in a community that is not essentially dependent on their service. Within our partnership, this experience is embedded within an equal-status relationship between the university and the community. As partners, we come together in a mutual dependency, each with different needs and contributions to pursue particular

and common goals. No one partner holds the monopoly on knowledge, and no one partner is placed in the role of receiving charity from the other—each brings an expertise that enriches the other (p. 149).

The University of Vermont’s Early Childhood Special Education graduate program and “Parent to Parent of Vermont” (a community-based organization [CBO]) provides another example of relationships grounded *in solidarity* (Capone & Divenere, 1996). The authors of this study are a university-based faculty member and a parent from the CBO. This program at the University of Vermont featured co-taught courses with faculty and parent instructors, families who mentored students during home visits (20 hours of contact over a semester), and families who supported practica, served on advisory boards for the teacher education program, and recruited and mentored new families to support preservice teachers in the program. Consideration about the quality of the partnership appears to be at the forefront. In addition to an equal status relationship, the program included a practicum course that met every two weeks and was devoted to preservice teacher reflection and mediation.

Capone and Divenere (1996) stated their goal for preservice teachers was to “...prepare family-centered practitioners by providing students with opportunities to learn with and from families” (p. 223). The authors continued: “...if we expect students to believe that families are valued consumers of and competent partners in the design, implementation, and evaluation of early intervention services, it is essential that the program model this belief by establishing true partnerships with families” (p. 225). The authors found preservice teachers felt that inviting parents to guest lecture was essential. The authors further elaborated: “In addition to having parents tell their stories, however, interns report that having parents co-teach certain sections of the course content provides a critical perspective” (p. 229).

Summary

Ultimately partnering with families and communities in university-based teacher education led us to a number of takeaways. Attention to the nature and quality of the mediation for preservice teachers and to developing trusting relationships with family and community partners, was related to preservice teacher learning. The addition of reported mediation, whether through, debriefs, journals or class discussion, led not only to positive experiences for preservice teachers, but also to an appreciation of the experience, relationships, and the people who were engaged in the partnership.

When looking at articles that were categorized as *involvement*, we found that studies tended to focus solely upon communicating or connecting with families and communities within the pre-existing structures. In this approach, teacher educators primarily defined the parameters of the relationship between the program and the families and communities, rather than entering a mutually beneficial relationship. Mentors from families and communities were engaged as a service to teacher education programs, preservice teachers or teacher educators. The missing care and effort in building relationships also provided an interesting wrinkle in looking at *involvement*. Many of the programs in this category clearly recognized the importance of teachers partnering with families and communities by virtue of inviting families and communities to participate, yet teacher educators remained in the *involvement* category themselves as the relationship between the program and the families and communities was one-sided.

Programs using an *engagement* approach in partnerships, worked to incorporate the knowledge of families and communities into their programs. Though the parameters of

relationships in the engagement approach were still primarily defined by programs, these programs attributed value to the knowledge of partnering families and communities. Preservice teachers were instructed or supported in listening to and honoring this knowledge through critical debriefings, reflections, or course assignments. Families and communities who were engaged in partnerships with teacher education programs at this level worked within the traditional public school framework, but were given choices or had more of a voice within the partnership.

Finally, partnerships were coded as working *in solidarity* if they worked toward mutually beneficial goals, made room for authentic experiences, and valued developing trusting partnerships with families and communities. These partnerships often included an orientation in teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers to challenge inequity in family and P-12 school relationships. In these partnerships, families and communities were involved in the decision-making process about teacher education programs or the partnership work. Teacher education programs working towards solidarity sometimes began with prioritizing the needs or goals of partnering families and communities.

We hope this article informs teacher educators who are interested in developing partnerships of trust and mutual benefit with local communities in which their programs exist. We also hope this review provides valuable insights for teacher educators simply considering their options in doing this work. We believe that despite very practical programmatic limitations of time and funding, decisions about the mediation of preservice teacher learning, space for building quality relationships, and the overall design of programs, matter very much.

It is our stance that when teacher education programs work *in solidarity*, they work for the benefit of communities and families. As programs work towards solidarity with families and

communities, they not only consider preservice teacher learning, but also the experiences and wisdom of those outside of the university structure who support preservice teacher learning. For those considering working towards *solidarity* in family and community based teacher education, we offer the following implications for future research.

Implications

In considering partnerships with families and communities, our findings suggest the following implications for family and community based teacher education programs and research on these partnerships.

First, most of the studies were self-studies conducted by the teacher educators whose programs were the subject of the research. As the majority of studies in our review were self-studies, we would have expected the programs to model community and family based practice in the classroom. The field would benefit with more studies from researchers who were not personally involved in the programs of focus. Also, many have called for research on the effects of family and community based teacher education beyond preservice teacher education programs into P-12 classrooms. For example, in their study of preservice teachers' perceptions of parental involvement, Jacobbe, Ross, and Hensberr (2012), found that the planning and implementation of a family math night had no lasting effects on positive perceptions of families one year after the program ended. There is a lack of studies on the long-term effects on pre-service teacher learning once they graduate from their preservice program.

Second, our analysis revealed a tendency for more early education and special education-focused projects to *engage* or work *in solidarity* with families and communities. Evans (2013)

also found this to be true, and this indicates a need for studies on secondary and general teacher education programs that work in solidarity with the families and communities.

Third, some of the ways in which teacher educators choose to take up this work was concerning to us. Seven of the 29 studies that we initially identified as part of our review and then coded as “not included,” included programmatic elements that disregarded the knowledge, hopes, and dreams of families and communities. Upon closer examination, these studies did not involve families and communities, despite claiming an interest in doing so or stating the importance in working with them. These claims, paired with experiences like role plays or hiring actors to portray parents, were concerning especially if these were the only ‘exchanges’ in a program between preservice teachers and ‘families.’ It is critical for teacher educators to model for preservice teachers how they partner with families and communities in mutually engaging and authentic work.

Fourth, while pre-service teacher learning is important, programs working towards solidarity with families and communities must acknowledge that the experiences and learning of the family and community members matter. In working towards preservice teacher learning, teacher educators must avoid taking advantage of partnering families and communities. Concrete ways to work in solidarity with families and communities include attention to spaces for critical mediation of preservice teachers’ learning experiences, as well as mutually beneficial and trusting relationships.

Finally, creating partnerships between teacher education programs working in solidarity with families and communities remains a challenge. Given the small number of studies our

search yielded about teacher education programs working with families and communities, it is evident that this type of work is not prevalent in teacher education programs in the United States.

Limitations

We have categorized the literature based solely upon the information in published, peer-reviewed articles and cannot know completely the full depth beyond what is presented. Some of the indicators for which we were looking may have been missed as some articles provided in-depth descriptions, while others focused on particular elements over others.

Another limitation was in our keyword search. We recognize that our selected keywords may not have matched the keywords chosen by researchers to identify their respective work in educational database.

Our analysis was intentionally limited to peer-reviewed, published research, and as such we recognize that much of the research in teacher education is written from a predominantly White academic perspective (Sleeter, 2001).

This review was intentionally limited to university-based programs that often work within constraints, both logistical and socio-historical, of the university structure. Each of the 44 studies in this review is situated within a college or university teacher education program. Although roughly one-third of new teachers come through non-university routes, most of those pathways as well as the traditional university-based programs are still affiliated with schools of education where preservice teachers still take coursework (Feistritzer, 2011). In the shifting contexts of teacher education programs, the study the family and community partnerships will remain a challenge to the field.

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“You Have to Reach Before You can Teach”: A Study of Teacher Candidates’ Journeys of

Community Teaching

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Abstract

Wisdom from families and communities has been largely absent from the content of teacher education programs in the United States. Efforts in an elementary teacher preparation program to bring this knowledge forward, was part of the context of this study. This paper focuses on several teacher candidates and the multiple ways they engaged with their students as ‘community teachers’ (Murrell, 2001): their efforts in partnering with families, tying knowledge of families and communities to curriculum, and challenging personal bias. Their engagement resulted in a deeper understanding of themselves, their students, and their work as teachers.

Introduction

Public education is bountiful, crowded, messy, contradictory, exuberant, tragic, frustrating, and remarkable. We need an expanded vocabulary, adequate to both the daily joy and daily sorrow of our public schools. And we are in desperate need of rich, detailed images of possibility.

—Mike Rose, p. 4, 1995

The research presented in this paper provides insights into how teacher candidates engaged and connected with *community teaching*. Murrell writes that community teachers, “draw on richly contextualized knowledge of culture, community, and identity in their professional work with children and families in diverse urban communities” (p. 4, 2001). Understanding the experiences of teacher candidates in programs that incorporate knowledge from communities and families into teacher preparation, is an area not well explored. Although teacher candidates are not in classrooms of their own (Soder, 2004), they too, like teachers, are “competent, capable individuals,” who, “can, and do, effect change” (p. 278)(Caro-Bruce, Flessner, Klehr & Zeichner, 2007) and their work in this area is important to understand. Using Ladson-Billings’ idea of “success models,” in *The Dreamkeepers* (p. vii)(1994), the cases included here focus on the efforts and reflections of several teacher candidates who explored community teaching by partnering with families, tying knowledge of families and communities to curriculum, and challenging personal bias.

When I was a teacher candidate, I too, needed the “detailed images” that Rose references to inform my teaching. Over the years, as I have taught and coached teacher candidates, I have found them to be thirsty for examples of what they can do as they are learning to be teachers in their own classrooms. Learning to teach can be tangled, purposeful, exhilarating, and devastating. And, the belief in possibility is important, even essential during this vulnerable time—where one is not yet an expert and is learning what it means to be a teacher (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

There is also a critical need for examples of teaching in ways that include knowledge from families and communities to provide alternatives and possibility. In November 2015, many news-watchers in the United States saw a video of a child in high school, who was violently removed from her seat by a school security guard because she refused to give up her phone. What are the implications of this for us as a country? As school leaders and teachers? As people learning to teach? And, as teacher educators?

What if the teacher in the video had been given the support and the mediation to better understand the context where the child was coming from? To know himself in relation to the student? To better know who the student was, to be trusted by her, to be connected to the community she saw herself a part of? What would that take? Like Svokos (2015) who cited Zeichner in her examination of the treatment of this student in relation to the importance of emotional learning, I argue that teacher education has a place in addressing these questions.

With teacher education programs considering ways to keep themselves relevant—some of them questioning how to develop authentic connections with the communities they send teachers to—it is crucial to examine how knowledge from families and communities can become an authentic part of a teacher education program. My research contributes to this literature by exploring how candidates engaged in community teaching. Additionally, the work presented here provides detailed examples for candidates of what is possible and while also providing insights for teacher educators who may, or already are, doing this work with future teachers.

Literature Review

There are several issues to keep in mind when considering authentic inclusion of knowledge from families and communities in teacher education. Community experiences in teacher education have occurred in varying degrees and for different purposes (Anderson & Erickson,

2003; Buck & Sylvester; 2005; McDonald, Tyson, Brayko, Bowman, Delpont & Shimomura, 2011). Across general education and special education, schools can be seen as the adversary of children and families through their deficit views of students (Harry & Klinger, 2006). Literature also suggests a need for a shift from the more traditional paradigm of “natural enemies” between families and schools (Waller, 1932; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003) to “natural allies” (Hong, in process).

Despite different efforts programs have made to address these areas, there have been too few opportunities to implement and study the inclusion of knowledge from families and communities. Recently, Zeichner, Payne, and Brayko (2015) posited that not enough attention has been given to the question of “whose knowledge should count in teacher education” (p. 123). While community schools are well underway, “...efforts to prepare teachers to work in them are almost non-existent” (p. 310)(Boyle-Baise & McIntyre, 2008). Others state the importance of teacher candidates having the opportunity to get to know the communities in which they work and the families of the children they teach (Gallego, 2001).

Programs that have been able to integrate knowledge from families and communities often remain on the periphery in their Schools or Colleges of Education, scrambling for time and money within teacher education programs that are already squeezed for both (Sleeter, 2001). Programs that have existed and have been able to honor knowledge from families and communities in various ways are sometimes categorized as Community-Knowledge-Centered (Hyland & Meacham, 2004) or as working in solidarity with families and communities (Zeichner, et al, in 2015). Explorations of these programs can provide a better understanding of candidates’ experiences in learning about the communities in which they teach and about how to work with their students’ families.

In the Cardozo Project in Urban Teaching (later the Urban Teacher Corps and then later the National Teacher Corps), teachers met with students and families outside of class time. These visits were not without pitfalls, but Cuban (1969) reported that the knowledge teachers developed of the children, their families and communities, began to trickle into how the teachers related to them and even began to influence their curricular choices. “The community can be an effective teacher” (p. 266)(Cuban, 1969).

