

Learning to Teach In *Teach For America*: A Case Study

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## **Dedication**

To my mother – Dolores – whose life story and daily actions taught me to recognize and resist society’s determination of what and who I might become.

For my father – Terry – whose circumstantially limited education denied him the chance to professionally express his full potential.

## Abstract

There is a gap in research examining teacher candidates' perspectives of learning to teach in alternative certification programs and, in particular, *Teach For America's* (TFA) program. This interview case study used critical discourse studies (Gee, 2005) and examined how one TFA corps member (CM) learned to teach through TFA's training model and its influence on her early teacher development. The study participant was Josephina, a 23-year-old upper-middle-class White woman. Her TFA placement was in a small urban charter high school, where 100% of students were English learners, recent immigrants and refugees, and everyone qualified for free and reduced lunch. Josephina's case was one of six study participants. She was selected because her CM profile most closely aligned with media and research claims about CM identity and how CMs fared as teachers of record in United States' under-resourced public schools. The study sought to look beyond generalized characterizations about how TFA CMs learn to teach. Findings supported research claims that CMs were underprepared to teach. Concurrently, study findings countered claims that CM teachers of record indisputably complied with TFA's program expectations, were uniquely harmful or successful as teachers of record, entered education intending to be temporary teachers, and were unilaterally ineffective as teachers of record in relation to alternative and traditional certification programs at large.

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

Teach For America (TFA), a non-profit organization, has faced controversy in the American education system since its founding in 1989. The organization trains and places thousands of beginning teachers in schools across the country, a practice that has both its fans and its critics. TFA corps members (CMs) do not go through traditional teacher-education programs (TC)<sup>1</sup>. Instead, CMs have a broad range of degrees, many of which are not in education at all. As college graduates, most TFA CMs are “a diverse corps of outstanding individuals from all academic disciplines” (Harding, 2012a, p. 59), and TFA uses a competitive and rigorous selection process to choose its recruits – in 2011 there were 48,000 applicants but only 5000 CMs were selected (Lipka, 2007, p. 59). Upon acceptance of an offer into TFA’s program, a recruit commits to teaching in high-need, under-resourced urban and rural elementary and secondary public schools for two years (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011).

### **The Study Purpose**

The study proposes to examine the complexities of one Teach For America corps member’s descriptions of learning to teach. The CM completed the TFA tenure at an urban high school where all students were English learners, immigrants, or refugees. Most had been in the United States for five or fewer years. During the CM’s first two years, she participated in a TFA and university partnership program. Once she completed the TFA commitment, she taught for a third year at the same school. Then she resigned

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<sup>1</sup> According to Grossman and Loeb (2008), traditional certification (TC) programs meant “by the second half of the twentieth century, the vast majority of teachers completed college –or university-based programs of teacher preparation” (p. 3). On the same topic, Darling-Hammond (2008) stated “among students who become teachers, those enrolled in formal pre-service preparation programs are more likely to be effective than those who do not have that [formal] training” (p. 337).

from teaching to pursue a non-education career.

The researcher applied critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2005) and ethno-methodologies to CM participant interviews. The purpose was to explore the explicit and tacit influences that guided the CM's teacher development during her three years as a TFA CM and classroom teacher. Chapter 3 includes detailed information about the study methodologies and procedures. This brief study description transitions to an examination of research about TFA training and CM preparedness to teach. The research provides background knowledge about the research topic. Table One (See Appendix A) includes keyword references, databases, and mainstream media research sources used in an initial secondary research and literature search.

