

Reimagining Social Justice-Oriented Teacher Preparation in Current Sociopolitical Contexts

Authors' Manuscript

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“It seems wrong to prepare teachers with a social justice stance and then place them in schools that think about social justice in a different way.” -Rachel

“Can we really imagine any school not embracing social justice? The whole purpose of public education is empowerment. Maybe it is not so dichotomous—we may just have different definitions from schools’ understandings of social justice.” -Lin

“We need to help our graduates think about possible futures and prepare them to work toward making schools more socially just, but we also need to make sure that graduates are able to teach in schools as they are now without alienating their colleagues or getting fired.” -Laura

Questions of teacher education and social justice, as illustrated in this conversation among the authors, highlight the reality that social justice is a much-contested concept in educational discourse (Grant & Agosto, 2008; North, 2006, 2008). Preparing teachers for social justice is a moving target as discourses change and ideologies evolve (e.g., Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2006). Even teacher preparation programs that espouse social justice as their goal, may have individuals working toward different definitions of social justice (Kaur, 2012; Hytten & Bettez, 2011; Samaras, et al., 2016).

In this article, we address some of the complexities of preparing and supporting social justice-oriented teachers in our work with Teaching Residents at Teachers College (TR@TC). This is a graduate-level teacher residency at Teachers College, Columbia University that prepares teachers certified in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), special education, and science for New York City Public Schools (NYC). As program staff,

graduate assistants, and university professors involved in program design, implementation, evaluation, and research, we have experienced the possibilities and challenges of social justice-oriented teacher preparation. Through collaborative autoethnography, we reflect on our experiences within the current sociopolitical climate that views university-based teacher education as disconnected from practice (e.g. Canrinus, Klette, & Hammerness, 2019; Kamenetz, 2016; Ord & Nuttall, 2016; Strauss, 2014). We began this study after submitting an application for a grant renewal, in which we proposed changes to TR@TC's core program. This led us to think about how and why the program had changed over time, and in so doing, we began to think more deeply about the social justice orientation of the program, about social justice teacher preparation more broadly, and our own individual and collective experiences with/in this construct. Our research questions include:

1. What tensions do we face as social justice-oriented teacher educators in the design and implementation of preparation programs in the current sociopolitical context?
2. How can we, as social justice-oriented teacher educators, create structures, policies, and practices that support preservice and novice teachers in NYC schools?

To address these questions, we present three tensions that we encountered in the design and implementation of TR@TC. In so doing, our work seeks to support teacher educators in navigating the challenges of preparing social justice-oriented teachers.

Recognizing multiple interpretations of social justice (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2010; Grant & Agosto, 2008; McDonald, 2005; McDonald & Zeichner, 2008; North, 2006; 2008; Zeichner,

2006), we use this phrase to represent teachers who create learning spaces that serve minoritized¹ students who are marginalized and under-served, and enact inclusive practices that challenge societal inequities (Agarwal, et al., 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2010). We draw on several related bodies of literature including culturally responsive teaching (e.g., Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995), inclusive practice (e.g., Kluth, Straut & Biklen, 2003), multicultural education (e.g., Sleeter, 2005), anti-oppressive education (e.g., Kumashiro, 2004), and critical pedagogy (e.g., Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). As such, we collectively define teaching for social justice as practices that include: curriculum making and the design of curricula for heterogeneous classrooms in which all learners have access to core content; reflective practice and critically questioning one's own beliefs, instructional skills and strategies; and advocacy that involves working against societal inequities that manifest in schools. We use this lens to consider our roles and the tensions we have faced as social justice-oriented teacher educators in TR@TC. TR@TC as a program, and the university in which it is situated, share this approach to social justice as part of their mission.

Autoethnography: Framework and Methods

We chose collaborative autoethnography to explore how we identified and understood key tensions in our work as social justice teacher educators (Coia & Taylor, 2009; Ellis, 2004). As a framework, collaborative autoethnography privileges narrative experience over traditional theory (Ellis, 2004), and informs methodological choices (Chang, 2013). According to Chang, Longman, and Franco (2014), in collaborative autoethnography, “two or more researchers pool their autobiographical materials related to an agreed-upon topic of social phenomenon and

¹ By minoritized (instead of diverse or minority), we connote “the ongoing social experience of marginalization, even when groups subject to racial-ethnic [or any type of] discrimination achieve a numerical majority in the population” (Chase, Down, Pazich, & Bensimon, 2014, p. 671).

analyze and interpret the collective data to interpret the meanings of their personal experiences within their sociocultural contexts” (p. 376). Instead of telling five individual stories, we shared with each other our reflections, writings, journaling, and frustrations, and then collectively interpreted the data set. “The combination of multiple voices to interrogate a social phenomenon create[d] a unique synergy and harmony” (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2012, p. 24) as we considered our own experiences within the context of teaching and teacher preparation in the United States.

As a result of our multiple roles in TR@TC, we come to this paper as invested knowers who believe in the possibilities of residency programs and university-based teacher preparation for supporting the development of teachers who are committed to and enact social justice practices. Our practice is both personal (Coia & Taylor, 2009) and deeply embedded in the larger context of teacher education in the United States (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008). We use our experiences and perspectives as the primary data for this study (Chang, 2008), and engage them through critical reflexivity, questioning taken-for-granted assumptions and knowledge (Hernandez & Ngunjiri, 2013; Hughes & Pennington, 2017). We are all former K-12 teachers who took different pathways into teaching and taught in different contexts, and we all have a range of experience in teacher preparation both with TR@TC and elsewhere (see Table 1).

[insert Table 1 here]

Our unique individual subjectivities and pathways to teacher preparation, captured in brief in Table 1, along with our collective positionality as social justice-oriented educators, played a significant role in this study, as they should in a collaborative autoethnography. Specifically, our roles with TR@TC provided us firsthand experience in designing,

implementing, and evaluating a teacher preparation program. Some of us have been deeply involved in all aspects of the program, especially Lin, as program director and original architect. Additionally, as teacher educators and researchers, we strive to support program graduates' development as competent, social justice-oriented practitioners. Through this process, we worked to ensure our desire for success did not lead us to make undue claims about the impact of TR@TC. Our previous roles as teachers in various contexts give us a sense of knowledge of how things are done or should be done in K-12 schools, and so we have to deliberately work to expand our lenses to consider the different contexts of residents and mentor teachers within the current sociopolitical climate, compared to our own teaching contexts.