The American Indian Reservation Project (AIRP) sponsored by the School of Education at Indiana University provided a semester of support in addition to a semester-long student teaching immersion on an American Indian Reservation in the southwest United States. Mahan and colleagues (1983) agreed that the work of the teacher candidates in this area should have a direct outcome for students in the classroom and when it did, it was often because the teacher candidates experienced a move toward understanding that students are not individuals located within the four walls of the classroom, but also part of a family and community unit. It is important to note that community teacher educators were also part of this work.

Other projects with similar outcomes to the AIRP and the Urban Teacher Corps are: the “Banneker History Project” involving Indiana University, the Banneker Community Center and the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)(Boyle-Baise, 2005); Ohio State’s teacher education partnership with an African American Baptist Church in Columbus, Ohio for Multicultural Apprenticeships (Boyle-Baise & McIntyre, 2008); the “Schools Within the Context of Community program,” which results in an 18-credit quarter-long experience developed with community mentors at Ball State University (Zygmunt, Clark, Clausen, Mucherah, Tancock, 2016); and “Step-Up,” in the “The Chicago Teacher Pipeline,” an urban education summer internship sponsored by Illinois State University, which includes a

home-stay with host families while candidates have a practicum in a summer school, coursework, and a placement in a community based organization in the neighborhood of their host family (Lee, Eckrich, Lackey & Showalter, 2010).

Scholars agree that teacher candidates involved in these opportunities further develop an asset view of the children they are teaching and their families, have opportunities to work with funds of knowledge, and gain a deeper understanding of culturally responsive teaching. There have also been a number of historical examples of how teachers and school leaders—not without professional risk—consider their students’ experiences, utilize community knowledge, and built relationships with families.

Historical Portraits

Historical portraits of how teachers and school leaders have honored knowledge from families and communities remind us that there is very little that is new in education. They also ask us to consider that, “some old ideas deserve new life” (p. 325)(Boyle-Baise and McIntyre, 2008).

Clarence Three Stars

Clarence Three Stars of the Oglala Lakota tribe was a teacher at the Pine Ridge Day School in the Indian School Service (Andrews, 2002). Three Stars, who was first mentioned in 1895 Indian education records, taught in a day school as part of the United State’s re-education program of American Indians. This day school was located on the reservation, as opposed to the boarding schools located away from the Indian American communities. Three Stars spent about thirty years educating students and serving his community. In his study of the Pine Ridge Day School and the Oglala’s tribe efforts against assimilation, Andrews described Three Stars as “a voracious learner, superb teacher, and tireless advocate for his people” (p. 421).

Away from the far-reaching hands and eyes of the government due to the isolation of the Pine Ridge Day School, Three Stars was able to provide support to his students, or in the words of Cochran-Smith (1991), teach “against the grain.” Utilizing the home language and familiar cultural practices of students, he created bridges as they learned the required content. He did this by connecting the new words he was teaching his students with familiar objects and practices from the students’ lives, rather than the foreign and unfamiliar items displayed in the government provided textbooks.

Officially, it was something that was not allowed. He consistently found himself in a position of insecurity—not only as a teacher who employed these methods, but also as an Oglala teacher in a system largely made up of Whites. Andrews (2002) wrote that Three Stars continually risked his job by employing the methods he developed of “more nuanced techniques that drew from the local physical environment and traditional Lakota pedagogy” (p. 422).

N.L. Dillard

From 1933-1969—during a time of condoned segregation—Principal Dillard anchored Caswell County Training School (later Caswell County High School), located in rural North Carolina (Siddle Walker, 1996). Through his forty-year tenure, Dillard guided and supported a segregated school steeped in excellence and deeply supported by the families and community. CCHS also disrupted the more dominant narrative about the quality of segregated schools.

Caswell County High School was forged with Dillard’s leadership. The school was successful in the involvement of its African-American families and the richness of its curriculum and abundance of extracurricular activities. Stark contrasts between school funding existed, based on whether they supported African American students or White students. Yet, this school

was able to provide for and support its students through the support of families and communities with Dillard's leadership.

Dillard was a visible presence in town, the community, homes of families, and at churches. Siddle Walker described instances remembered by her interviewees of the walks Dillard would take throughout town, going back and forth for different tasks, and greeting everyone on the way. He did not just take the time to talk to people, "he knew how to talk to people" (p. 83). A former student and parent said, "You could relate to him" (p. 84). Others agreed he was able to put people at ease, not using his education to set himself apart. Dillard was "someone who could talk to them on their level and someone they could look up to" (p. 85).

Dillard encouraged his teachers to have a presence and be a part of the community. He asked them to go to church where their students and families attended services and to also visit the homes of their students. Dillard told his teachers that, "If you could see the circumstances out of which the children have come, you would understand better how to teach them" (p. 87). Interviewees reflected that "the teachers' and principal's presence within the community was one of the two-points most closely associated with how they felt about the school and why they maintained the involvement they did. The other point—worthy of discussion of its own—was the way teachers and principal proved to them they were genuinely interested in their children" (p. 91). This caring demonstrated by the members of the school staff was reciprocated by the families in the way that "home trained" their children, creating "invisible support" to the school, its staff and principal.

The literature that exists around the work of honoring the knowledge families and communities bring to teacher education, and to teaching, suggests that these efforts make an impact. It is not without risk or without potential disruptions to knowledge hierarchies, but it can

and has created change, and provided access for those who have been a part of it. It is worth a “closer look” (O’Connor & Jenkins, 1996).

Methods

This study sought to understand how teacher candidates, who were prepared in a community knowledge orientated teacher education program, engaged in *community teaching* (Murrell, 2001). In this paper, I will discuss how engaging in community teaching gave teacher candidates an opportunity to partner with families, bring knowledge from families and communities into curriculum, and challenge their personal biases. In my second paper, I will discuss how engaging in community teaching created several tensions for teacher candidates and the program in which they were enrolled.

This paper is part of a larger research project funded by the Boeing Foundation, the Seattle Foundation, and the Spencer Foundation, which included exploring the impact of the Community Teaching strand on teacher candidates’ positionality, sense of purpose as teachers, practices, and the experiences of community mentors in the Community Teaching strand. I was a co-designer and co-instructor of the Community Teaching strand. As part of my position, I taught the entire cohort of elementary teacher candidates in the 2013-14 school year, getting the chance to observe and know them a little better as students and pre-service teachers. It also gave me the opportunity to plan and implement opportunities with community mentors who partnered with us in the strand.

My Role

As a co-instructor in the seminar, where the Community Teaching strand was primarily housed, and a co-designer of the strand, I was a participant observer. This provided a number of

advantages and limitations (Geertz, 1973). To address the challenge of my position in the work that I am studying, I employed several different checks. As I reviewed the, themes that emerged in my analysis, I consulted with the members of the Community Teacher strand research team. I discussed the emerging themes with the participants as member checks. I also triangulated themes by using multiple data sources from our larger research project (e.g. comparing my themes with findings from focus groups that did not include the three participants for this study).

Participants

An integral part of understanding how teacher candidates engaged in community teaching was selecting teacher candidates for study who were interested in becoming community teachers. I utilized a purposeful sampling strategy of unique sampling defined by Merriam (2016) as, “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 96). The 3 participants were part of a 65-member elementary teacher education cohort. They were identified from the existing data from the larger research project as being: 1) interested in community teaching, 2) in a placement that would support or at least not hinder that interest, 3) in a placement that reflected the teacher education program’s statements about the demographics in its placement schools (e.g. “high needs”), and 4) were representative of the variation of the teacher education program’s population in regards to gender, ethnicity, age, and prior experience.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection took place during the 2013-14 school year. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the teacher candidates (three per candidate) and their cooperating teachers (one per cooperating teacher) throughout the year, at particular moments in time (e.g. after the beginning of the school year, before full time student teaching, after the completion of full time

student teaching). I also had many informal conversations with both the teacher candidates and their cooperating teacher and spent time building trust and rapport. I spoke with several parents that were involved with the candidates who worked in the school or had their child in one of the candidate's classrooms. I engaged in ten observations per candidate and made field notes during classroom observations, and while attending after-school events, celebrations, and school-wide functions. I attended school functions where candidates participated and also informally observed them. I collected lesson and unit plans, photographs, and teacher candidate created materials (e.g. surveys, assignment write ups). Formal interviews were recorded and transcribed.

To understand how the teacher candidates engaged in community teaching, I drew upon the tradition of interpretive research (Erickson, 1986) to “make the familiar strange” (p. 121). This allowed me to understand what was happening and specifically describe the details of those interactions. I used the analytical conception of *whose knowledge counts* (Zeichner et al., 2015) to understand how knowledge was picked up and adopted in teaching by the study participants. Considering *whose knowledge counted*, enabled me to examine how teacher candidates were using, for example, the knowledge gleaned from their students, their families, and communities in their teaching, which is a central tenet of *community teaching*. Specifically, the orientating categories used in the analysis were the participants' 1) engagement with families, 2) engagement with and/or knowledge building about the communities that were a part of their placement at Blakeview Elementary³, 3) demonstrated openness and reflection of their role in relation to the students and families they worked to serve, 4) curricular design and instruction moves connected to community teaching, and 5) comments connected to their own sense of their cultural, political, and racial identities, particularly in relation to their own students. Lastly, I also

³ All names presented here are pseudonyms

left space for other themes to come forward in the analysis that I hadn't planned for, which is the topic of my second paper.

I analyzed the data on an ongoing basis for, “[w]ithout ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming” (p. 171)(Merriam, 2009). I hand coded the data where I identified themes based on the orienting categories. I triangulated field notes with interview data and collected artifacts. These cross-references were compared and categorized into themes in order to triangulate the data and generate claims.

Coding strategies were aligned with Seidel and Kelle (1995, pp. 55-56) summarized by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), which include: (a) noticing relevant phenomena, (b) collecting examples of that phenomena, and (c) analyzing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures.

In addition the codes, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) were looked at as the, “‘stuff of analysis’ (p. 56), allowing one to, ‘differentiate and combine the data you have retrieved and the reflections you make about this information’” (p. 27)(Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

Contextual Considerations

The study participants were teacher candidates enrolled in a 4-quarter graduate Master's in Teaching program with a focus on K-6 education and were placed at the same elementary school, in different grade levels, with experienced mentor teachers. The school site was part of a partner school network of Mountain City University, a large research university located in Mountain City in the Pacific Northwest. In the following sections, the city, university teacher education program, and school context are briefly described.

Mountain City, Teacher Candidate Placements, and University Contexts

The racial and class geographies of Mountain City and its suburbs were initially shaped by White “settlers” forcing the local indigenous tribe outside city limits, stripping them of their ancestral home and practices. It continued with generations of racialized federal policies and local practices such as mortgage insurance policies, restrictive covenants, exclusive zoning, gentrification, and real estate steering (Singler, Durning, Valentine & Adams, 2011; Thrush, 2007). As a result, most schools serving students of color are concentrated in the central, southwest, and southeast sections of the city and in the districts south of the city.

Participants were placed at Blakeview Elementary located in the southwest region of Mountain City, where 79.2% students qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch, 20.5 % for Special Education (including two self-contained SPED classrooms,) and 36.8% of students qualified as Transitional Bilingual (OSPI, 2014). During 2013-14, the school had 374 students and included a more prevalent Latino (39%) and Black (26.5%) population. Other ethnicities were Asian (12.6%), Asian or Pacific Islander (13.6%), Two or More Races (7.2%), White (12.6%), and American Indian or Alaskan (1.1%). The school referred to itself as a Full Service Community School (FSCS) because of its onsite health clinic, and specific wraparound supports available to students. Blakeview Elementary also supported family engagement and home-school connections, specifically with a home visit program, which, they referred to as “family connection visits.”

The participants were teacher candidates who were part of a cohort-based 4-quarter, 63-credit, graduate program, which offered a Master’s Degree in Teaching. This program consisted of coursework and practicum placements. During the 2013-14 academic year there was an enrollment in the program of 65 teacher candidates (TCs). The percentage of the ELTEP students

of color in this cohort was about 36% (TEP, 2014). When the demographics are disaggregated, the percentage of different groups in the cohort were: African American: .02%; Asian: 28%; Native American: .05%; Latino: 8%; White: 58%. Coursework included several methods courses, a course in social foundations, learning sciences, differentiated instruction, classroom management, and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. Time in their student teaching practicum consisted of three weeks for the September Experience, then one day a week when Fall Quarter began, three days during Winter Quarter, and five days (full time) during Spring Quarter. Also, part of the program consisted of a social-political strand called the Community Teaching (CT) strand.