*TFA training and teacher preparedness controversies.* TFA's pre-service training happens fast – too fast according to critics (Miner, 2010). In 2014, St. Louis, Missouri public schools hired 135 TFA CM teachers of record (TOR)<sup>2</sup> to staff some city schools (*Teach For America*, 2012b). The University of Missouri-St. Louis' Associate Dean of Teacher Preparation, Helen Sherman, acknowledged her “professional concerns about TFA's model: ‘It's a pretend band-aid ... these kids aren't prepared’ ” (Miner, 2010,

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<sup>2</sup> **Teacher of Record (TOR)** – Upon recommendation of the *Center for Education Policy Research* at Harvard University, the term *Teacher of Record* is defined as: “the teacher or teachers who have responsibility for providing instruction to a given student since the most recent prior test administration in a given subject. In some circumstances, a student may have more than one ‘teacher of record’ – for instance, if there is a team teaching in a given subject or when another teacher provides supplemental instruction. For each of those students, the state should approximate the share of instructional responsibility since the prior state test administration to be apportioned to each teacher. The state should also track whether each of the ‘teachers of record’ is a classroom instructor or providing supplemental education in a subject, e.g. as a ‘pullout’. The state should establish a ‘teacher of record’ for each student in each test subject for grades 3 through 8. For students in grades 9 through 12, the state should define a ‘teacher of record’ in those subjects for which ‘end of course’ tests are available. Teacher of record and their supervisors should be asked to verify and, where appropriate, correct the rosters of students for whom they have been assigned responsibility and they should do so at least twice per year” (Goldhaber, Hannaway, Hanushek, Kane, Rockoff, Sass, & Staiger, 2009).

para. 30). At the same time, Sherman's daughter graduated from University of Wisconsin-Madison with an English degree and joined TFA. When Sherman discussed her daughter's TFA involvement, the Dean conceded "she had mixed feelings [about TFA] overall" (para. 30). Generally, Miner's (2010) article about St. Louis' relationship with TFA "provided a window" into local-level complexities characteristic of community relationships with *Teach For America* (para. 36). However, Dean Sherman's statement that as CM TOR, "these kids aren't prepared," resonated with many traditional teacher certification (TC)<sup>3</sup> advocates, experts, and community members who stated that TFA's pre-service CM training happened too fast. On the other hand, experts (Feiman-Nemser, 2012) cautioned: "while quality programs require time, time alone does not guarantee quality. The important question is how that time is spent. Such a question cannot be answered by focusing on the [program] structure alone" (p. 73). So, though critics found fault with TFA's "fast-track" teacher preparation, traditional certification (TC) proponents recognized a program's length – a structural component – did not mean a lengthier program's candidates were any more effectively prepared than CMs to assume TOR responsibilities.

Still, TFA's pre-Institute assignments seemed to be a rigorous preparation expectation that CMs then were expected to complete, bring to Institute, and use as foundations for subsequent training and classroom learning. Pre-Institute work rounded-up to 40 hours of topic preparation: readings, video training, and teacher identity

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<sup>3</sup> According to Grossman and Loeb (2008), traditional certification (TC) programs meant "by the second half of the twentieth century, the vast majority of teachers completed college –or university–based programs of teacher preparation" (p. 3). On the same topic, Darling-Hammond (2008) stated "among students who become teachers, those enrolled in formal pre-service preparation programs are more likely to be effective than those who do not have that [formal] training" (p. 337).

reflective writing on education related topics such as poverty, racism, teacher leadership, traits and actions of successful teachers in low-income communities, personal identity, classroom observation, lesson plan development, and a “Story of Self” narrative (*Teach For America*, 2012e). CMs were instructed to bring completed pre-work to Institute where it was incorporated into daily processes of learning to teach (2012e). Again, as Feiman-Nemser (2012) noted, hours in learning or time in class did not guarantee teacher effectiveness. However, most education experts were certain that CM pre-Institute work combined with six weeks in Summer Institute training was Spartan preparation compared to the varied, lengthier traditional preparation models at colleges and universities (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008).<sup>4</sup>

TFA requires CMs to attend six weeks of Summer Institute training before they become teachers of record (TOR) and receive a classroom placement (Darling-Hammond, 2009). During the two years they teach, many regions insist CMs take graduate courses in education at a partnership university (Koerner, Lynch, & Martin, 2008). Concurrently, CMs must attend: a) monthly Saturday TFA-sponsored professional development conferences; and b) ongoing school placement sponsored professional development (Harding, 2012a). Frequently, CMs remain in education-related careers after completion of their TFA two-year agreement (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011).