Additionally, we are grounded in our understanding of race and racism as systemic experiences in schooling and society, and we are attuned to the specific racialized challenges faced by people of color in the United States. We acknowledge that many forms of oppression also work as systems that impact youth in NYC schools and schools across the country, although this article focuses primarily on racism. Individuals' experiences of these systems, including our own personal experiences as students, teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers, are myriad; we come to this work from multiple, intersectional subjectivities, which at times privilege us and at other times, present great challenge. Reflecting on our subjectivities through collective positionality allowed us to confront ourselves as researchers who are critically reflecting on work with and among communities who experience these systems of oppression in ways that are sometimes reflective of, but often significantly different from, ours (Pillow, 2003). We acknowledge the partial and incomplete nature of our inquiry and hope that by collectively interrogating ourselves, we better position ourselves to work with teacher candidates and communities of color (Paris, 2011).

Through collaborative autoethnography, we acknowledge also that our framing of the problem, our research questions, our data collection, and our data analysis are personal, as Coia and Taylor (2009) suggest. We do not strive to be objective seekers of generalizable knowledge; instead, we consider the tensions we face and the actions we can take in advancing social justice teacher preparation. At the same time, we acknowledge the tensions inherent within a collaborative approach—even as we write this collective positionality statement, we challenge each other to think about how our different racialized backgrounds position us in relation to the majority Black and Latinx students that URT candidates will go on to teach. We have not always agreed, but we have always engaged in the process to work toward a shared reimagining of teacher preparation. Multiple revisions, conversations, questions, and drafts have pushed us as individuals and as colleagues in shared enterprise to consider—as white, as Asian American, as immigrant, as students, as tenure-track and tenured professors, as women—what it means to prepare candidates of diverse backgrounds to teach in a school district such as NYC. Exploring ourselves in relation to each other has helped us to better understand our experiences with TR@TC. As Ngunjiri, Hernandez, and Change (2010) suggest, developing our collective positionality statement has enabled us

to explore self in the presence of others to gain a collective understanding of [our] shared experiences. Critical probing of one another...[has] potentially [kept us] from settling too soon in [our] own grove of perspectives and evoke new insights beyond [our] own (p.

13).

“Explor[ing] self in the presence of others” does not happen naturally but is a disposition as well as a behavior that develops over time. As a group, we have worked together for between five and 10 years. Norms of engagement were established at the start of the collaborative that cultivated a

culture of “critical probing.” We always maintained a spirit of inquiry for deeper understanding, never punitive critique, and the group ethos was one that supported candor; we learned to hear one another’s challenges, which helped us individually to routinely question our own assumptions, even while we also adopted and honed a collective—and normative—stance of analytical examination. Over time, through this dialogic process, we have created a space that encourages us to express different and divergent opinions, knowing that they will be listened to and honored even as they may be debated. Thus, for us, the expression of opposing ideas does not result in tension in the sense of unease, hostility or stress, but rather is seen as a pull towards discussion, clarification and explanation, an opportunity to expand thinking, come to know in a different way, learn, and unlearn.

While the scope of this piece does not afford us the room to fully chronicle our continuous process of listening and contestation, it is our collective positionality as social justice-oriented teacher educators that has enabled us to expose and confront implicit biases and beliefs so as to come to new understandings of our roles. Although we are a racially and ethnically diverse group of teachers of a racially and ethnically diverse group of candidates (more so than common in teacher preparation across the United States), who intend to teach a racially and ethnically diverse group of children, we understand that genuine diversity does not mean that the lived experiences of anyone who is not part of the dominant culture will be identical. Our experiences with schools and schooling differ in important ways from each other’s’ experiences, from those of our candidates, and from those of the children of NYC."

We demonstrated our readiness to tread on controversial ground in a discussion of “racial erasure” (hooks, 1992), as we dug deeply into how we were positioning ourselves and/versus our Asian-American co-authors as teacher educators within this landscape, drawing on and

challenging our own racialized identities. This was just one example of the multi-layered and complex discussions in which we continuously engage, where we enact our commitment to confront and question implicit assumptions we might each be bringing to the conversation. This also illuminates the tensions we experienced that pulled us to wrestle with uncomfortable issues, but in an atmosphere of support and openness that ensured our willingness to be uncomfortable. Through this iterative and dialogic process, we have pushed each other to surface and examine individual positionalities that may obscure our vision, in our efforts to keep growing collectively as social justice-oriented teacher educators. Further, these rich conversations helped us to better understand how to support our candidates as they made sense of how their own identities and positionalities affect their roles as teachers of diverse students in NYC.

Research Context: TR@TC

TR@TC is a graduate-level teacher preparation program that leads to initial teacher certification in science education, special education, and/or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Funded through two² Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants by the U.S. Department of Education in 2009 and 2014, TR@TC's program goals are to (1) collaborate with partners to prepare quality teachers in shortage areas for urban schools, (2) enhance the professional development of all teachers within partner schools, (3) support graduates in their first two years of teaching, and (4) conduct research on the impact of TR@TC on teaching and learning. TR@TC currently has 131 graduates and 13 current residents. Social justice-oriented practice, by which we mean teacher practice that works to create learning spaces that serve minoritized students and enact inclusive practices that challenge societal inequities, is

² The program recently received a third round of funding in 2019.

a central focus of program curriculum and is embedded across coursework, assignments, and clinical experiences.

TR@TC aims to prepare teachers with and for New York City Public Schools, a large school district serving over one million students. The student population is diverse, with almost 40% of students speaking at least one language other than English, including Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Hindi, Arabic, and Haitian Creole. According to District statistics, Latinx students make up about 40% of the district population, Black students about 25%, and White and Asian students each constitute about 15% of the population; within each category there is diversity across ethnicity, social class, immigrant status, home language(s), religions, etc., as well. Almost three-quarters of students are low-income, almost 15% of students are identified as multilingual learners, and approximately 20% of students have an identified disability. Despite this great diversity, the district is among the most racially and socioeconomically segregated in the country (Kucsera & Orfield, 2014). To qualify as a partner school with TR@TC, schools must be identified as “high need,” enrolling a minimum of 45% of students who qualify for free- or-reduced lunch.³

New York City Public Schools’ (NYC) mission, like many public school systems across the United States, highlights excellence and equity, with the goal of ensuring that every student has “the tools they need to achieve their dreams” while “meeting every student where they are.” The many teachers, support staff, and administrators with whom we work through NYC have their own definitions and understandings of equity and social justice practice. Despite this

³ Per the federal register, eligible partner schools are considered, “An elementary school, the school serves students not less than 60 percent of whom are eligible for a free or reduced-price school lunch under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act; or (B) Any other school that is not an elementary school, the other school serves students not less than 45 percent of whom are eligible for a free or reduced-price school lunch under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act” (p. 22401).

diversity of definitions, we do believe that we all share the same goal of teaching all of the students in each classroom. How each individual enacts this goal may not be obvious to others who have different definitions—as evidenced by Rachel’s opening quote at the start of the paper, and one of the challenges we acknowledge is that we rarely have these conversations regularly or formally with the diverse stakeholders of TR@TC.