The framers of the strand were faculty, graduate students (which, I was one), and community organizers who were founders of the Family and Community Mentor Network (FCMN). The strand also ran in Mountain City's elementary and secondary programs. A critical feature of the strand was that these founders of FCMN served as co-planners along with the university-based teacher educators and created opportunities to connect candidates to the wisdom of families and communities. The definition of community teachers, which was presented to the teacher candidates, came from Murrell's (2001) framework:

Community teachers draw on richly contextualized knowledge of culture, community, and identity in their professional work with children and families in diverse urban communities...Community teachers have a clear sense of their own cultural, political, and racial identities in relation to the children and families they hope to serve. This sense allows them to play a central role in the successful development and education of their students (p. 4).

Grounded in the principles of *community teaching* (Murrell 2001, 2015) and *learning to teach against the grain* (Cochran-Smith, 1991), the CT strand was understood by its framers as political work and explicitly attempted to incorporate marginalized perspectives, voices, and knowledge from those who had the most at stake in public education: families of the students in K-12 schools and community mentors. The CT strand existed in the elementary and secondary programs (see Figure 1).

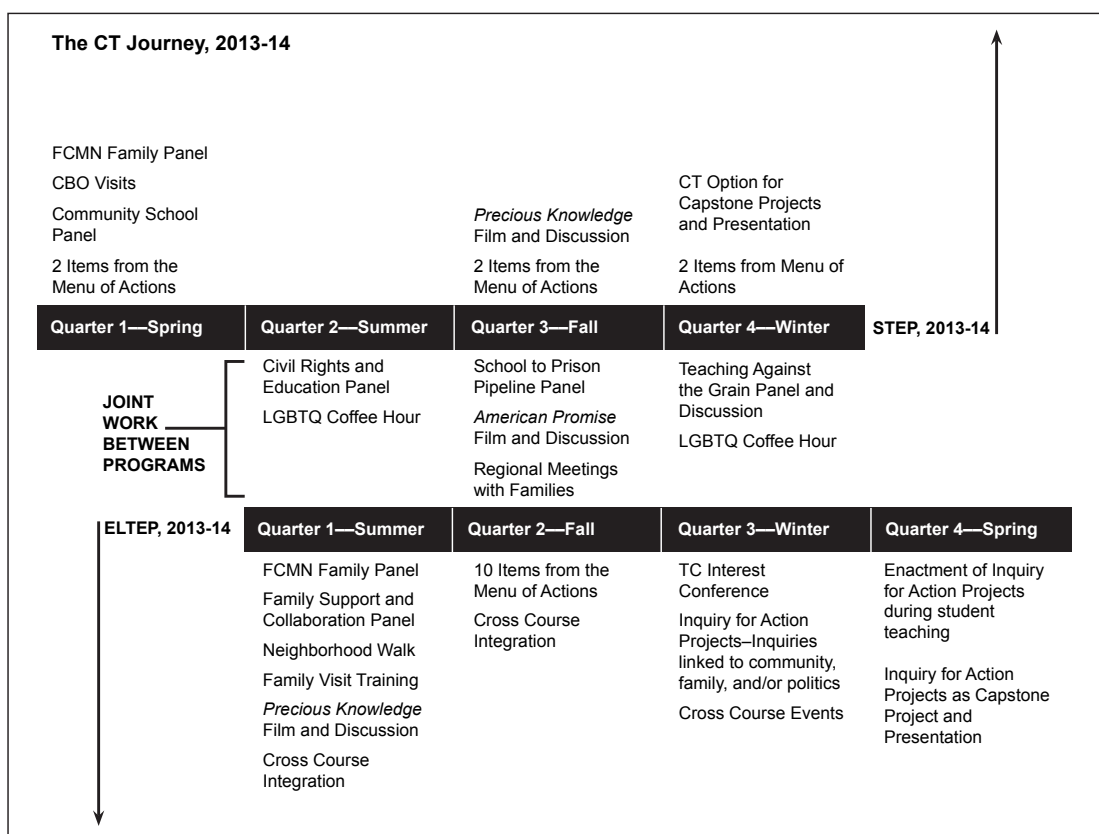


Figure 1. The elements of the Community Teaching strand within 2013-2014 elementary and secondary programs.

The CT strand operated primarily in a seminar course that met at various times during each of the four quarters. It included opportunities to connect with families and communities through panels, in-class discussions, regional conversations with families, with time to debrief in

classes with university-based and community-based instructors. There were also aspects of the strand that were picked up by particular courses, namely social foundations and learning sciences. There were also “touch points” in the differentiated instruction and classroom management courses. Another important part of Community Teaching strand was an action research assignment. The only criterion that was required for the action research was connecting it to families, communities, and/or politics. Students identified their question at the beginning of their third quarter (Winter) using the rest of the quarter to research and revise it. They implemented their action research during their fourth and final quarter (Spring). The projects were mediated through the seminar with the support of the instructors, particularly faculty and the field supervisors. How teacher candidates took this project up varied.

Findings

This paper discusses examples of how teacher candidates engaged in community teaching. In my second article, “Showing the seams: How exploring community teaching revealed programmatic tensions for teacher candidates (working title),” I will also discuss additional findings that reveal some of the difficulties learning about and in engaging community teaching yielded.

In the next sections, I introduce the candidates and their mentor teachers. Following this, I provide a brief overview of the CT strand and then I describe the major themes that reflected the experiences of the three candidates.

The Teacher Candidates and Mentor Teachers

Pari

Pari was a teacher candidate who had spent her early years in a refugee camp and immigrated to the United States with her family from Southeast Asia. Pari described herself as a kid who grew

up in Section 8⁴ housing in the neighborhood adjacent to Blakeview Elementary. Resulting from the trauma her family experienced by living through a war, she particularly saw school as a safe place. Pari immediately empathized with the families of her students and sought to connect with them based on her family's vulnerability as immigrant refugees. She had worked for several years as an instructional aide and tutor in various schools and other education settings. Pari was placed with Anthony, a White kindergarten teacher who had taught for almost ten years, and demonstrated in conversations and observations to be extremely open and reflective about his practice. He collaborated closely with his grade level team and specialists. I frequently observed him being approached by and talking with families before and after school.

Olivia

Olivia was a White teacher candidate who had always wanted to be a teacher and came from a family of teachers. She had taught English to adults abroad, was fluent in Spanish, and had most recently worked as a Special Education paraprofessional in a nearby school district. She originally hailed from the southern U.S. Olivia identified the expectations around politeness and conservatism she grew up with to be the cause of some inner tension when discussions about race in the program and placement came up. She displayed a certain willingness to be uncomfortable when it came to community teaching. She was placed in a 4/5 split classroom with Marie, a veteran White teacher who had a passion for teaching reading and writing. Marie spoke informally about how she was more reserved about connecting with families and communities but was supportive of Olivia's interest and efforts.

⁴ Section 8 housing is rent assistance for low-income qualifying families.

Mateo

Mateo was a Latino teacher candidate, originally from South America. He had begun his career in finance but decided to alter his path after a life-threatening illness. Spending his formative years in South America and near New York City, coupled with his outlook from experiencing a serious battle for his health, Mateo found himself often at odds with what he perceived as the culture of “nice” in Mountain City. Mateo was placed in a 5th grade classroom with Jesse, an award-winning veteran teacher of color. Jesse worked closely with the families of his students. During one of our conversations, Jesse showed his cell phone to display the phone numbers of his students’ families as he frequently texted parents and guardians to keep them informed. Mateo strongly identified as a community teacher. He even used that title as his e-mail signature, which was one of the first things Jesse noticed about him.

Community teaching in action: a brief overview

Community teaching had been introduced to the candidates during the first quarter of the program and it continued to be discussed in each subsequent quarter. The strand drew from Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model, which says that environments inform childhood development along with understanding that interactions occur between the environment and the individual (Garbarino, 1982). Hong further applied the model by directly connecting it to family engagement in schools (p. 30, Hong, 2011) The introduction to the CT strand in the elementary program, began by examining the knowledge outside the classroom but still within the school. Candidates began their journey by listening to individuals who worked in schools but were not classroom teachers. These people often actively linked home and school and had positions like bilingual translators, family advocates, and counselors— positions that are often considered auxiliary or peripheral in school settings. As people who could “speak school,” but still remain

slightly on the outside, they served as an important introduction to candidates who often came to the program having given very little thought to working with parents, let alone including knowledge from families into their own work as teachers (Zeichner et al., in process).

Gradually, candidates were able to have ideas about community teaching (Murrell, 2001) reinforced through the words of the family and community mentors: the importance of examining their racial identities in relation to those of their students; how they should consider ways to authentically connect with families as a way to begin to connect school and home; and, to think about how and what they teach as a way to bring forward and celebrate “the genius” of families and communities.

Pari, Olivia, and Mateo engaged in community teaching in a variety of ways. They expressed different comfort levels with varying aspects of it. For Pari, the focus of her work was to connect with families, examine her biases, and their role in the classroom. By contrast, Mateo took more of a curriculum focus while also considering families in the design of a culminating writing unit on poetry. Olivia, who perhaps felt the most uncomfortable in engaging in community teaching, pushed herself in a variety of ways to engage with families and worked on relationships among students in her placement classroom. Despite Olivia’s level of discomfort, she recognized the importance of families and continued to engage with them. Olivia reflected on the importance of this engagement in connection to her experience of listening to family and community mentors as part of the CT strand: “You’re teaching kids and kids have families.”

Pari: Seeing herself, seeing her students

Pari was consistently reflective about the importance of connecting with families. She frequently asked in our conversations, “How can I be a support to my families?” The first thing she always talked about was saying hi to the families in the hallway. “It’s really important to acknowledge

that they're there." As a student teacher, Pari made positive phone calls throughout the year and attended home visits with her cooperating teacher, which were part of a state legislative initiative for kindergarten interventions at Blakeview Elementary. Pari shared that her relationships with parents often "came from me just asking about how [their] day was going and I think that really—Like I said, parents see the effort that you put. It goes a long way."

Her efforts in connecting with families were not only recognized by her peers but also by her mentor teacher. Anthony reflected, "She seemed genuinely interested in the other families and what their situations were and talking about their kids. She came across as a real booster for their kids, a real advocate. I think parents really liked that." When it came to family engagement, Pari was also well matched with her mentor teacher. They shared the belief that families were important and both were open to learning more and striving to do better, particularly with harder to reach families. When talking about Anthony, Pari said, "My CT, he's such a personal person, too. He is really good with connecting with families and making them feel valued and appreciated. Just the way he talked to them was great to view that."

In Pari's case, her struggle in connecting to community teaching was something she had not been expecting. She shared:

I grew up in [a neighborhood adjoining Blakeview Elementary], and I've been around diversity my whole life...I really thought I had this whole teaching thing figured out, especially with working with diverse students. Then I went to Blakeview Elementary and I figured, 'You know, I was kind of wrong.'

Pari continued to talk about how she was placed in the kindergarten classroom. Overall, she connected with and really enjoyed the students she was working with, with the exception of two boys. "I found myself getting more and more frustrated with them, getting really annoyed at

them for not meeting my expectations.” She reflected back on those initial interactions describing how she labeled them as, “bad kids” and how they wouldn’t “do well in this classroom because they can’t follow directions.”

Pari shared how attending a panel and discussion focused on the School to Prison Pipeline, which was part of the Community Teaching strand, really disrupted this thinking for her:

When I went there and the panel, once they started talking I started thinking about my two kids and how I had these labels for them. These two Black kids, who just can’t follow directions, they can’t follow my expectations. Then I realized that this could be a reality for them, the School to Prison Pipeline. Then I knew I needed to stop the way I was thinking—this trap that teachers can easily be in, of thinking these kids are just bad and they just can’t follow directions. I don’t want them to be judged by their teacher. I didn’t want them to be jaded by school and not being supported by school...

After the panel, Pari began to ask herself how she saw her students and how to build on their assets. She talked about being able to “hone” their activeness. She developed, as part of her action research, a set of interventions with the two students that included: sticker charts, frequent check-ins, lunch dates, regularly communicating with the families, conducting positive phone calls when set goals were reached, and building her rapport with the two boys. In fact, while I was there observing one day, one of the boys came up to me as I was sitting in the hall watching the class walk by. He puffed up with pride in his tiny oxford shirt, smiled at me and said, “Did you know I get to call home today because I am doing such a good job?”