Some articles describe the TFA training Institute as a rich, in-depth, intensive preparation program (Tatel, 1999, p. 39). Survey data shows an 82% satisfaction rating from CM Institute participants (Harding, 2012a). Others say the Institute is a “boot

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<sup>4</sup> Grossman & Loeb (2008) found that alternative certification programs at large typically require similar kinds and length of preparation as TFA’s program for teacher recruitment and training. Also, there are AC programs that require less time, training, and supervision than TFA’s program.

camp,” and they conclude that the brevity of courses and practicums is inadequate preparation to teach (Albina, 2012; Veltri, 2010). The research remains inconclusive, however, because studies do not delve into the particulars of Summer Institute’s curriculum, instruction, practicums, and teacher training during the school year.<sup>5</sup> However, aside from these and similar study artifacts,<sup>6</sup> anecdotal and qualitative evidence more often concludes that TFA’s pre- and in-service preparation is inadequate time-in-training (Veltri, 2010). This information leads education professionals and some recruits to conclude CMs lack the necessary practicum preparation to learn to teach (Lipka, 2007). Yet, it is unclear whether additional time in preparation would mean TFA and its partnership affiliates would collaborate to build a cohesive program wherein gaps and overlap in training, course, and school-based learning would also be addressed (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Still, most stakeholders agree that an extended pre-service training time would more adequately prepare CMs to work confidently and effectively in their newly acquired literacy communities (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Hopkins, 2008).

As noted, although there were studies that supported and opposed the integrity of TFA’s Institute model, all stakeholders agreed that more time in pre-service training would benefit CMs as they transitioned to TOR roles in public schools. The following section examines the research on TFA and in-service models of learning to teach and similarly seeks to determine if an in-service learning model is an effective way for educator candidates to learn how to teach.

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<sup>5</sup> See *TFA training materials (available on TFA Web site)* for more detailed accounts of TFA’s Institute’s framework descriptions and an overview of TFA-specific Discourses used in CM training

<sup>6</sup> See appendixes and TFA CM training, university, and school-base artifacts referenced at points throughout the dissertation.

*In-service CM learning to teach: Research and the effects of on-the-job learning to teach.* Once CMs are in the classroom, the effectiveness of CMs compared to other teachers has been studied. In both qualitative and quantitative studies about AC, TFA, and CMs learning to teach, the literature produces competing conclusions: some researchers favour and others reject the TFA CM presence in classrooms. For example, a study of TFA CMs teaching in an urban high school states: “TFA teachers are in general more effective, as measured by student exam performance, than traditional teachers” (Xu, Hannaway, & Taylor, 2011, p. 448). In another instance (Heineke & Cameron, 2011) a TFA-university partnership study characterizes CMs as educators who have students’ best interests in mind: “teachers’ discourse reflected their TFA preparation regarding ... the flaws in the education system and taking action to make change within the four walls of their urban classrooms” (p. 2). This research claims that CMs are “more effective” and “taking action to make change,” respectively. While this supports placement of TFA CMs as teachers of record, the statements use broad, universal language to indicate CM success. This last point is mentioned as the use of oblique language represents a central theme in reading the literatures about learning to teach.

At the same time, TFA is presented negatively in the research. For instance, Viadero’s (2002) summary of research and school principal survey data reveals that students with traditionally certified teachers achieved better results than with other teachers, including TFA teachers, an improvement of 20% (para. 12). Likewise, Veltri (2010), who has done ethnographic research and has long-term experience as a district and school mentor for TFA recruits, remarks: “Many TFA teachers were not familiar

with or exposed to urban, high-needs communities themselves and were naïve and unprepared for the realities their students faced on a daily basis” (p. 519). Here, TFA is viewed as a “subtractive”<sup>7</sup> force, a short-term triage measure that perpetuates education inequities. For example, one associate dean of education referred to TFA as a “band-aid” instead of a permanent solution to staffing under-resourced schools (Miner, 2010). Yet again, generalities such as test score data claims and inexplicit phrases are characteristic in the write-up of study results.