Data Sources and Analysis

Through this study, we sought to understand our own shared and different perspectives on social justice-oriented teacher preparation, drawing on Chang’s (2008) analytic autoethnographic approach: developing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and situating our experiences within the broader context in order to further understandings of social justice-oriented teacher preparation in both policy and practice (Sparkes, 2000). To do this, we drew on varied methods, data sources and forms of analysis, including stimulated recall, narrative writing, discourse analysis, and meeting notes. We engaged our own subjectivities, “inviting one another’s critiques and feedback” (Chang et al., 2016, p. 157). While data collection and analysis are often discrete aspects of research, in this collaborative autoethnography, even as we collected data, we were “already engaged in collective meaning-making” about our experiences of and with TR@TC (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013, p. 110).

We began by noting changes and continuous pedagogical threads across the two iterations of TR@TC, such as changes to residency placements and the continuing practice of providing professional development to mentor teachers. We then individually brainstormed a list of tensions that we experienced or noticed occurring. We exchanged lists and reviewed them together, identifying five tensions across our lists: integrating theory and practice; preparing

teachers for urban contexts; recruiting and retaining teachers of color; identifying social justice-oriented mentor teachers; and induction support.

Using these tensions, we conducted five “interactive interviews” (Ellis, Kiesinger, & Tillmann-Healy, 1997). In these bi-monthly interviews, we discussed our personal experiences of the tensions within the context of TR@TC, specific programmatic changes, relevant literature, and our thoughts about impact. We also shared our experiences from other contexts. We reviewed and analyzed program documents, such as TR@TC’s mentor teacher standards. This stimulated recall (Gass & Mackey, 2000; Lyle, 2003) enabled us to reflect upon the purposes of the residency, how those purposes shifted, and how program staff assessed how well program goals were being met. We also studied papers we have written based on data from program participants, which allowed us to examine our evolving conceptual/theoretical understandings of our work. Like Chang et al.’s (2016) autoethnographic study on their university program, we saw our analytic approach in line with continuous program design.

Interactive interviews and stimulated recall supported us in reflecting on our own experiences in light of our research questions. In our conversations, we asked critical questions to connect our data to our research questions. The opening dialogue of the paper illustrates our critical dialogue. Rachel began the conversation critiquing some of the placements that we used because they were not “social justice enough,” and her co-authors pushed her to think about social justice in schools from a different lens. Through individual and collective reflection and dialogue, we worked through different individual interpretations and present our findings as a unified voice.

Systematic analysis of these data involved separately reading interactive interview notes, then writing narrative pieces based on our experiences. We shared narratives and interviewed

each other about them, identifying discourses of teacher education, teaching, and learning across tensions. In pairs, we wrote up how the team identified the tension, how the tension evolved over time, and the degree to which we felt success in negotiating the tension. We then presented each write-up to the full team in a shared word processing document, so that everyone could contribute, delete, or revise, and we continued the process of revisions until we reached consensus.

Through this process, we identified three primary tensions: preparing teachers for particular contexts (e.g., urban, high need); identifying and supporting mentor teachers as social justice-oriented teacher educators; and addressing the continuum of teacher learning through induction support. We eliminated the tension about theory and practice because several ideas that came up in our interactive interview for that tension also arose across all of the other tensions; and we eliminated the tension about recruitment and retention of teachers of color because we had limited data based on our primary roles with TR@TC.

Situating the Tensions in the Literature

Our collective experiences with TR@TC led us to pinpoint three key tensions:

1. Preparing social justice-oriented teachers for a specific public school system
2. Identifying and supporting mentor teachers' social justice-oriented practice
3. Addressing the continuum of teacher learning through induction within a social justice framework

They mirror struggles across the landscape of teacher preparation, and they defy easy fixes. We now situate each within the literature. Recognizing that these tensions are not new, we identify key concerns raised, and look to see how different ways of understanding these tensions inform this work.

Context-Specific Teacher Preparation

Context-specific teacher education prepares teachers for specific settings, such as urban or rural schools, involving the “people, places, politics, systems, cultures, affordances, and constraints” of those settings (Williamson, Apedoe, & Thomas, 2016, p. 1107), and the ways in which they interact (Edwards & Miller, 2007). Contexts are not static or bounded containers; rather, they are relational sets of practices in which learning to teach and teaching occur (Edwards, 2009). This view of contexts, which some scholars conceptualize as “place,” involves perceptual, sociological, political, ecological, ideological (Gruenewald, 2003), and affective (Perumal, 2015) dimensions (Jones & Hughes, 2016). Context-specific teacher education programs have been promoted as tools for social justice because in education, “applying the same rules to unequal groups often can generate unequal results” (McCullough & Ryan, 2014, p. 156). In other words, for teachers to be effective in a particular context, they need to understand, unpack, and develop context-specific skills, knowledge, and philosophies.

Learning to teach and teaching in NYC involves understanding NYC teachers, students, families, policy, and each school’s unique culture and community within the racialized sociopolitical context of NYC, the state, and the U.S. Hammerness and Matsko (2013) identified contextual layers that teacher educators must keep in mind to prepare their students for urban contexts, including the children, classroom and school, district, local sociocultural context, geographical context, larger urban public school context, and policy context. Additionally, Howard and Milner (2014) argued that teacher education must help pre-service teachers navigate these layers of complexity for their own benefit and for the benefit of their students.

Despite calls for context-specific preparation, few studies examine how, exactly, context is addressed in such programs, or how programs address diversity within contexts (Williamson,

Apedoe, & Thomas, 2016). Furthermore, “urban” remains a contested and poorly defined term within education (cf. Milner, 2012; Williamson, Apedoe, & Thomas, 2016), meaning that urban teacher preparation programs may attend to different ideas of “urban.” For example, many urban teacher preparation programs focus on students’ racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity but ignore bureaucratic structures, the political economy, and community networks (Oakes, Franke, Quartz, & Rogers, 2002). It is also important to note that there is an unstated assumption that “traditional” programs are designed to prepare teachers for suburban schools (Haberman, 1996).