Focusing on what she called “the good,” was affirming. “It allowed me to see that there are going to be some really difficult kids, but how can you change your own view of them? ... I

can change my own view by seeing them in a positive way.” She started these interventions by communicating with the families on a regular basis.

Her mentor teacher Anthony praised Pari’s work with the students, considering how she admitted, “‘Wow, I was defeated and I was doing the wrong thing and I was not being a good teacher. I did this and am doing much better,’ which, I think that kind of honesty and integrity is really difficult to process.” He continued that her work “helped” him too, and the two boys were “actually disappointed” when she wasn’t at school. Pari noticed both the change in herself and her students and what relationships with students could do. She reflected:

I think they were more excited to be around me. I would love to think every child loves to be around me, but I think just building that relationship really allowed them to see that I was a part of their team.

In summary, Pari’s was a case of examining her own identity, understanding her bias and addressing it in order to better serve two of her students. Teaching students who she felt did not share her respect for school given the importance it had in her life, was challenging to Pari. Particularly because in her own words, she thought she had, “this whole teaching thing figured out, especially with working with diverse students.” Her examination of this bias and how she addressed it with the two boys, gave her opportunities to see them in new ways.

Olivia: Overcoming fear

For Olivia, addressing the fear of engaging with families was something that she worked hard to overcome. She likened talking with families to speaking Spanish in her world language and Teaching English as a First Language (TEFL) coursework. She was reserved in nature and eager not to make mistakes. Olivia directly linked her learning of the importance of talking to families and overcoming her fear, to the CT strand and hearing from families.

These parents [who have come into our classes] have told me I need to be calling my parents and having positive connections with them. I knew that I needed to call, and engage with them positively. That was one of the things that was top on my list. It's hard, and I'm still scared of doing it, but I found a way to make it something I could do.

Olivia reflected that many in the school had told her that she was working with the toughest class at Blakeview Elementary. As she considered her own learning and the work she wanted to do with her students around their own community, she first considered introducing topics around race and ethnicity. But then she came to realize that despite it "being an issue that we deal with" at Blakeview, she needed better relationships with students and families. She decided to have a classroom celebration that the students would plan and facilitate with her and her mentor teacher's support. By successfully engaging in this task, communicating with families seemed more do-able. She revealed:

That involved calling to introduce myself and invite parents to an event in our class, and compliment their kid [positive phone calls were part of her action research]. That went over really, really, really, well. I mean they really liked to hear that. I think that at least for a while, made even the parents who felt a little stand-offish, feel a lot more comfortable with our class, and happy about their kids.

Having a reason like a classroom celebration to call families helped give Olivia an "authentic reason to contact them." And, although the idea for the celebration came from Olivia and her mentor teacher, the students "loved" it and came up with four committees to plan the "food, decorations, the electronic program, and invitations." When Olivia polled the students the day of the celebration to see who would be coming, she counted 75 people. "I'm like, 'It looks like we're going to have 75 people in our classroom'...but at the event we had over 80." In a

school where traditional parental involvement was low, the attendance demonstrated to Olivia that families would come to the school when presented with the right setting.

When Olivia looked back on her goal of building classroom community, she saw a positive difference in her students after the celebration. She used climate surveys throughout the year in her student teaching as a way to gauge how the students were feeling in class towards each other, herself, and the mentor teacher. After the event, she saw an improvement in the students self-reporting whether they felt respected by each other and their teachers.

Olivia shared with me two examples from that evening, which moved her and other students. One of her students who was chronically tardy and got herself up each day to walk to school had a particular job that evening, and she showed up 30 minutes early with her little cousin in tow. Olivia shared, “Her mom wasn’t able to come, but she brought the person that she was caring for and it was really moving to see.” Some students perceived this student as not being as “capable.” Olivia commented that this student brought in a dish that evening that “all of our families really enjoyed and he received a lot of compliments...I think that really affected how he felt in the class.”

Early on in Olivia’s interviews with me, she recognized the value of building community and how important she felt it was:

Having [the classroom] be a place that’s safe and everybody feels like they have a place. They feel welcomed ... and everybody has a stake in them being a part. Of course we have things to work on, and we’re always getting new students, which makes it a lot harder, but, yeah...yeah. If you don’t have that, you don’t have anything.

Olivia also recognized the importance of students and families having positive relationships with school and educators. She understood her responsibility as an educator in the power dynamic

between teachers, students, and families. She saw the historical pattern of disenfranchisement and recognized that, “[t]his pattern doesn’t start in secondary school. It starts in elementary.”

Olivia and Marie, her mentor teacher, had a good working relationship and Marie gave Olivia room to try aspects of community teaching in her classroom. Marie shared with me what it was like having a teacher candidate who was mindful of community teaching:

Learning about what was happening between students, underneath what was happening in the academic and social level was really important. And, having a teacher candidate in the classroom that is steeped in the importance of social justice really helps the classroom teacher put her lens on other aspects of what’s going on in the classroom community.

Olivia was aware that as a White teacher in a school largely made up of students of color, she had to take extra steps to build trust with students and their families. In some ways, the responsibility instilled through the strand, inspired more trepidation. When Olivia considered how to approach families, she really wanted to get it right. She persevered in being open to what she could do in the classroom. Olivia strived to find new ways to bring in parents and guardians into the school, as a way to genuinely connect with them and see children in new ways.

Mateo: Connecting families to curriculum

Early on, Mateo saw curriculum as a way to bring in elements of community teaching. His mentor teacher, Jesse, gave Mateo a particular amount of freedom when it came to developing short units and choosing elements to share with the students, as long as Mateo could align it to his grade level Common Core State Standards. Mateo took the opportunity to be deliberate in his curriculum choices, connecting standards and published curriculum to themes aligned with community teaching. During his first quarter with Jesse, Mateo developed a mini unit on *Americans You Might Never Have Heard Of*. During the weeklong unit, Mateo shared books

about different people of color through interactive read-alouds focusing on particular literacy skills. Mateo read about Cesar Chavez, Ruby Bridges, and a fictionalized experience about Native American boarding schools in the book *Cheyenne Again* (Bunting, 1995). He also provided contextual discussions about this book because it is not without controversy). From the beginning, he clearly linked community teaching to being a culturally responsive teacher.

I think that's another big part of it, like having them see who they are, and that's why I think the culturally responsive teaching is so important, huge, hugely important for social justice in a sense that zip code shouldn't determine how smart [students] are considered to be...

Mateo connected this kind of teaching to who he was and his own experiences growing up. Mateo told me when he began his studies at Mountain City University that he did not know terms like community teaching, social justice, or CRT. He didn't know about family visits. He continued:

All I had was an idea of how I had gone to school, some things that had worked, some things that had not worked and kind of what I saw as far as being a teacher...and really kind of gets going just based on who I am and how I informed myself and the values that my mom taught me...all those tools that I got.

When Jesse reflected on his first impressions of Mateo, Jesse said, "He definitely came in with more of a sense of who he is and what he wanted out of the teaching program." Jesse continued that Mateo, "absolutely embraced the notion, saw himself as a community teacher and demonstrated it."

Mateo explicitly talked about community teaching as "bridge" work. Mateo shared how that connected to his own teaching:

[Community teachers are] like bridging the gap, bridging the gap...finding every single way I can bring that together...just finding ways, it would be like [this to parents], “Hey, this is your place, too, so come on in...pick up your kid one day, why don’t you come by and see the kind of work they worked on....”

Incidentally, in one of Pari’s initial meetings with me she talked about how community teaching was a way to “bridge home life and school life.” This clear vision Mateo had of the kind of teacher he wanted to be and how he saw *bridging* being a part of that role, helped define another curricular opportunity. Mateo designed a *Where I’m From* unit as part of the poetry unit he was teaching for Writers’ Workshop. He specifically designed a questionnaire along with the students for them to use to interview a family member. As a modeling lesson, Mateo Skyped with his mom in New York during class using the protocol the class had developed. When Jesse looked back at the unit, he commented:

I thought it wound up being tremendous... the process that the kids went through was solid and beneficial and engaging, meaningful for them. He successfully connected with families, and that was something that he really wanted to do...The power of the poetry, the power of kids getting to know each other, getting to know their families, getting to know about other families and cultures, it was phenomenal. That was his greatest success, I thought, this year.

Parents also reflected on the poetry. A mom who attended the poetry-publishing event after school which Mateo had planned for his action research, talked about how reading the poetry of the students gave her better insights into the kids. She appreciated having that knowledge. Another parent talked about how the interview between her and her daughter presented an important opportunity:

That is another great thing that [Mateo] has done for us, for our family. You know, right now that [my daughter] is in a change. She is growing and she doesn't want to talk that much with me. And, because of [Mateo], we were able to create a conversation, to create a conversation between me and her.

Mateo developed curriculum as a way to represent students and their ethnicities' historical and cultural contributions. He bridged this curriculum in a meaningful way to the experiences and histories of the families of his students. Not only was their knowledge included in an assignment that was publicly shared, it also cleverly gave families a chance to connect with their older and more independent children.

Conclusion

Teachers are trained by institutions that all too often sharpen differences and build calluses rather than sensitivities.

—Larry Cuban, p. 257, 1969

Teacher education programs have an obligation to the communities they are attempting to serve. This includes a critical focus on historical experiences that have shaped communities and contributed to the perspectives of the people within them. It includes the crucial understanding of how trust is not automatic and schools are not seen as inherently safe. And, it is important to know who we are teaching in teacher education. Considering who our teacher candidates are and developing differentiated approaches based on their strengths and areas of growth is an important step in their preparation as community teachers. Community teaching requires something different from us and it begins in the recognition of our collective humanity; in our need to be understood, valued, recognized, seen, heard, and respected as contributors.

Pari, Olivia, and Mateo's experiences were not unique. These cases are a small part of the larger research project that investigated the Community Teaching strand. In an optional survey

that was part of the larger study, 41 students responded out of 65, providing a 63% response rate. Of the 41 respondents, 35 reported using community teaching in their placements from occasionally to daily. Representative comments from this group of 35 included:

TC 1: Any time that I interacted with families, which was everyday, I brought with me pieces of relevant information from the family panels in the CT strand. I considered how my families might feel welcomed or not in the school setting, and I thought about how to make my families feel welcome in my classroom.

TC 2: I feel like the CT strand helped shape my interactions with students and families--I could be very intentional in the topics and relationship-building I pursued with them. I also knew at least some of the resources and places that were important to my families/students. In teaching, I made as many references as possible to what kids already knew based on their personal and cultural backgrounds--I selected writing prompts and contextualized math problems to draw on their values and/or prior knowledge. I used local resources and expertise to shape the social studies unit so that it aligned with the priorities of the community I was teaching about. I viewed this way of teaching as a political act. I know there is more to do in terms of involvement with the community and families but what I did was a step in the right direction.

TC 3: I talked about local community events around the school's neighborhood. For example, Lily Pond Park and the YMCA are really close-by, so I would invite students to share those experiences. I also spent some time walking around the neighborhood to be more familiar with the community resources.

This data suggests that teacher candidates across the elementary program engaged in various ways with community teaching. The cases presented in this paper, along with the brief historical portraits, pinpoint something that many candidates are hungry for, and some have not even considered: That investing in community teaching, creates new and exciting possibilities. Instead of going into communities to “save” children despite their families, teachers enter communities ready to learn from and with families. It becomes less about what families and communities can do for schools, but transcends into what schools, families, and communities can do together.

In the Fall of 2015, Dr. David Stovall, a faculty member at the University of Illinois at Chicago in educational policy and African American studies—who is also a volunteer high school social studies teacher, spoke at a local conference in Mountain City where he emphatically addressed the crowd: “if teachers cannot speak to the truth of students lives, students will reject the content that is put before them” (2015, October). The sentiment he shared was similar to what Pari, Olivia, and Mateo heard from the co-founder of the Family and Community Mentor Network, “You have to reach, before you can teach.”

Pari, Olivia, and Mateo all attempted in various ways to connect with the children who were entrusted to them, and their families. Through the vignettes presented here, we see people who are in very vulnerable situations as teacher candidates. In reality, they are guests in other peoples’ classrooms, attempting to wrestle with who they are, and what they bring in relation to how they see and include families and communities in their work while learning what it means to teach. The three of them provided us with examples of what might be possible for other candidates who are vested in community teaching.

There is a danger here too, of creating one-size-fits-all-tools (Zeichner, 2012) for community teaching, Olivia could have practiced a script, or worked with an actor (Khasnabis, Goldin & Ronfeldt, 2015; Sawchuk, 2016) any number of times. However, from these exchanges she felt a genuine connectedness with family members of students in her classroom. This encouraged Olivia to continue to reach out to families. This authentic connection and personal investment cannot be replicated through a script or role-playing.