Political and policy comparison debates (Cochran-Smith, 2005) use student learning as a dependent variable (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002), aiming to establish a hierarchy of effectiveness between AC/TFA corps members (CMs) and traditionally certified (TC) teachers (Veltri, 2008). Since the early 1980s, ample research examines this perspective (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Labaree, 2010). Some researchers claim these studies, however, are agenda-driven interpretations of CMs’ experiences learning to teach (Carter, Beardsley, & Hansen, 2011; Heineke, Carter, Desimone, & Cameron, 2010; Heineke & Cameron, 2011). In any case, how CMs learn to teach is a key contention among TFA’s opponents and proponents, albeit, there is overall agreement that teacher quality and “teachers’ abilities are especially crucial contributors to students’ learning” (Bradford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005, p. 2).

*Taking stock of the literature and setting a course for study.* Literatures included studies and expert arguments that neutralized one or another claim that TFA was unilaterally a positive or negative influence on public school education. The ambiguity in

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<sup>7</sup> Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S. Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany, NY: SUNY.

the literature made it difficult to synthesize secondary research, primary study findings, and take an evidence-based position on the merits or faults of CMs as TOR in public schools. However, Miner's (2010) observation of TFA's role in public education most closely resonated with how the literature prepared me to study TFA CMs and how they learned to teach. Next, an article (2010) synopsis helped inform my stance on AC/TC preparedness to teach, led to questions about how teachers learn within education institutions and systems (particularly rather than generally according to research), and helped me write a statement of how I view the conceptual orientations of learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, pp. 74-96) as a dynamic collection of perceptual and practical resources to continuously challenge and inform an educator's practice during all phases of his or her educator career.

*Teach For America: There is the organization and there are the corps members.*

Miner's (2010) article in *Rethinking Schools*, a "non-profit publisher and advocacy organization dedicated to sustaining and strengthening public education through social justice teaching and education activism" (para.12) examined *Teach For America* in an article: *Looking past the spin: Teach for America*. Miner's story took her to St. Louis, Missouri where she interviewed education stakeholders' diverse views about TFA CMs in some city public schools. In the article's first paragraphs, I noticed Miner differentiated between TFA's goals, its star-studded media image, and the CMs professional motives. Miner stated:

I am still groping towards an understanding of the organization. I have come to distinguish between the generally hard-working, smart, and idealistic TFA



classroom teachers, and a national organization that is as sophisticated, slippery, and media savvy as any group I have ever written about. (para. 4)

Miner's statement and distinction between the CMs and TFA as organization was based on multiple interviews with education stakeholders: local union and school board representatives, teacher educators, political leaders, and TFA corps members (CMs) teaching on site in St. Louis' public schools. Miner persistently and frequently communicated with TFA national leadership to gain added information for the article. She interviewed people who were TFA advocates and critics. Miner concluded that there was no certainty that CMs' motives and practical experiences aligned with the TFA organization's goals for public school education. It was unclear what CMs knew about TFA's organization and the politics of education reform (Gee, 2004). As described in the article, Miner's experience with CMs and TFA was similar to my own work with TFA recruits in schools. Therefore, I concluded that for the purpose of this study, I, too, would focus on the "generally hard-working, smart, and idealistic TFA classroom teachers" (Miner, 2010) and address TFA's organization as that larger topic only when the organization was noted as significant by the study participant and in data derived accounts of TFA in her experiences learning to teach (Gee, 2013).