Mentor Teachers

Mentor teachers (cooperating teachers) are regularly perceived as invaluable to preservice teacher development (e.g. Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Clinically-based teacher preparation, including teaching residencies, assigns mentor teachers increased responsibility for teacher development. In this sense, they can be seen as field-based teacher educators (e.g. Bullough, 2005; Goodfellow & Sumsion, 2000; White, 2018). However, most available literature is long on *what* is necessary to support teacher candidate learning in the field, but short on *how* to achieve these goals.

The literature has a fair amount to say about mentor teachers’ roles and responsibilities (e.g. Clarke, Triggs & Nielson, 2014; Koc, 2012; Rozelle & Wilson, 2012), qualities and characteristics of “effectiveness” (e.g. Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Glenn, 2006), and mentor teacher learning resulting from mentoring (e.g. Hudson, 2013; Huling & Resta, 2001; Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005). However, little empirical work illuminates mentor teacher preparation, selection or fit beyond inputs (e.g., teaching experience or certification; dispositions), how mentoring-in-action looks, or how strong mentoring practice is enacted. In the context of this study, research that offers insights into mentor teachers in relation

to social justice is also limited, whether about how mentor teachers enact social justice teaching, or how they support mentees' development as social justice educators (Duckworth & Maxwell, 2015). While there is acknowledgement that mentoring demands "knowledge and skills that teachers may not acquire from work experience alone" (Ganser, 2002, p. 308), and that being a competent teacher does not automatically mean one will be an effective mentor (Bullough, 2005; Clarke et al., 2014), how mentors are identified, developed, and supported remains unclear (Darling-Hammond, 2010; UTRU, 2015).

What becomes clear is available literature on mentor teacher preparation is sparse (Gareis & Grant, 2014), and "we know relatively little about what thoughtful mentors try to teach novices, how they make their knowledge accessible, and how they think about their mentoring in context" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 18). Research suggests that mentor teachers are more likely to emphasize the instrumental and technical over the critical and sociopolitical (Roegman, Reagan, Goodwin & Yu, 2016; Goodwin, Roegman & Reagan, 2016; Wang & Odell, 2002), paying more attention to replication versus interrogation of prevailing practices. In high-stakes accountability environments, it is understandable why mentors' focus might be on test scores and compliance, and less so on social justice issues (Goodwin et al, 2016).

Induction Support

As novice teachers enter the field, they must simultaneously teach students and learn to teach in a particular school (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Induction programs offer targeted support to teachers as they navigate these roles (Bullough, 2008; Achinstein & Athanases, 2010). These programs are typically provided by schools, districts, or nonprofit organizations (Bastian & Marks, 2017).

In the past decade, several literature reviews have examined research on induction (e.g., Bullough, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Wang, Odell & Schwille, 2008). Together they suggest that induction programs are prevalent across the United States and internationally. However, they vary substantially in purpose, structure, and implementation. For example, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) describe multiple goals of induction programs including “teacher socialization, adjustment, development, and assessment” (p. 203). An induction program could consist solely of providing teachers with a one-on-one mentor, but could also be more expansive, including any combination of orientations, workshops, supervisory consultations, or direct classroom help (Bastian & Marks, 2017).

Although results are mixed, empirical research suggests that high quality induction programs have the potential to support teacher practice (Everston & Smithey, 2000; Stanulis & Floden, 2009), retention (DeAngelis, Wall & Che, 2013), and student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Rockoff, 2008). These programs are intense in duration and provide content and/or philosophical alignment with the novice teachers’ practice and school context (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Yet questions remain about whether induction programs maintain the status quo or have the capacity to promote change. When considering social justice-oriented induction, Achinstein and Athanases (2010) remind us to ask, “Induction for what? Induction for whom? Induction by whom?” (p. 574).

Along with school and district-based programs, there has been a recent increase in university-based induction programs, some of which are part of TQP-funded programs (Bastian & Marks, 2017). University-based induction programs aim to smooth the transition between preparation and practice, particularly along the continuum of teacher learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). These programs have the capacity to effectively direct resources (Stanulis & Floden,

2009), strengthen relationships between schools and universities (Zeichner, 2010), and serve as external supports for novice teachers (Bastian & Marks, 2017). Additionally, these programs can potentially provide coherence for social justice practice from preservice to in-service teaching. To promote induction for social justice, Achinstein and Athanases (2010) call for a “political critical frame” in which the purpose of induction is to “critically reconstruct schooling and teaching with an equity focus” (p. 576) through critiquing existing structures and enacting practices that promote inclusion.

However, as Bastian and Marks (2017) suggest, university-based programs also face an additional set of challenges, such as the scope of influence of university-based programs to change existing school cultures, (in)frequency of interactions between novice teachers and induction supports, and (lack of) required participation in the program. The limited research on university-based induction provides few insights into addressing these challenges.

This brief review locates each tension within the literature, and suggests interconnections among the three. For example, the work of mentor teachers *is* context-based given their role as “local guides” (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992) for teacher candidates, located within a defined set of cultures, practices, and relationships as bounded by (usually) a single classroom within a single school. We acknowledge that the tensions intersect, even while we discuss our findings from each tension in turn. We now turn to explore the tensions in the context of our experiences with URB@PCU and consider ways that we navigate them in the current sociopolitical context. As Sonia Nieto (1992) wrote in her foundational text on schooling in the United States, multicultural education—and really, any type of education—“must be understood in its larger personal, social, historical, and political context” (p. 2), which includes policies and laws related to such topics as immigration, housing, school assignment, or language acquisition, as well as

society's beliefs about race, ability, educability, belonging. Thus, the K-12 educational context in the United States overall, and specifically in NYC, involves both social and political histories and policies that intersect to influence what happens in classrooms and for students such that the social is never neutral but always shaped by the political.

Unpacking the Tensions

We now turn to three tensions that we identified as key tensions we faced in developing a social justice-oriented preparation program. Our purpose in this analysis is to consider how our work as teacher educators embodies the social justice stance that we claim. While it may be easy to see gaps between our espoused stance and the practice of NYC educators, we are working on the more difficult task of identifying gaps between our espoused stance and our development of TR@TC. We are not arguing that we have the “right” answer; rather, we believe that exploring how we grappled with these three tensions may support other teacher educators in their own work around social justice teacher preparation in different sociopolitical contexts.