It is important to point out that part of what is discussed in the findings was in connection to an inquiry assignment; namely a writing celebration that included families by Mateo, and a set of behavioral interventions that included positive phone calls home by Pari, and positive phone calls to families made by Olivia. This assignment was unbounded, which meant candidates across the program could go into as much depth as made sense for them and their placement contexts.

Readers might wonder if community teaching would have happened without this assignment. Indeed, it was intentionally designed, created to encompass community teaching. Yet, I would argue how candidates engage with assignments and curriculum is critically important to understand, because the design of learning experiences matter (Gay, 1995; Au, 2011). That is, because of its design, candidates were able to take it as an self-directed opportunity. It is important to pay attention to how teacher candidates exerted agency over their own teaching and reflection in relation to community teaching.

In the larger study of which this work is a part, we know that Pari, Olivia, and Mateo continued to engage in community teaching during their first two years as practicing teachers in various ways, including: making “sunshine calls” (positive phone calls home), doing family visits, having classroom celebrations where families were invited and included at the end of the

school day, creating curriculum that was representative of knowledge from families and communities, creating across grade level community- building opportunities, developing teacher of color affinity groups in their school district, and supporting families at their school through heritage language evening programs. This work continues to be appreciated by students and families, and inspires Pari, Olivia, and Mateo. They have reported that community teaching sustains them, when much feels stacked against them and they are currently in schools where most of their colleagues do not engage in this work.

Pari, Olivia and Mateo feel that their work as community teachers remains to be prioritized or recognized in their schools and districts in a time where data and test scores play a pervasive role and where teachers can feel more burdened than ever. Given this complex climate, we need to explore more about induction in relation to community teaching and consider the place of *learning to teach against the grain* (Cochran-Smith, 1991). It is critical that teacher educators demonstrate that they are serious about preparing teachers who can address the opportunity gap. In the words of one of the community mentors, teacher education programs are “culpable”—they have a responsibility to the communities and families where they send teacher candidates, and later graduates, to teach. For that reason, we also need to know more about candidates who resist or simply do not see the relevance of knowledge families and communities bring to the table.

Children and educators in schools, particularly in our most vulnerable ones, deserve our utmost care and respect. They do not need saviors, or people who work on communities, rather than with them. Unless teacher education starts to fully include the wisdom of families and communities and prepare teachers who are able to do the same, these vulnerable schools will continue to be the most at risk. For they will be hard pressed to find teachers who are willing and

able to respectfully and authentically commit to the communities, families, and children who deserve to have teachers who honor them and the knowledge they bring.

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Showing the Seams: Teacher Candidates' Experiences of Programmatic Tensions

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Abstract

The context of this study was an elementary teacher preparation program that included a focus on families and communities. In looking at how three teacher candidates in this program engaged in *community teaching* (Murrell, 2001), several programmatic tensions became apparent through analysis. For in addition to engaging with *community teaching*, the participants also experienced a dissonance between the stated objectives of the program and their actual experience, in many ways exposing the seams of the program. The themes that arose and are explored in this paper are about conflicting perceptions of what counted as teaching, the program's stated objectives and the actual experiences of the teacher candidates, and for one candidate in particular—the difficulties in balancing the feelings and comments of some of her White classmates with her own feelings and experiences as a student of Color.

Introduction

I would have you be a conscious citizen of this terrible and beautiful world.

—*Ta-Nehisi Coates, p. 108, 2015*

Recently a teacher, née teacher candidate I had worked with during their student teaching, told me about being “woke,” while she was being taught by family and community mentors in her teacher education program. This critical consciousness of being *woke* has roots in Freire (1970), and her comment brought me back to the work presented here and in other papers written by our team (Guillén, 2016; Zeichner et al, 2015). We⁵ began our work at Mountain City University⁶ with a deceptively simple task—to create a programmatic strand that brought in the knowledge of families and communities to teacher education.

Our work centered on the question of “whose knowledge should count” in the education of teachers (p. 123)(Zeichner, Payne & Brayko, 2015). To us, not only should knowledge from faculty and instructors be included in teacher preparation, but also expertise from K-12 educators (teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, family support workers and other school professional staff). Importantly, we also agreed that teacher education should also be comprised of wisdom from families and communities —people who often have the most personally at stake in public education.

The Community Teaching (CT) strand was developed as an answer to this question and was derived from several concepts. It was most directly connected to Peter Murrell’s work on community teaching (2001, 2015). Murrell wrote that community teachers, “draw on richly contextualized knowledge of culture, community, and identity in their professional work with

⁵ The team consisted of faculty, graduate students, and community organizers in a teacher education program, which is more fully described in the Methods section.

⁶ All names presented here are pseudonyms.

children and families in diverse urban communities” (p. 4)(2001). In the CT strand, we discussed community teaching and collaboratively worked with members from families and communities who co-planned and facilitated many of the experiences teacher candidates took part in. The details of this strand are discussed more comprehensively in the Methods and Findings section of this paper.

This work yielded powerful results; some of which in relation to three participants are discussed in (Napolitan, 2016). Yet, in looking at these teacher candidates’ engagement with community teaching, tensions teacher candidates experienced while in the program were also revealed and are the focus of this article. These tensions exposed the seams of the broader program in which the candidates were enrolled.

The teacher candidates in this study felt dissonance between the stated objectives of the program and their actual experiences. Themes that arose in my analysis were about conflicting perceptions of what counted as teaching (was it defined by content areas like math and reading or was it about what the candidate named as *social issues?*), the program’s stated objectives and students actual experiences, and for one candidate in particular—the difficulties in balancing the feelings and comments of some of her White classmates with her own feelings and experiences as a student of Color. These tensions are the focus of this paper.

Literature Review

This section reviews design elements that teacher education programs have used to infuse knowledge from families and communities in teacher preparation, and related tensions, which can arise in each element.

Hyland and Meacham (2004) argue that elements of teacher education programs have three aspects: structural, curricular, and experiential. Structural features relate to programs where

institutional structures and partnerships (e.g. Professional Development Schools) are a part of a teacher education program; curricular, is defined as links in coursework through readings and discussions; and experiential, is where experiences like service learning or particular student teaching experiences are designed and implemented to help candidates gain insights into the lives and communities of the youth they serve as teachers. It is useful to examine these how these elements affect candidate's learning.

Each program design element provides possibility and constraint. Professional Development Schools (PDS), which are connected to partnerships between school districts and colleges or universities in teacher education, are examples of a structural element. While not without benefits, particularly in regards to connections between K-12 educators and university faculty, Professional Development Schools can become too reliant on helping teacher candidates to master teaching practices.

PDS advocacy for urban school reform often implies that the task for teacher education is a simple matter of identifying the right teaching and curriculum practices for effective work in urban contexts, so that the solution to urban under-achievement is the training of teachers to use these practices (Murrell, 1998, p. 13).

This focus of PDS, described by Murrell, can create and perpetuate a hierarchal system where curricular practices and tools to help teacher candidates learn these practices are privileged over wisdom from communities and families. Communities and families do not necessarily have the same institutional knowledge and expertise held by universities and schools. This institutional privilege needs to be questioned. We need to ask, "whose knowledge counts" (Zeichner, Payne & Brayko, 2015) in teacher education to ensure that families and communities have say in how future teachers of their children are prepared.

Curricular elements in teacher education programs, usually seen as coursework, are often the easiest to implement and institutionalize. Curricular elements can provide opportunities for teacher candidates to engage with ideas, inquire, be challenged and reflect through discussion in class. However, these curricular elements often rely on particular types of readings and discussion formats. An unintentional result of these elements, are they can end up privileging university knowledge to the detriment of other forms of knowledge. Hyland and Meacham (2004) also note that relying on course readings and discussions to produce attitudinal change is a “profound weakness” (p. 121) of this element.

This is not to say that curricular elements do not have value. But, when they are the only elements offered to bring in knowledge of families and communities, they are not as powerful of an experience. In looking at multicultural education courses and experiences, Sleeter (2001) wrote, “...community-based immersion experiences are more powerful than stand-alone multicultural education courses, yet it is likely that the latter are more prevalent because they are easier to institutionalize” (p. 102). A similar observation about the value of experiences is voiced by Boyle Baise & McIntyre, (2008): “Community knowledge can not be learned in college classrooms alone. Community teachers need to learn about their school communities by participating in them” (p. 314).

The American Indian Reservation Project (AIRP), at Indiana University is an example of a program with experiential elements involving teacher candidates with families, and communities. The program provides a semester of support in addition to a semester-long student teaching immersion on an American Indian Reservation in the southwest United States (Mahan, Fortney, & Garcia, 1983). Authors describe how they saw changes in the teacher candidates who participated in this program:

As a result of community impact upon teachers, changes can and do take place in the following areas: 1) teacher relations with community members and parents; 2) teacher sensitivity to students; and 3) classroom curriculum. Perhaps the greatest change occurs when teachers realized that they must approach communities as learners (p. 8).

Similar results have been reported by other programs with experiential elements (Boyle-Baise, 2005; Boyle-Baise & McIntyre, 2008; Lee, Eckrich, Lackey & Showalter, 2010; Zygmunt, Clark, Clausen, Mucherah, Tancock, 2016). However, these elements can be difficult to implement as they can take more time and money. It is also important to note that experiences cannot be the only teacher of teacher candidates. Research suggests that quality mediation can facilitate teacher candidates' learning in community experiences (Sleeter, 2001). Unfortunately, given the constraints that many teacher education programs operate within, it can be challenging to find the time to include families and communities, or spaces to include mediation of those opportunities.

In summary, how teacher education programs design the programmatic inclusion of families and communities matters a great deal in *whose knowledge counts* (Zeichner, et al, 2015). First, we must be mindful that mere inclusion of families and communities in teacher education programs does not guarantee their knowledge will count. In fact, family and community members risk a great deal by sharing their wisdom in an institutional structure that does not always place the same value on the knowledge they bring (Seidl & Friend, 2002). Second, design matters as teacher education programs with coherent design and communication facilitate teacher candidate learning (Sleeter, 2008).

In my previous paper (Napolitan, 2016), I examined how teacher candidates engaged in community teaching. In this current paper, I will describe the dissonance and lack of coherence

experienced by teacher candidates in their teacher education program as they engaged and learned about community teaching. In the below sections, first I will describe the methods and contexts of my study. Then, I will present findings from teacher candidate experiences.

Methods

This study was part of a larger research project which included exploring the impact of a programmatic strand that emphasized community teaching on teacher candidates' positionality, sense of purpose as teachers, practices, and on the experiences of community mentors as they worked with teacher candidates. In the following sections, I discuss the contexts of the city, university, and school placement where this work took place, leading into the methodology of the study.

Contextual Considerations

The study participants were three teacher candidates, two of whom were candidates of Color. They are briefly described later in the Methods section and in detail in the Finding section. The three candidates were enrolled in a 4-quarter Master's in Teaching program with a focus on K-6 education. They were placed at the same elementary school, in different grade levels, with experienced mentor teachers. The school site was part of a partner school network of Mountain City University, a large research university located in Mountain City in the Pacific Northwest. In the following sections, the city, university teacher education program, and school context are briefly described.

Mountain City, Teacher Candidate Placements, and University Contexts

The racial and class geographies of Mountain City and its suburbs were initially shaped by White "settlers" forcing the local indigenous tribe outside city limits, stripping them of their ancestral home and practices (Thrush, 2007). It continued with generations of racialized federal policies

and local practices such as mortgage insurance policies, restrictive covenants, exclusive zoning, gentrification, and real estate steering (Singler, Durning, Valentine & Adams, 2011). As a result, most schools serving students of Color are concentrated in the central, southwest, and southeast sections of the city and in districts south of the city.

The three participants were placed at Blakeview Elementary located in the southwest region of Mountain City, where 79.2% students qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch, 20.5 % for Special Education (including two self-contained SPED classrooms,) and 36.8% of students qualified as Transitional Bilingual (OSPI, 2014). During 2013-14, the school had 374 students and included a more prevalent Latino (39%) and Black (26.5%) population. Other ethnicities were Asian (12.6%), Asian or Pacific Islander (13.6%), Two or More Races (7.2%), White (12.6%), and American Indian or Alaskan (1.1%). The school referred to itself as a Full Service Community School (FSCS) because of its onsite health clinic, and specific wraparound supports available to students. Blakeview Elementary also supported family engagement and home-school connections, specifically with a home visit program, which, they referred to as “family connection visits.”