*Persuasive perspectives of learning to teach.* After making a decision to separate the CM's experience learning to teach from the broader image of TFA, it was possible to focus more pointedly on research and studies about AC and TFA CMs' accounts of learning to teach. The literature showed most AC and TC pre-service and new teachers reported they were underprepared and inadequately supported during the first several

years teaching (Grossman & Loeb, 2008; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Overall, the literature persuasively urged that more studies about how novices learned to teach, irrespective of AC/TC preparation, were much needed. More emphatically, extant research persuasively recommended researchers conduct studies of the novice experience in a particular program. Studies of educator candidates working in particular contexts were a way to uncover evidence of the concepts, practicums, or relational learning experiences that increased new teachers' confidence while they learned to teach.

Likewise, there was a need to identify the problematic learning elements that frustrated or impeded how the novices “acquired, generated, and learned to use knowledge in teaching” (Feiman-Nemser, 2008, p. 697). Right away, entrenched educative norms that impeded novice confidence, autonomy, and denied them permission to grapple with vulnerabilities and uncertainties claimed ownership of my thoughts. The structures, regulations, and scripted frameworks encouraged conformity. Frequently, novices left teaching altogether or yielded to systemic pressures to conform, teach mainstream norms, and reproduced inequities that prescribed what learning meant for teachers and students. Thus, though experts (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Kennedy, 1999) conceded that classroom routines, procedures, and frameworks were useful and even necessary for novices to use at the onset of their practice, in time the teacher must learn to think expansively and plan purposefully – knowing the reason for doing so is the inevitable anticipation of improvisation and spontaneity that characterized classroom learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Zeichner & Conklin, 2008).

*Stepping out of the concrete.* In short, this step into uncertainty echoes Ellsworth's

(1997) accounts of learning to teach. She learned from earlier scholars: teaching is an impossible profession (Felman, 1982). As I read through Feiman-Nemser's (2012) work on teacher learning orientations, I recognized that, in any instance in practice, drawing from one or another orientation could more aptly further educator development.

*What impressions about learning to teach were drawn from the scholarship and the research studies?* I was impressed with the idea of drawing from multiple orientations for learning to teach. Similarly, I was impressed with Britzman's (2003) study of the novice teacher in practicum. Despite theories about the normative influences of teacher preparation: courses, practicums, and micro-political influences (Britzman, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Lortie, 1975), Britzman's (2003) study of novice educators resisted static portraits of teachers as workers who submitted to authority. She contested theories that determined teacher socialization robbed educators of their capacity to exercise agency. She questioned that educators inevitably succumbed to practices that reproduced and affirmed teacher folk wisdom (Cuba, 1989). Further, Britzman (2003) addressed the importance of supporting young educators' inevitable encounters with uncertainty and vulnerability – both personal and professional. She acknowledged the inevitability of ambiguity in teacher learning and argued that teacher educators and mentorship explicitly address the complexities in teaching. Staying close to that knowledge of vulnerability and uncertainty, irrespective of years in practice, an educator could move into relationship with humility, a disposition necessary to locating an extended, generative pathway to learning to teach.

So, in reading the literature, I was persuaded that I may not know what is needed

– to facilitate learning – until I was in the moment with that circumstance, co-participants, and context. I was persuaded that how to best learn to teach is not located in any AC or TC program. Further, I was drawn to authors’ claims that novices’ and seasoned colleagues’ epistemological and sociocultural responsiveness to and success with students and communities were more important than any professional differences that existed between educators. When an educator was effective and appreciated by the community wherein s/he taught, other concerns about his or her politics became secondary considerations in judging another educator’s suitability to teach (Gee, 2013).

In considering how descriptive accounts of learning to teach became difficult to enact in practice, I was taken with Kennedy’s work and “the problem of enactment” while learning to teach (1999). How does someone know one’s self as person and educator? Then, how does an educator – in professional work with colleagues and students – strive to achieve congruency between his or her professed purposes for teaching and the individual’s enacted role as teacher? Was it possible to support teacher development even as the students and communities wherein I taught were ideologically bound to condemn who and what I represented, personally and professionally? And, in an educator’s role, in the midst of such a community, was it possible to act with love and integrity to encourage learning and model teaching? Yes. And that can happen because perspectives and standpoints shift in relationships that resist socially normative polarizing influences. So, claiming a moment and a purpose for diverse pathways to learning eventually led to ideological and epistemological shifts.