Tension 1: Preparing Social Justice-Oriented Teachers for the NYC Public School System

The literature suggests that context-specific teacher education prepares teachers for specific settings (e.g. Williamson, Apedoe, & Thomas, 2016). The TQP grant had a similar focus, requiring us to think about preparing teachers for a specific teaching context—the high need district, NYC, with which we partnered. In our first proposal, we focused on how issues of poverty, race, language, and class impacted student learning and teacher practice. Coursework focused on skills, knowledge, and philosophies needed to teach in schools in which the majority of students were living in poverty, alongside other subjectivities that marginalized them. This included topics such as reading strategies for diverse learners and differentiation, learning about the intersection of poverty and learning, and volunteering weekly with a community-based

organization; we hoped these activities would foster an asset view of students whom society routinely depicts as deficient. In our initial conversations about this topic in thinking about changes within the program, we noted that we wanted to “really enable [residents] to be acquainted with NYC schools – go into placements with less trepidation.”⁴ We thought that “early exposure to classrooms, schools, and kids” would be beneficial, and that residents needed “more than one experience”⁵—we did not want them to make any conclusions about urban teaching based on only one clinical placement.

However, as we reflected on residents’ preparation, and some of their clinical and early teaching experiences, we realized that this initial focus was too narrow: we had implicitly defined context by the students who attended NYC public schools—e.g., how many received free/reduced lunch, how many were English language learners. We had focused on only the “social” of sociopolitical, limited to categorical names and designations created by political bodies to sort and label students. However, Crystal pondered:

the complex anatomy and movement of the city made up of different cultures, languages, backgrounds, people, art, music, food, etc. Being a teacher in the city is itself an act to be a part of the city—to constantly appreciate, challenge, and work with the rich neighborhoods, assets, languages, and resources it has to offer.

We realized that while residents had developed asset views of students and had acquired a solid range of strategies and philosophies, we had still not necessarily prepared them well to teach in NYC because we had limited our discussions of the social defined monolithically, without attending to the multiple identities of each student and the many layered cultures of the city. We had neglected a complex discussion of the political—of laws, legislation, and policies that perpetuated systems of inequity by offering differential access to schools, programs and other

⁴ Unattributed quotes come from our collective imaginings from our iterative data collection and analysis.

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opportunities based on students' race, socioeconomic status, disability status, language spoken at home, or other aspects of their identities. As a result, our aim towards social justice teaching and teachers implicitly located the “problem” in the individual student, rather than in the system undergirded by histories of oppression and contemporary policies deliberately designed to maintain inequity.

In an analysis of the first three years of graduates certified in special education (Author, 2017), we found that residents left our program with a sense of “doubt, fear, and guilt” (p. 17), concerned that the classrooms and schools where they were going to teach would not support them as social justice-oriented teachers. Sociopolitical elements within schools that privileged students without labeled disabilities and their teachers were reinforced by teachers' schedules, certification requirements, and special education law, leaving residents unsure of their ability to be the type of teacher they wanted to be. We needed to be responsive to these sentiments, and support residents as they become *a part of the city*. This was not solely about understanding where students were coming from; this was about developing a more complete understanding of the contexts of NYC—that teaching for social justice required a deep comprehension of the complexity of the individuals, institutions, communities, and practices that constituted schooling.

When we individually reflected on this question, we each had come to a similar conclusion as Crystal:

- NYC public schools are part of a complex and complicated system... there is incredible, rich diversity (e.g., racial/ethnic, linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic) of communities, students, teachers, and schools. Simultaneously, there is also incredible segregation/separation (Emilie).
- Learning to teach in NYC would need to involve developing an understanding of the system and its complexities. And NYC is so much more diverse in so many ways—student backgrounds, languages, family types, religions (Rachel).
- Big bureaucracy, lots of schools, lots of awesome community resources... Very diverse city, but not necessarily diverse schools or neighborhoods (so teachers and students need

to find ways to gain the benefits of diversity while also dealing with segregation), very international and multicultural city (Laura).

Over time, our understanding of context expanded, considering many of the layers identified by Hammerness and Matsko (2013) such as the larger urban public school context and policy context, not just the specific urban setting of NYC. Our reflections illustrate how the social and political interact to create the context for teaching for which we were preparing residents.

We were not simply preparing residents to work with specific students who inhabited this context; we aimed to prepare future teachers to be social justice advocates who can agentially work within/against the political constraints of the current teaching contexts of the city, state, and country as a whole—contexts that stressed accountability and devalued students who were less likely to perform well on existing accountability measures. Teachers in NYC in particular had to contend with additional layers of bureaucracy due to the vast size of the district in terms of numbers of students, teachers, schools, offices, and departments, and residents needed to understand this centralized and complex bureaucracy that oversees them. As we wrote in one of our early interactive memos, we needed to “rethink schools as embedded in communities [and not] as isolated institutions.”

Preparing residents for NYC repositions context-specific teacher preparation as something that can “disrupt unitary notions” so that “urban” is not a euphemism for a district with Brown and Black students, or a community that is poor, or even a technical term for population density. Rather, when residents hear the word “urban” used to describe themselves or their students or their schools, we want them to ask, as we ourselves ask, who is using the word, and why? Who gains and who loses from this description of our partner district, a NYC that “defies categorization,” whose “students defy categorization but still are categorized”?

Reflecting on TR@TC's courses and clinical experiences, we realized a need for intentional disruptions and problematizing to support deeper, more nuanced understanding of what it means to teach in NYC as a sociopolitical entity. To do so, we shifted from residents spending two to four weeks in an "alternate placement"—a brief amount of time that did not allow them to develop relationships with faculty or students, or get to know the school culture, to residents having two year-long placements—an immersion placement for three days a week, and an extension placement for one day a week. With this new structure, residents participated in two different school cultures throughout the year. We also changed course assignments. For example, a "community walk" assignment that provided a cursory view of a neighborhood, was revised to a more extensive and extended community assignment that required residents to identify specific assets within a neighborhood and how schools could partner with neighborhood assets around student learning. In other words—they had to identify social and political elements of the neighborhood, analyze how they interact, and how they support or constrain opportunities for learning.

Over the course of our work with TR@TC, we have grappled with the idea of preparing residents specifically to teach in NYC public schools, hoping to provide students with opportunities to gain deeper understandings of the assets and nuances of different NYC neighborhoods. We began with a somewhat narrow view of context-specific teacher education and of urban school districts, the inner circles of Hammerness and Matsko's (2013) concentric depiction of contextual layers of urban contexts. Throughout this collaborative autoethnography, we have come to realize we are not just disrupting discrete terms, but also questioning the very idea of context and place:

One way to define the boundaries of a place is to use official, government designations—this line marks the border between [parts of the city]...Borders are important to many

people because they define who is "us" and who is "them," but borders are often disputed. They are often unofficial, and they often change. Time matters too. Someone who says "I grew up in NYC during the 70s" is describing a different place from someone who says "I grew up in NYC in the 2000s."