The participants were teacher candidates who were part of a cohort-based 4-quarter, 63-credit, graduate program, which offered a Master’s Degree in Teaching. During the 2013-14 academic year there was an enrollment in the program of 65 teacher candidates (TCs). The percentage of the ELTEP students of Color in this cohort was about 36% (TEP, 2014). When the demographics are disaggregated, the percentage of different groups in the cohort were: African American: .02%; Asian: 28%; Native American: .05%; Latino: 8%; White: 58%. Coursework included several methods courses, a course in social foundations, learning sciences, differentiated instruction, classroom management, and culturally and linguistically responsive

teaching. Time in their student teaching practicum consisted of three weeks fulltime in the fall prior to the start of Fall Quarter, then one day a week when Fall Quarter began, three days during Winter Quarter, and five days (full time) during Spring Quarter.

Community Teaching (CT) strand

Part of the program consisted of a social-political strand called the Community Teaching (CT) strand. The framers of this strand (who included me) were faculty, graduate students, and community organizers who were founders of the Family and Community Mentor Network (FCMN). A critical feature of the CT strand was that the founders of FCMN served as co-planners, along with the university-based teacher educators, and created opportunities to connect candidates to the wisdom of families and communities through different events. The definition of community teachers, which was presented to the teacher candidates, came from Murrell's (2001) framework:

Community teachers draw on richly contextualized knowledge of culture, community, and identity in their professional work with children and families in diverse urban communities...Community teachers have a clear sense of their own cultural, political, and racial identities in relation to the children and families they hope to serve. This sense allows them to play a central role in the successful development and education of their students (p. 4).

Grounded in the principles of *community teaching* (Murrell 2001, 2015) and *learning to teach against the grain* (Cochran-Smith, 1991), the CT strand was understood by its framers as political work and explicitly attempted to incorporate marginalized perspectives, voices, and knowledge from those who had the most at stake in public education: families of the students in

K-12 schools and community mentors. During the year the study was conducted, the CT strand existed in the elementary and secondary programs (see Figure 1).

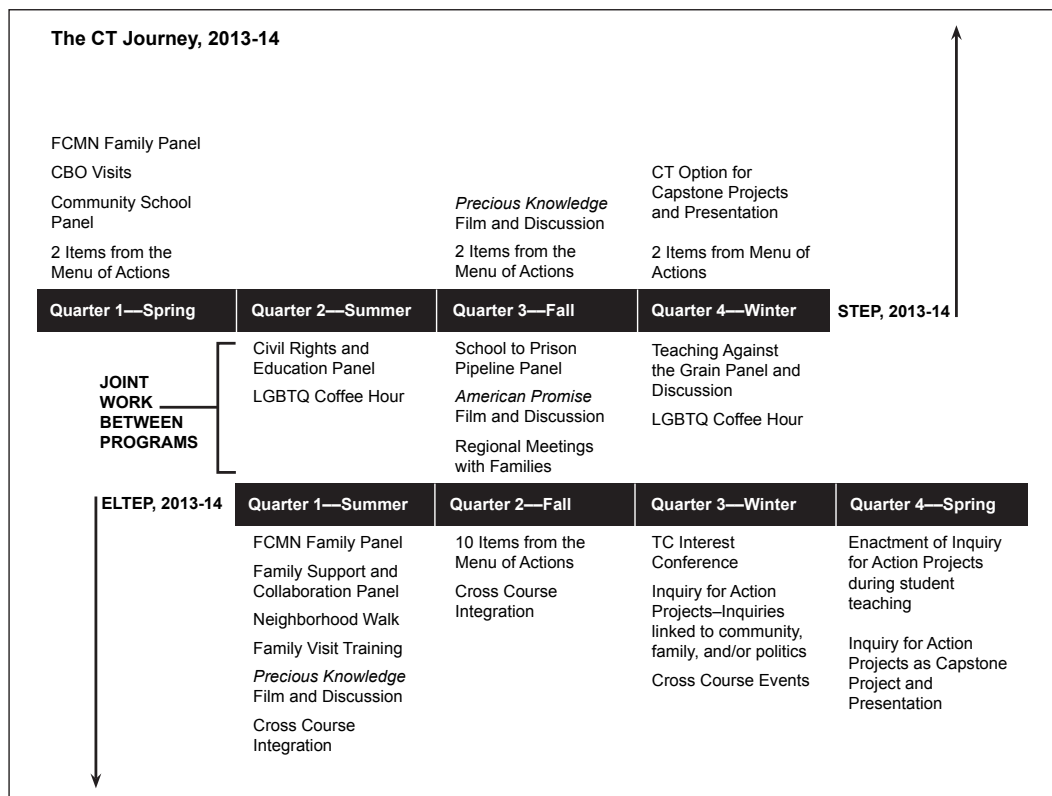


Figure 1. The elements of the Community Teaching strand within 2013-2014 elementary and secondary programs.

The CT strand operated primarily in a seminar course that met at various times during each of the four quarters. There were also aspects of the strand that were picked up by particular courses, namely social foundations and learning sciences. There were also “touch points” in coursework on differentiated instruction and classroom management.

My Role

As a co-instructor in the seminar, where the Community Teaching strand was primarily housed, and a co-designer of the strand, I was a participant observer. This provided a number of

advantages and limitations (Geertz, 1973). Because of my position in studying work that I helped to create and implement, I employed several different checks to enhance the validity of the study. As I reviewed the themes that emerged in my analysis, I consulted with the members of the research team for the Community Teacher strand. In conducting member checks, I also discussed the emerging themes with the participants. I also triangulated themes by using multiple data sources from our larger research project (e.g. comparing my themes with findings from focus groups that did not include the three participants for this study).

Selection of Participants

An integral part of understanding how teacher candidates engaged in community teaching was selecting teacher candidates for study who were interested in becoming community teachers. I utilized a purposeful strategy of unique sampling defined by Merriam (2016) as, “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 96). The three participants were part of a 65-member elementary cohort. Extant data indicated that participants: 1) were representative of the variation of the teacher education program’s population in regards to gender, ethnicity, age, and prior experience, 2) expressed interest in community teaching, 3) were in placements that were supportive, or at least was not a hindrance to that interest, and that 4) their placements were consistent with the teacher education program’s statements about the demographics of placement schools (e.g. “high needs”). The three participants are called here Olivia, Mateo, and Pari and are more fully described at the beginning of the Methods section.

Data Collection and Analysis

Throughout the 2013-14 school year, data collection occurred in multiple contexts with participants. It included formal interviews, informal conversations, observations, field notes and

participant work products. I conducted three semi-structured interviews per teacher candidate throughout the year on a planned schedule (i.e. after the beginning of the school year, before full time student teaching, after the completion of full time student teaching). I also conducted a semi-structured interview with each cooperating teacher. These formal interviews were recorded and transcribed. In addition, I had many informal conversations with the participants and their cooperating teachers and spent time building trust and rapport. I also spoke with several parents that worked in the school or their child was in one of the candidate's classrooms.

I engaged in ten observations per candidate and took field notes during classroom observations, and while attending after-school events, celebrations, and school-wide functions. I also attended school functions where candidates participated and informally observed them. I collected lesson and unit plans, photographs, and teacher candidate created materials (e.g. surveys, assignment write ups).

To understand how the teacher candidates engaged in community teaching, I drew upon the tradition of interpretive research (Erickson, 1986) to “make the familiar strange” (p. 121). This allowed me to understand what was happening and specifically describe the details of those interactions. I used the analytical conception of *whose knowledge counts* (Zeichner et al., 2015) to understand how knowledge was picked up and adopted in teaching by the study participants. Considering *whose knowledge counted* enabled me to examine how teacher candidates were using, for example, the knowledge gleaned from their students, their families, and communities in their teaching, which is part of community teaching. It also allowed me to see other themes that emerged during analysis that I had not planned for but were still related to the community teaching experience in the program.

The orientating categories were derived from the definition of community teaching (Murrell, 2001; Murrell, 2015). The categories used in the analysis were the participants': 1) engagement with families, 2) engagement with and/or knowledge building about the communities that were a part of their placement at Blakeview Elementary, 3) demonstrated openness and reflection on their roles in relation to the students and families they worked to serve, 4) curriculum and instructional moves connected to community teaching, and 5) comments connected to their own cultural, political, and racial identities, particularly in relation to their own students. While I was looking for these orientating categories, utilizing opening coding (Merriam, 2009), three additional categories surfaced: Teaching “content or the important things?”; Program articulation and coherence; and “Balancing Acts.”

I heeded Merriam’s warning that without ongoing data analysis, “data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming” (p. 171)(2009). I hand coded the data where I identified themes based on the orienting categories. I triangulated field notes with interview data and collected artifacts. These cross-references were compared and categorized into themes in order to triangulate the data and generate claims.

Coding strategies were aligned with those used by Seidel and Kelle (1995, pp. 55-56) as summarized by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), which include: (a) noticing relevant phenomena, (b) collecting examples of that phenomena, and (c) analyzing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures.

In addition, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), the codes were looked at as the “‘stuff of analysis’ (p. 56), allowing one to look across the codes to differentiate and combine data while reflecting on the findings (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

Findings

This paper discusses how learning about and engaging in community teaching made several tensions within the program visible. In the following sections, I introduce the candidates and their mentor teachers; provide a brief overview of the tensions experienced by the candidates and the Family and Community Mentor Network (FCMN); and describe the major themes that reflected the experiences of the three participants.

The Teacher Candidates and Mentor Teachers

Olivia

Olivia was a White teacher candidate who had always wanted to be a teacher and came from a family of teachers. She had taught English to adults abroad, was fluent in Spanish, and had most recently worked as a Special Education paraprofessional in a nearby school district. She originally hailed from the southern United States. Olivia identified the expectations around politeness and conservatism she grew up with to be the cause of some inner tension when discussions about race in the program and placement came up. Olivia spent time teaching English abroad and had also worked as a special education paraprofessional. She also displayed a certain willingness to be uncomfortable when it came to community teaching. She was placed in a 4/5 split classroom with Marie, a veteran White teacher who had a passion for teaching reading and writing. Marie spoke informally about how she was more reserved about connecting with families and communities but was supportive of Olivia's interest and efforts.

Mateo

Mateo was a Latino teacher candidate, originally from South America. He had begun his career in finance but decided to alter his path after a life-threatening illness. Spending his formative years in South America and near New York City, coupled with his outlook from experiencing a

serious battle for his health, Mateo found himself often at odds with what he perceived as the culture of “nice” in Mountain City; a politeness that he felt allowed racial tensions to remain unrecognized. Mateo was also a member of a local organization composed of pre-service teachers and teachers of Color. Mateo was placed in a 5th grade classroom with Jesse, an award-winning veteran teacher of Color, who also had close ties to the program as a longtime mentor. Jesse worked closely with the families of his students. During one of our conversations, Jesse showed me his cell phone to display the phone numbers of his students’ families as he frequently texted parents and guardians to keep them informed. Mateo strongly identified as a community teacher. He even used that title as his e-mail signature, which was one of the first things Jesse noticed about him.

Pari

Pari was a teacher candidate who had spent her early years in a refugee camp and immigrated to the United States with her family from Southeast Asia. Pari described herself as a kid who grew up in Section 8⁷ housing in the neighborhood adjacent to Blakeview Elementary. Resulting from the trauma her family experienced by living through war, she particularly saw school as a safe place. Pari immediately empathized with the families of her students and sought to connect with them based on her family’s vulnerability as immigrant refugees. She had worked for several years as an instructional aide and tutor in various schools and other education settings. Pari was also a member of the same local organization composed of pre-service teachers and teachers of Color to which Mateo belonged. She was placed with Anthony, a White kindergarten teacher who had taught for almost ten years, and demonstrated in conversations and observations to be extremely open-minded and reflective about his practice. He collaborated closely with his grade

⁷ Section 8 housing is rent assistance for families who qualify as low-income.

level team and specialists. I frequently observed him being approached by and talking with families before and after school.

The Tensions

Like a sand tray filled with fine-grained sediment, a slight shake is all it takes to for unexpected items to surface. As I went through the transcripts looking for examples related to my orientating categories about community teaching, tensions that the students experienced within the program became visible.

As demonstrated by an open letter written by 13-members of the cohort, and sent after their graduation on July 1, 2014 to the program leaders, the faculty and instructors, and the Dean, teacher candidates in this 2013-14 group remained vocal throughout their time at Mountain City University about the dissonance they felt between the stated objectives of the program and their actual experiences. In response to students' concerns, some instructors and administrators in the program felt the CT strand and the mentors, were "stirring up" the candidates.

Yet, what the strand brought into the program touched many of the teacher candidates. In May of 2015, 45 students signed a different letter that was composed by several cohort members, one of support for the Community Teaching strand, which was sent to the ELTEP program. It stated, "The work we have done with community, family, and politics in the CT strand and with the FCMN has been particularly beneficial to our education...The work they have done to support us as community educators has provided us with lasting skills to sustain the work we hope to do throughout our careers." Olivia, Mateo, and Pari were among the signers of this letter.

The work with the mentors clearly touched Olivia, Mateo and Pari. To provide more of a context about Family and Community Mentor Network's (FCMN) work with the candidates, it is important to know that early on in their partnership with Mountain City University, the co-

founders of FCMN identified discussions about race and institutional racism to be an integral part of their work with teacher candidates. They opened every session with candidates stating how they were there to help and how invested they were in teachers being successful with “their children.” The co-founder of FCMN often added that the mentors were there to make sure the TCs didn’t get “cussed out” as they began their teaching careers. This usually garnered some uncomfortable laughter and knowing chuckles. It is important to keep this FCMN objective in mind while reading about the tensions.

As Pari, Mateo, and Olivia spoke with me during the year, tensions surfaced. The tensions were layered. Sometimes they showed up across the three participants, while at other times, they only affected individuals. First, I will discuss conflicting perceptions of what counted as teaching, which for Olivia came up as teaching content areas or what she referred to as the “important things.” Next, I will address how participants felt that some of their experiences in the program were not aligned to the program’s stated objectives. Lastly, I will examine the difficulties Mateo and particularly, Pari felt in balancing the feelings and comments of some of their White classmates with their own feelings and experiences as students of Color. I discuss these tensions in detail in the following paragraphs.

Teaching “content, or the important things?”

In our larger research project (Zeichner et al, 2015), the dissonance many students felt between the stated objectives of the program and their actual experience showed up in the divide students noted between methods coursework (e.g. literacy, math, science) and topics in the CT strand. Olivia, Mateo, and Pari, said very little about methods coursework. When methods courses did come up, they talked about how they seemed disconnected from communities and families. For example, Olivia in particular, spoke of a rift between “content” and “social justice issues.”

Olivia viewed teaching content (e.g., literacy, math, and science) as separate from social issues, which she considered more important. In one of the interviews, Olivia stated that she wanted “social issues” (which she later defined as changing the accepted structure of things) to be an important focus of her work with students. By contrast, she said, “I want content stuff to become second nature...so I can really focus on the important things with the kids.” When I asked her to say more about what important things, Olivia continued:

Social issues, like social justice issues. I wish that right now I didn't have to worry about studying how to be a math teacher, how to be a literacy teacher, how to be a science teacher, and I could just do it, and focus on what's important and just implement all of those essential issues into what I teach. I know that's going to take a long time.

When I asked Olivia to name supports that she had to do the kind of teaching she described, she talked about her placement at Blakeview Elementary, Marie the cooperating teacher, the CT strand, the family and community mentors, and a core group of friends in the program as a resource. Notably, missing from her description of supports for the kind of teaching she aspired to, was mention of method courses. This divide also appeared in the data from our larger research project where other candidates noted that their methods courses were not connected to what Olivia called “social issues.” Some candidates felt that methods courses did not bring up families and communities in meaningful ways. Mateo also said that rather than being supported to “see” the student (Ayers, 1991) in his practiced-based literacy and math courses, he felt like he was asked to treat them like “guinea pigs.”

Olivia entered the program thinking that teaching was confined to the teaching of subject matter—math, reading, and science. When we spoke, she recalled during her admissions interview for the program that she was asked to define good teaching. She remembered talking

about, “content and differentiation and nothing about engaging with kids’ families.” Later, through interactions with community and family mentors she realized that good teaching was more than that. Near the end of her program, she was asked what suggestions she had for the program and future teacher candidates. In support of the CT strand, Olivia stated:

It’s going to be one of the most important things for them to listen to the families, during this program. It was really important, and we didn’t even realize how lucky we were... These people are donating their time because they care so much about their kids, and about education, and they want you to be really successful.

In summary, Olivia did not start in the program thinking about the role of community and families in teaching. As she went through the coursework and interacted with the CT strand, she came to believe that teaching was more than teaching content and differentiation, as she had originally indicated. And, she still saw a dichotomy between teaching “content or the important stuff.”

Olivia did not mention methods courses in science, literacy, or math, as something that was informative of the teaching she wanted to do. Perhaps, she thought that the inclusion of methods coursework was obvious when she recalled what she felt contributed to the kind of teacher she wanted to be. But, it’s nevertheless notable that in thinking about aspects of the program that supported her in learning to teach, her comments landed exclusively on the CT strand, the people affiliated with it, her placement, and her cooperating teacher. From her perspective, perhaps her belief in the importance of social issues contributed to her seeing content as separate. Or without explicit linkages made across her coursework, the connection between methods and social issues was lost for Olivia. Mateo and Pari were more direct in naming the tensions they experienced in the program.

Program articulation and coherence

Mateo and Pari were more direct in naming tensions related to program coherence. Mateo's cooperating teacher, Jesse, also weighed in on this issue.

Mateo spoke about his decision to attend the teacher education program at Mountain City University. He had viewed it to be a well-respected program and was really excited about the ways he had heard the program connected with local communities and families. Yet, partway through his year in the elementary program, Mateo began feeling a disconnect between the university's institutional structures and his learning goals in the program. When Mateo talked about the time he connected with the family and community mentors he was very positive. "I like the fact that [the strand] gives me an article, but then, what else, puts a face to it, puts a voice to it, puts eyes to it, and it's not just a book." Mateo talked about the disconnect he felt in other areas of the program, which relied upon readings, traditional academic experiences, and hierarchies:

This is the kind of stuff that you just get out there and get real with people, and I think that's a real disconnect that there is from all this faculty, all due respect, PhDs, etcetera. Come on down (*he motioned his hand downward, implying coming down from the ivory tower that he mentioned earlier in the transcript*) and be like...I just saw you.

You just smiled to me, and I smiled back. Maybe next time when you see me, it would be like, "Hey, so who are you? What's your name?" It's a gradual build up.

Pari also discussed the divide in what she described as the focus on academics and schooling and the relatively small emphasis the CT strand had in the program as a whole. Pari stated that she entered the program with a clear stance around the importance of families in education and her role as a teacher in working with them. This stance was reinforced by her

experiences in the CT strand. Along with her ideas of how to better engage with families, she was quick to name how the program came up short for her. As an example, she noted she often faced the choice of staying late to talk with families after school or leaving in order to complete her course assignments.

I wish the [elementary] program would have supported that the community is important in the sense that we have a dozen homework assignments. It's like, can you help us, can you support us in a way so we can do these things?

Pari continued when I asked her to say more about this, “the whole thing of like choosing...I can either go to this event [and talk with families] and not do homework, you know, just more support.” A general student complaint about the program in 2013-14 was the way instructors' set due-dates for assignments. Many final projects or course papers were due at similar or even the same times. There also was no standard practice for awarding extra time to complete assignments. Pari felt that asking for extra time made it look like she was unprepared. She felt there should be some kind of policy where a student could get an automatic extension of a reasonable amount if they could demonstrate they were doing work in their placement. Without this, coursework frequently trumped work with families and community. The community teacher focus of the overall program felt like lip service to Pari. She elaborated on how she saw her choice:

To go to an event that would really help you build the community with the school and not do homework...because during a recent evening celebration at school, it was during crunch time, you know? And I was like, I really want to go do this, but I need to be doing a lot of homework and it's like, “Okay, well, I'm going to go to this and then I'm just going to spend all night doing my homework.”

Despite these choices Pari still saw the importance of a CT feature in any teacher education program.

I really think that's why teacher education programs need to be really strong in their CT work—to know that teachers greatly effect and impact students and families. If programs do not see the value in it, it will just continue the stress of the school institution. It's just terrible. Then who will feel successful and confident in the system? Basically people of the dominant culture. It's like this perpetual system... That's why the CT [strand] work is so important...

This theme of program coherence came up in an interesting way for Jesse, Mateo's cooperating teacher, who had a long history with the program. During one point in our conversations, Jesse talked about the extent to which Mateo identified as a community teacher. I asked him if he felt this was aligned or not to his own practice. Jesse answered, "Yeah, I think it does feel aligned with my own practice. I would venture to say even more so." But, then Jesse brought up something I was not expecting when it came to Mateo and his experience in the program, "He definitely was distracted this year, I think, dissatisfied with things that are a part of ELTEP."

When I inquired about this "distraction," Jesse first talked about what a success Mateo was; how he was the first man of Color Jesse had seen successfully complete the program, how he was able to "handle the rigors of the university," and his teaching plans were "on solid ground." Then he further added:

Culturally Responsive Teaching. That was his big thing this year. He, in

particular, didn't feel the Math folks were doing a great job of showing him what Cultural Responsive Teaching looked like in Math. That was the example he always talked about...I felt like he didn't feel like he was getting the teaching that he needed...

Jesse provided further insight by explaining how he didn't "like confrontation," alluding to how one might need to keep their head down and how the critique Mateo shared with him made him uncomfortable. Jesse's position was also complicated because he was part of a professional development effort in the school led by university faculty that Mateo criticized. For Mateo, the explicitness of "seeing" students and the personal connection he felt from the community mentors helped him connect with the strand's objectives around community teaching. Faculty affiliated with math methods would say that their courses were also attuned to students' cultural identities, but without explicit linkages Mateo, similarly to Olivia, missed the connection.

In summary, Pari and Mateo, unlike Olivia, came into the program expecting support for working with families and communities. In Mateo's case, he was reassured that this was indeed a focus of the program. As they progressed throughout their coursework and time in their respective placements, this divide between what they felt the program had promised and how it was actualized for them, became contentious. Jesse couched Mateo's dissatisfaction as being 'distracted.' By looking closer, this distraction was how Jesse identified the need for Mateo to just stay focused on his placement, not for reasons of success (as he was doing well), but for avoiding confrontation.

"Balancing Acts"

During our conversations over the academic year, Pari described how the program required her to perform "balancing acts." When looking at the challenges community teaching presented to the three teacher candidates, each participant managed in a different way. For Mateo and Pari,

difficulties were presented in balancing the feelings and comments of some of their White classmates with their own feelings and experiences as students of Color. Examples of these comments from White students included; how some White students perceived being “attacked” during panels with community mentors, how some of them concluded that the program did not appreciate White students because they were not going to be teachers of Color, and resentment towards Pari and Mateo because they received funding and professional development (PD) as students of Color from a local organization. Mateo exhibited frustration with these comments, but he was able to dismiss those he disagreed with by connecting to classmates and mentors with whom he felt more allied. Pari struggled and internalized this tension. She was empathetic towards her classmates but frustrated with their lack of empathy for her experience.

Throughout her conversations with me, Pari talked about her identity as an immigrant, an ELL student, and a student of Color. Mateo also shared these identifiers and talked in great detail about the power of the values his mom had instilled in him, the importance of his family and culture, and the ways he felt marginalized in the program. At one point, he described a conversation he had with an instructor in the program who also came from the East Coast. She asked where Mateo was from. Mateo mentioned the town. Those familiar with the town’s location know it is within an affluent county with a particular type of suburban reputation. She knew it and replied, “I’m sorry.” Mateo later shared with me that he was furious at the assumption made about his family and community. He explained, that despite the wealth of this place, there are neighborhoods made up of people who work in the service industry of which Mateo’s family was a part. His mother had come from Latin America to this community because she knew people from her home country were there.

Both candidates mentioned that several classmates, some instructors, and the program itself did not always seem to honor their identities. Examples of these instances included:

- 1) Requests to debrief a racism and identity training that were denied by program administration.
- 2) Questions they posed, which they felt were deflected by their instructors, about ways to honor culture through curriculum choices.
- 3) Learning that honoring culture was essential, but feeling dismissed when it came to their own cultural knowledge, and,
- 4) Having no real clear path in the program to address or see changes implemented, which they felt needed to happen.

Pari, more than Mateo, internalized the racial and cultural stresses encountered in her teacher preparation program, and her reflections about this are the focus for the rest of this section.

Pari compared what it was like being a student of Color in the program and a member of a local organization that provided support to teachers of Color through monthly professional development seminars. She reflected how different her experience was being a student of Color amongst a community of teachers of Color. She compared it to being a student in class with a majority of White females in her cohort: “It’s actually really funny when you think about it...I’m surrounded by a lot of White females [in class] and then at the end of the spectrum, on some Saturdays I’m surrounded by teachers of Color.”