So even when we say that we are preparing residents to teach in NYC public schools, we acknowledge that NYC as place is a moving concept that we collectively construct, and those evolving constructions define and shape what it means to do social justice-oriented teaching.

Tension 2: Identifying and Supporting Mentor Teachers' Social Justice-Oriented Practice

Our initial assumptions about mentor teachers situated them as field-based teacher educators (Bullough, 2005) who play a critical role in the development of future teachers. We could not leave this role to chance. Thus, identifying mentor teachers (MTs) was a crucial first task for TR@TC. We hoped to identify MTs “who had the same lens and openness of the program” around social justice, and teaching more generally to serve as field-based teacher educators. We looked for MTs who were *both-and*: both well-versed in NYC schools, and with a vision that stretched *beyond* prevailing practice, toward more inclusive practices that disrupted rather than perpetuated existing inequities based on students’ race, dis/ability status, home language, and other factors. In program meetings we reminded ourselves that “good practice does not equal good mentoring” and acknowledged the “tensions between supporting/honoring (MTs where they are) and having MTs see themselves as learners.”

Our first step was to develop mentoring standards, drawing from existing standards as well as extant literature. We knew from experience, backed by research (e.g., Achinstein & Athanases, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2012), that assuming teachers already know what mentoring entails is problematic, so we focused on articulating what MTs would do—behaviors and indicators of performance—to help MTs comprehend and concretize their role as field-based

teacher educators. This, in turn, helped us clarify our vision around strong mentoring—and guided us in terms of the support we would need to provide.

We developed eight standards for mentoring, which included an emphasis on social justice, and focused MTs on residents' learning and K-12 student learning simultaneously, what Achinstein and Athanases (2010) have termed MTs' "bifocal perspective," and what we have termed in our own studies of MTs as "Progressive vision...a perspective [that] requires the mentor teacher to focus consciously on the learning of the individual teacher candidate as well as on her/his K-12 charges with the understanding that they are preparing both learners for the future" (Kolman, Roegman, & Goodwin, 2017, p. 108). We also designed professional development to help MTs translate the standards into practice, including orientation to the program, monthly meetings, full day retreats with residents and mentors, push-in support, and reflective self-assessments so as to deliberately support MTs in thinking about their mentoring practices.

In implementation, we faced many challenges. One recurring worry was that in practice, "some standards were challenging to interpret," especially where we struggled alongside MTs with "how to define social justice." In one analysis of data, MTs revealed that they felt most effective when mentees were able to replicate their practice independently (Goodwin et al., 2016). Another inquiry into MTs' approaches told us that they "sought to support their resident's self-esteem and provide technical knowledge and skills that they need to teach in their local context" (Roegman et al., 2016, p. 47). There was little mention of social justice, critical analysis, or equity pedagogy, which did not align with the vision we shared and tried to instill in TR@TC residents. Moreover,

A struggle that we faced was finding mentor teachers whose pedagogy matched what we were trying to teach in the program. We often felt lucky to find a mentor who would at least let a candidate have freedom to try different things.

While it would be easy to view this as a fault of the MTs, it also presented an opportunity for us to reflect on our vision, MTs' visions, and the systems and structures in place, both in TR@TC and in NYC public schools, that created opportunities and constraints for MTs as field-based teacher educators.

Weekly meetings of program staff led to reflections on vision, systems, and structures (Sanchez, Roegman & Goodwin, 2016). While what we did is important, *why* we did it is perhaps more so. We realized that we too were being instrumental, unintentionally emphasizing technical measures of *success*—attendance, completed assessments, cooperation/compliance—instead of adopting a stance of openness, and using our own social justice lenses to see mentoring through the eyes of MTs' realities. Taking into account the social-political context meant acknowledging the pressures MTs face in a high stakes accountability environment that places them in the cross-hairs between resident learning and student achievement (Goodwin et al., 2016). In an interactive interview, we noted “teacher evaluation and accountability pressures on mentors” as well as “current traditional schooling practices” that were often different from residents' coursework. This required, again, that we widen our gaze such that each individual MT was seen as operating within policy demands to increase test scores or risk public humiliation, at the same time that their own sense of professionalism had led them to choose to nurture students—their own and ours. We became more sensitive to challenges that mentors faced in stepping back from the center of the classroom and “allowing” a resident to teach, especially given these imperatives around test scores and student performance. We recognized that mentor teachers, especially those certified in special education and TESOL, “were already

so overburdened” and marginalized along with their students who are often perceived to be deficient and a drain on aggregate standardized test scores. We began to think more carefully about MTs’ time and pay attention to logistics. In essence, we started to cultivate our own “progressive vision” so that we could keep in view their needs alongside residents’ needs.

This is a continuous work in progress, with constant revision and numerous stumbles. Our focus has sharpened to make mentoring meaningful to MTs. As we deliberately positioned ourselves as listeners, we began to take into account the reality that MTs were at different stages in their development as mentors. We also came to realize that MTs’ practice occurred in interaction with the specific residents assigned to work with them. We noted that the program needed to be aware of the impact of resident placements on mentors. In an interactive memo, we discussed “mentor teachers who [had been] so committed in the past and are really doing this part, and then they have residents who are not responding.” These realizations helped us frame mentoring as a multi-layered activity that affords different ways for MTs to connect and engage with residents and with TR@TC.

From the start, we believed in the important role of mentor teachers in the development of future teachers as field-based teacher educators (Bullough, 2005). We understood that being a good teacher and being a good teacher educator are not synonymous, and that we wanted mentor teachers to collaborate with us as school-based, social justice-oriented (teacher) educators. However, given the challenging accountability context in which they work (Wang & Odell, 2002), MTs may act in ways that do not seem to align clearly to our specific vision of social justice-oriented practice. Ultimately, recruiting MTs was less about looking outward, but about looking inward at ourselves. We were the ones who had to be school-based in our approach and support of mentor teachers; we had to think about how our actions were supporting and enriching

the diverse practitioners and schools with which we were working in ways that advanced their goals, not just ours; we had to shake unconscious deficit perceptions of mentor teachers and invite them to be our co-teachers and co-planners. This means that development is now “on the part of everyone involved—mentors, other teachers, ourselves as a program, our residents”; we are all mentoring and being mentored.

Tension 3: Addressing the Continuum of Teacher Learning through Induction within a Social Justice Framework

The TQP grant stipulated a two-year induction program, providing us the opportunity to build strong connections between residents’ preservice learning and their ongoing development as professionals. Feiman-Nemser’s (2012) continuum of teacher development and her understandings of the induction phase as one in which novice teachers simultaneously teach students and learn to teach, has provided a foundation for our own understandings of how induction can look within TR@TC. Our proposal called for “Induction Mentors” (IMs)—experienced K-12 teachers who would work with graduates around instructional practice. An Induction Coordinator worked with IMs to build a collegial community that would collectively develop ideas, share stories, and address common issues related to induction.

In our interactive interviews, we noted that the IM role was initially envisioned to be as “an outsider of school context to support the graduate to push against the status quo...in a safe space.” This approach was partly informed by feedback from graduates of other preparation programs with whom we have worked. These graduates have informally shared that they graduated with a social justice stance, but with little support in how to enact it (e.g., Agarwal, et al., 2010), and we hoped that IMs could support TR@TC graduates to challenge that status quo as social justice advocates. Unlike other forms of induction, this vision required IMs and

graduates to resist socialization into a school or district—and TR@TC graduates were quick to tell us that this was not the induction support that they wanted. Although we were focused on ~~concerned with~~ supporting candidates—through the IMs—in disrupting existing racist, ableist, and other oppressive practices, that goal at times placed candidates in the difficult position of working against the communities they were newly trying to enter. In fact, in encouraging this stance through induction and discussing it in our interactive interviews, we saw that:

When IMs take on the role of disrupter, we have evidence that graduates resist that. One person... received support from TR@TC to find a [a teaching position in a different school], but completely resisted every effort and ended up disengaging from TR@TC induction.

While some graduates readily became involved in induction activities and worked with IMs throughout the year, others stopped interacting with TR@TC entirely, despite program staff and IMs repeatedly reaching out. We were overall disappointed with this bifurcated response to induction.

Our first step in reimagining induction was to adopt the position that induction “was mandatory for us to offer, but not for graduates to accept,” thus taking the pressure off graduates to participate and instead understanding that “folks have the right to make choices about how, and whether, they engage in induction.” Getting to this place was not easy for us because the IMs were committed teachers/teacher educators who offered a rich variety of learning opportunities for TR@TC graduates. We thought that all graduates would find these valuable—especially those who happened to have positions in schools that subscribed to different, deficit viewpoints of children from racially minoritized backgrounds, students with disabilities, emergent bilingual students, and others. For example, one of us reflected that...

We have graduates in segregated and self-contained [special education] settings. We hope they...could become voices or leaders in their own schools around more inclusive

practices. I wouldn't be happy if they adopted thinking of special ed. as a condition that we are going to cure with this intervention.

Given our mindset, we revised our thinking about induction to support “possible futures” (Vadeboncouer, Hady-Rachid, & Moghtader, 2013). We knew, firsthand as former K-12 teachers and through our work as teacher educators, the difficulty of those first years of teaching. In our interactive interviews, we discussed our hope that through induction, graduates could begin to see for themselves “what possible futures are there for later on as a teacher.” Our goal became to “plant seeds for future practice,” to make learning more invitational by being directly responsive to graduates' expressed needs.

However, even with our new approach that emphasized choice, some graduates still continued to resist—we realized we needed to push our thinking further. Our reimagining took us to the poetics of teaching and a more holistic view of our graduates, that induction needed to recognize the aesthetic, intellectual, and moral aspects of their work (Hansen, 2004). We recognized that our induction support had been focused on the tangibles of teaching—planning, classroom instruction, assessments, but our graduates—K-12 teachers working with specific student populations who are marginalized in schools and society—were fully immersed in their teaching and deeply engaged emotionally. They needed care as multidimensional people who choose to teach, not just teachers who happen also to be whole people. In our interactive interviews, we talked about designing induction to “preemptively address mental and physical challenges of teaching [with] holistic induction supports.” We hoped that by fostering the aesthetic, intellectual, and moral aspects of their teaching, we could model what they could similarly foster in students

Our program helped IMs carry through this holistic view in several ways. More recent IM hires, for example, have not just been experienced teachers but individuals who have also been

involved in arts-based and community-based efforts such as theater or yoga/meditation, with the intention that IMs could offer support along multiple dimensions, not just in terms of classroom-bounded curriculum and teaching. IMs began to understand their role as one facet of overall support for graduates and partnered with other mentors available to graduates—for example, the NYC Department of Education and many individual schools within it also offer induction support to novice teachers, such as PD and on-site mentoring.

Aligned with our mission to mentor graduates holistically, self-care became an emphasis of induction. More recent offerings included a weekend retreat focused on respite, community building, and inspiration to new teachers struggling with challenging jobs in challenging schools during challenging times. This was a stretch for us. We wanted the induction program to nurture and advance TR@TC goals related to graduates' teaching, and we questioned in program meetings and within our interactive interviews if it was “okay for induction to be a place of inspiration, place of support or friendship, place of self-care.” But, after much deliberation, we realized that graduates were asking for that type of induction—that provided “support around self-care, staying healthy, spiritual and emotional parts not just technical and pedagogical parts” of learning to teach for social justice.

With the second grant, in keeping with our intention to seed possible futures and also to invite participation around mutual issues and aspirations, we developed a “Teacher as Activist” series—a lecture series in which we invited scholars to address issues of social justice in the 21st century. Our goal has broadened to include our graduates' school communities, and we encourage them to invite colleagues to attend these and any other PD opportunities through TR@TC. Many of them do so, making shared futures more possible at schools across NYC. We have also moved beyond the initial two-year TQP requirement for induction, to invite all

TR@TC graduates, regardless of their graduation date, to stay connected through induction activities—and we have found many choose to do so, even as long as ten years later.