She elaborated that teachers of Color “get it.” “They understand...it’s not like you are offending [people of Color] with things that you want to share about feeling marginalized. And, you don’t have to explain yourself [to them].” She compared this to the exchanges she had with

White teacher candidates in class. Pari felt she understood and could relate to her White classmates feelings of marginalization:

Yeah, when [some of the White teacher candidates] mentioned they felt attacked [when topics about race came up in class]...I mentioned, "I don't feel attacked. I feel okay."

You know this whole thing on shared stories (*referring to how people of Color can share experiences*) I feel like that is part of the reason I don't feel attacked, because of them feeling marginalized, I've been there and understand their experiences. I believe every person of Color feels that way. You see another person of Color, you're like, "Okay, you get it." That's just an automatic thing, even though if we don't know their history or anything like that.

Pari also talked about a time she was talking to a White student after class who was upset after a panel discussion because she felt like a lot was being assumed about her because she was White. Pari expressed empathy for the student, but she also stated, "it was kind of comedic to me a little bit because I was like, 'Well you don't like it, people [of Color] for generations have been feeling this way and they're still stigmatized in society because of the way they look,' you know?"

Part of Pari's balancing act was in empathizing with some of her White classmates who were sometimes troubled by feedback they had received from the FCMN mentors in contrast with her own very different sense of support from those same mentors. Seeing "people like them" drew Mateo and Pari to mentors from the FCMN who made them feel honored them and supported their choice to become teachers. Pari also talked with me about the importance of acknowledging bias, and remained insistent in her support for her White classmates while also

supporting people of Color: “I have to understand where you’re coming from but I also have to stick up to what I know because of these shared experiences for people of Color.”

Despite her efforts, this balancing between being empathetic towards some of her classmates and her own frustration about their lack of empathy for her own experience began to take a deep toll on Pari. She began to question her ability to teach, particularly as someone who identified as an immigrant and an English Language Learner. She later shared:

Yeah, but this like whole balancing act is very hard. Like the whole, seeing myself as a person of Color and being surrounded by so many White females who, I can just see they know what they’re doing and they’re confident in what they’re doing and then I’m just kind of like, [pause], I feel like sometimes I want to tell [my classmates how they make me feel], because I don’t know if they see me in a different light. All right, society sees me in a different light because of my experiences and I don't know, stereotypes that they would have of me because of the way I look...it’s also part of not feeling confident in myself because I’m constantly doing that comparison.

In closing, Mateo and Olivia were able to manage their tensions in different ways from Pari. The “balancing act” Pari struggled with not only provided an external tension for her, but an internalized source of doubt.

Conclusion

During a class in our 2nd quarter, I witnessed Pari’s “balancing act.” We had watched several days earlier, with members of the community a movie, *American Promise*, with a panel discussion afterwards. *American Promise* is a film that documented the experiences of two African American boys who are accepted and attend a prestigious New York City private school. When the class debriefed the experience a few days later, I overheard comments in Pari’s group,

where she was the only student of Color. A White candidate opened up the discussion talking about how she felt blamed during the panel discussion because of the assumptions she felt were being made about White teachers.

Pari briefly glanced at me as I sat down at the table. She talked to her group about the importance of knowing the perspective of the family in the movie and how we should think about what school can force you to give up. There was a pause after Pari said that. I made a decision to back Pari up. I briefly spoke about my own experience as a student where I was one of only a handful of White kids in my elementary and high schools and I pretty much knew every bad name there was for a White person. I mentioned that as a White teacher I had been called a racist by one of my students. To these statements, the White students at the table nodded—which, I read to mean they felt I understood them, and was on their side. I continued, that despite all of this, I knew I had benefited and still benefit from White privilege. I continued on that the onus was on me, as a White teacher to listen and build trust—to prove my trustworthiness to the families. As a table we engaged in a brief discussion about this and as class quickly came to an end, I left the room and was walking down the hallway. Pari ran up behind me and stopped me. She gave me a hug and whispered, “Thank you.”

In that moment I felt a drop in my stomach as I thought of how many more times Pari would be asked to listen and support her classmates. It reminded me how much we ask of our students, perhaps too much, and how part of our responsibility is to walk part of the journey with them. This requires vigilance in advocating for and supporting teacher candidates, especially in situations that make them feel vulnerable and marginalized. It also requires us to be constantly mindful about how our programs and institutional structures can have deep internal repercussions

for our students when the vibrancy and value of their experiences go ignored or are acknowledged in name only.

Olivia, Mateo, and Pari were not alone in their experiences. Similar tensions surfaced in a multitude of ways for others while also showing the seams in the program. In an interview with a participant for our larger research project, another student of Color told what the mentors from FCMN had meant for her:

I don't know if they influenced my interaction with families as much as they comforted me in doing so because I don't know, it made like being the only Black person in the program, that was hard to do...I was so confused on what to do and then just having somebody to talk to about it was like, oh my God, thank you, thank you. That was really empowering for me. I don't know, that kind of created that fire a little bit more because a few weeks in I was like almost second guessing myself.

Student activism contributed to and was also a result of the multiple tensions in the program. For example, 13 teacher candidates—10 of whom were students of Color—collectively organized a group around culturally responsive teaching. Pari and Mateo were a part of this group. As mentioned earlier, upon graduation, the group sent an open letter to the ELTEP program about their experiences (personal communication, July 1, 2014). In it they addressed the divide, “[w]e experienced a lack of cohesion between the social justice initiative--as outlined in Mountain City’s mission statement--and our methods courses. We saw culturally responsive teaching, differential instruction, and social justice taught separately from our methods courses.” They also addressed how they were sometimes meant to feel in courses, “We learned the importance of recognizing that students learn in different ways, display different intelligences, and require differentiated instruction yet the same courtesy was not

afforded us as teacher candidates.” And, they called upon the program to do work differently, “It is imperative that ELTEP program be responsible to intentionally design a safe space for discussing, debriefing, and contextualizing these conversations.”

The open letter had a negative reception from several faculty and instructors in the program. They critiqued the writers for having chosen an inappropriate forum for their concerns (even though students had met to register their concerns both individually and collectively with instructors/faculty members about problematic courses and experiences on multiple occasions prior to sending the letter). Another critique was that the students were criticizing something that faculty and the program director had little control over given their intractability, as evidenced in the following comment from a faculty member that was sent in response to all of the recipients of the open letter: “I am sure it is not your intention to do this but I want to make sure we are not placing the blame on any one person here but recognize that these are issues that are systemic and historical” (personal communication, July 20, 2014).

Indeed, there may have been things the students could have learned from the critiques the program had of their action. And, there were program personnel who did follow-up with students. Overall, the negative response effectively silenced the students.

In terms of the three themes presented in this paper, there is much to consider. Olivia, Pari, and Mateo all experienced dissonance between the stated objectives of the program and their actual experiences.

Teaching “content, or the important things.” Olivia saw academic content and “social issues” residing on separate islands. Without more integration of these ideas and experiences in the teacher preparation program across all coursework, students like Olivia struggled to make the

connections between them. In other examples from the literature (Capone & Divenere, 1996; Kidd, Sánchez & Thorp, 2005) programs where family and community knowledge has been infused across coursework, rather than in isolated pockets, has been beneficial to teacher candidate learning.

Program articulation and coherence. Considering Pari's choice between doing homework and staying late to connect with families, which was a dilemma other candidates in the program also experienced, revealed another tension, especially for students who have families and/or must work to support themselves and others. For various reasons students have limitations on the time that they have available for program requirements and opportunities, forcing a choice between competing assignments, like homework and school/community events. This "choice" of doing work for class or taking advantage of opportunities to connect with people in their placement created a tension. Candidates began to feel that the commitment to families and communities was only in place when it did not interfere with coursework. Better alignment between coursework and the goals of connecting with families and communities, or finding ways to more strongly instill the program's objectives into its practices, would be beneficial and in Pari's words, more supportive, of the students.

There are strong implications here for the importance of a clear stance by teacher education programs about the integral role families and communities and the articulation and actualization of this stance across all course work and instructors. Another implication is that the program and its faculty should take into consideration the backgrounds and lives of the teacher candidates in the same way they expect candidates to take these factors into consideration with their current and future students. Otherwise the persuasiveness of what teacher candidates are

told that they should do in elementary classrooms is weakened by the contradictions between what faculty preach and what they practice.

Although the following research is about the experiences of teachers of Color in K-12 schools, the experiences described by Kohli and Pizarro (2016) echo the experiences of Mateo and Pari:

Because schools operate through Eurocentric cultural frameworks that devalue their communities and their community-based forms of knowledge (Yosso, 2005), teachers of Color are often not able to engage holistically, to grow in ways that accomplish their goals, or to advocate for their communities (p. 73)(Kohli & Pizarro, 2016).

Additionally, it is important to consider the presence of mentors from families and communities in teacher education programs. This initially requires that collaborative work between universities and communities be of mutual benefit. If this mutual benefit is established, mentors can serve teacher candidates as touchstones and advocates—particularly for candidates who share cultural and lived experiences with the mentors.

“Balancing Acts.” For me, as a teacher educator, this was one of the most painful themes to look at because of the internalization Pari experienced leading her to question her ability to be a good teacher. I also want clearly state that Pari and Mateo were not victims, but rather they experienced oppressive acts. The co-founders of FCMN frequently talked about the work of racial identity and awareness as “a journey.” As teacher educators, must be willing to walk with teacher candidates on their journeys and be vulnerable with them, while constantly examining our own practice, and being a strong and active advocate for their knowledge, learning, and experiences. If we are unable or unwilling to do this, we are culpable of inviting students into softly oppressive and sometimes openly hostile spaces.

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CONCLUSION

Based on the work presented here and in other research accounts regarding the Community Teaching (CT) strand, our research team developed seven principles (Zeichner, et al, 2015) that might assist teacher educators as they contemplate deep and sustained teacher-family-community work within teacher education programs. Epistemological and ontological differences between teacher educators and mentors from local families and communities can and did contribute to tensions in our teacher education program. It is clear in our other research accounts (Zeichner, et al, 2015) and in Article 3 of this dissertation that the teacher candidate participants also experienced tensions due to a lack of programmatic articulation and practices. In some cases the dissonance candidates experienced contributed to them feeling closer allied to the mentors than to the program itself.

Acknowledging these differences in ways of knowing and being is an important step, but additionally we feel that this work must initially begin with teacher educators acknowledging that hierarchical power and knowledge relationships have historically characterized interactions between teacher education programs, particularly ones at predominantly White institutions, with schools and communities. With this acknowledgement comes the need for teacher educators to (re)build trust and develop *equal-status* relationships with those they seek to partner with.

Teacher educators must commit to altering these power relations by working towards solidarity with families and communities. We can do this by building more democratic spaces, where those with the most at stake in public schools—families and local communities—have a genuine voice in the preparation of teachers.

1. Teacher educators must acknowledge that there exists valuable cultural, historical, political, social, and educational knowledge outside of schools and universities and must

work to recognize, respect, and help make this knowledge more visible in teacher education programs, including connecting with teacher candidates who have a share in this valuable knowledge.

2. Humility, respect and trust that are a part of the relational expertise and relational agency that are preconditions for finding common areas of agreement to support successful cross institutional work.
3. Joint-work requires full participation of family-community mentors and teacher educators; this includes co-planning and joint decision-making (where applicable) related to curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, etc.
4. Teacher educators, mentors from local families and communities, and teacher candidates must be able to establish this joint-work across program elements (course work, evaluation, placements); the joint-work should be integrated (albeit in different ways) across coursework and be fully supported by faculty.
5. Teacher educators must accept a lack of total control over the program, and honor perspectives and wisdom from outside the university. In this honoring work, they must be willing to listen and learn in order to (re)build trust and work towards solidarity with families and communities, and teacher candidates.
6. The focus of this work between teacher educators, families and local communities cannot primarily reside in privileging the dominant teacher candidate perspective (e.g focusing on White students). Rather, it must include designs and fulfill opportunities for teacher candidates who represent less dominant perspectives —through language, (dis)ability, culture, ethnicity and beyond—to also be supported, seen, challenged, and recognized for the vibrancy they bring.

7. This work is inherently political and value-laden. All involved need to see, and work to make visible, the systematic approaches that inform so much of our schooling and educative experiences. And then, collectively work together to “teach against the grain” (Cochran-Smith, 1991).

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