As we reflect on the role of teacher preparation in new teacher induction, particularly for TR@TC, we have shifted from an early view of required induction support focused on teaching for social justice, to a more nuanced understanding of teachers as whole people with multiple needs. We moved from thinking, “We hope you come, and it’s too bad we can’t punish you for not coming,” to thinking, “Tell us what you need, even if what you need has nothing to do with lesson plans or curriculum, and we will help you figure it out.” We attribute our movement to our reflective approach to our own teaching practices and our ability to actually hear what residents were saying. We had to shift our mindset from the idea of us having the answers and just needing to find the right incentives or supports, to the idea of residents as agentic practitioners who can identify their needs. Instead of providing answers, we provide space for them to explore their questions and work together to address them. As social justice-identified educators, we realized we were *not* engaged in social justice practice when we identified the questions and answered them ourselves. It is too easy for us as program faculty and instructors to decide what should be done and expect residents, graduates, partner school administrators, and mentor teachers to do them; it is less easy for us to listen, collaboratively imagine social justice practice, and enact it together.

Moving forward, we continue to ask ourselves for whom and for what are we designing the induction program, as suggested by Achinstein and Athanases (2010). The continuum of teacher development (Feiman-Nemser, 2012), provides us with the needed reminder that learning to teach is a process and that different individuals require different supports at different times. This suggests also that learning to teach from a social justice orientation is also a process, and

different teachers will get to that place following different routes and enacting different practices that we ourselves could not possibly imagine. Our role is not to tell them where to go or how to get there, but to work with them in their travels so we get there together.

Discussion and Implications

Acknowledging that “teacher education involves working across intersecting complex systems, including individuals, schools, preparation programs, and broader social systems,” (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2016, p. 69)—consciously addressing both social and political elements, we took on the task of examining multiple tensions that we face in a social justice-oriented teacher preparation program. This work allowed us to examine how these tensions link and overlap. For example, reimagining context-based teacher education requires acknowledging the multiple contexts in which teachers operate (Hammerness & Matsko, 2013), and that teachers in contexts serving minoritized and marginalized children are often teaching against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 1991) because of institutionalized racism, inadequate resources, punitive accountability, and prescriptive curricula (Blanchett, 2009; Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Teacher educators must help preservice teachers identify and disrupt stereotypes about those who live in particular places, and develop social justice-oriented pedagogies that offer equitable opportunities and actively resist the deficit characterizations assigned to black and brown children, and their communities. However, teachers also need to learn how to leverage context-specific institutions (e.g., museums, religious or cultural institutions, community organizations), each of which is located within and mediated by multiple, surrounding, ever-changing communities, to cultivate local allies and learn from and with those who have learned to use the system to dismantle the system.

One resource for supporting preservice teachers in developing their knowledge and understanding of teaching in particular places is their MTs. However, recruiting MTs who are already strong teachers and teacher educators is not always possible. As a result, teacher education programs must consider ways to support mentor teachers through ongoing professional development, rather than hoping to find mentor teachers who are already prepared to work as/with social justice-oriented teachers and teacher educators. We also need to hear, see, and embrace the many ways of enacting social justice as defined by school partners, taking care not to shut down dialogue or ignore progress by adhering to only our own understandings. We cannot presume to know others' understandings of social justice until we sit down and listen to each other, and we cannot assume that our understandings are right. Public school teachers are working under extraordinary circumstances within a challenging sociopolitical context and enact social justice practice on a daily basis simply by choosing to educate "other people's children" despite the constraints imposed by policy makers who typically have little understanding of children or families who do not represent the advantaged majority. We must respect their effort and assume capacity and goodwill on their part as the starting place for our work together. This is not to say that teachers are not responsible for engaging in critical reflection, to argue that having good intentions is enough, or to ignore the body of literature that shows how teachers enact white supremacy and other oppressive practices (e.g., Matias & Alden, 2019; Picower, 2009; Yoon, 2012); however, instead of placing the blame on teachers, we argue that systems, including teacher preparation and K-12 districts, themselves are responsible for creating contexts, classrooms, and environments in which social justice-oriented practice is the norm.

In addition, teachers and teacher educators need to learn how to navigate complex bureaucratic structures within which teaching and learning occur (Vernikoff et al., 2019). As we

have argued, place and context are not unitary concepts, so teacher preparation programs should be deliberate in exposing pre-service teachers to a range of experiences, enabling them to see uniqueness and complexity, and avoid essentializing places and people. With induction and mentoring support, novice teachers can extend understandings of context-based knowledge that they began developing as preservice students. This might involve guiding them to translate what they know to fit or serve a new and unfamiliar school context. Still, we must ask ourselves—How do we navigate these contexts and yet not be limited by them?

Examining these tensions through the lens of collaborative autoethnography helped us to embody an inquiry stance as teacher educators (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), and cultivate critical perspectives. We created the time and space to collectively and individually reflect on and analyze our process of reimagining TR@TC. In doing so, we drew on “personal experiences as primary material (data) for social investigation” (Chang, 2008, p. 108), with the goal of expanding understanding of social phenomena. This process enabled us to “bring forward the shifting aspects of [ourselves] and create ways to write about experiences in the broader social contexts” (Hamilton, et al., 2008, p. 17, 22). By writing about and speaking in/to each other’s narratives, we created a “hybrid new space” for discussion that allowed us to engage our experiences and expertise as teachers, teacher educators, and researchers (Taylor, Klein, & Abrams, 2014, p.16). We offer collaborative autoethnography as a possibility for

developing and executing programs of research for studying equity-centered initial teacher education with the dual purposes of continuously improving local programs, on one hand, and building theory about how, why, to what extent, and under what conditions teacher candidates learn to enact practice for equity, on the other. (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2016, p. 68)

Collaborative autoethnography also gives us the opportunity to reimagine ourselves as teacher educators, who, as Grossman, Hammerness, and McDonald (2009) say, are responsible for “preparing ordinary people, in an extraordinarily brief amount of time, to be prepared for the challenge” of teaching (p. 287). Through this process, we began to see how teacher education can function as a community space and a collective to discuss strengths, areas of tensions, and expectations (Kosnik et al., 2015; Selkrig, & Keamy, 2015; Taylor, Klein, & Abrams, 2014). We continue to traverse these tensions, keeping social justice at the core of our work, explicitly recognizing that inequities are perpetuated in schools, in society, *and* in teacher preparation, while attempting to addressing them “in knowingly imperfect, but concrete ways” (Cochran-Smith, 2010, p. 254).

Drawing on our own experiences in the writing of this collaborative autoethnography, we argue for all of the stakeholders involved in the preparation of teachers to take the time to critically reflect, individually and collectively, on the purposes of their practice. We may not agree on a single definition of social justice, but we need to develop shared understandings of what it means to teach all of the students in all of our classrooms well. From this, we need shared understandings of the varying and multiple roles that different stakeholders play in making this a reality for all students in every classroom in every school, the articulated mission of both NYC and TR@TC.

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