The previous section discussed what theories or studies most persuasively

expressed important principles and practices within teacher education and specifically the research on learning to teach: movement away from polarized views of TC/AC programs; engagement in research on teacher learning that excavates the tacit and concrete knowledge and practices that support teacher learning without censorship based on program affiliation; commitment to cohesive, vertical learning experiences where novices work in “affinity spaces” (Gee, 2004) or if that is not possible, in learning communities (Wenger, 1989); cultivation of professional solidarity through engagement with the “problem of enactment”; inclusion of Discourses of uncertainty, vulnerability, and collaboration in how learning to teach is addressed; and tolerance for impermanence in the development of programmatic structures and frameworks that guide learning to teach. These were some of the persuasively prevalent topics in the literature reviewed on learning to teach.

Having addressed what was persuasive about the literature about TFA’s teacher recruitment and training, alternative certification, teacher preparation programs, and learning to teach, it was troubling to recognize how pervasively ideologically motivated arguments dominated the research and writing about teacher education and learning over the past several decades (Gee, 2013; Zeichner & Conklin, 2013). Unquestionably, it was essential to understand and respect the importance of this partisan scholarship. Similarly, it was evident that researchers who sought to move beyond dichotomously positioned scholarly pursuits recognized that frequently policy-driven research failed to effectively address central and important concepts in teacher preparation and for the purpose of this study, “how teachers acquire, generate, and learn to use knowledge in teaching” (Femain-

Nemser, 2008, p. 697). In sum, the persuasive research provided guidance and direction in studying how CMs learn to teach. At the same time, it was difficult to resist getting caught up in the ideologically invested research. Yet, to do so would likely interfere with “inter-orientation” and “inter-agenda” scholarly support for new teachers’ learning.

*Recap of the introduction and literature sub-topics.* The introduction and literature review began with an overview of the debates about TFA and teacher preparedness. In particular there were concerns about the brevity of CMs’ summer Institute training. Next, the writing summarized controversies that surrounded issues with CMs as TOR and TFA’s in-service teacher training model. In both sections, studies and research reached different conclusions about TFA’s CM model for teacher training. A third section examined the policy and political disagreement about TFA’s role in public education. Miner’s (2010) research suggested there was a distinction between the CMs and their work in schools and the TFA’s organization’s high profile media image (Miner, 2014). This finding provided a means to separate CMs’ experiences learning to teach from the organization’s reputation except when the latter is referenced in relation to participants’ descriptions of learning to teach. Thus, the study focused on AC and TFA CMs’ training. Research in these areas recommended studies of programs and enrolled candidates learning at a specific site. Further, experts concluded there was a need to look at particular concepts and practices that benefit novice educator learning. Likewise, there was an interest in learning what novices found problematic about their teacher learning programs. Finally, there was a short synopsis of some of the literature’s persuasive claims about learning to teach. This led to a short interpretation of how the literature

conceptualized learning to teach as a life-long endeavour that expanded in its complexity as the educator continued to actively engage in teaching as a learning profession. Here, the writing returns to the controversies about AC and TC preparation and TFA's influence on education reform at a major university.

Indeed, debates about AC and TC preparation and Harvard University's well-established partnership with TFA have recently led to Harvard's decision to reform and expand its university teacher education program. The *Education Week* article, *Harvard launches fellowship initiative to prepare seniors to enter teaching* (2014) stated that TFA's popularity among the university's undergraduates is partially responsible for the university's renewed attention to its teacher preparation program. Perhaps TFA was a competitive catalyst that created the media attention needed to mobilize the university to more fully support schools of education and in-house teacher preparation reforms. Certainly, this story demonstrated that TFA and how CMs learn to teach has strong research potential and worth (Sawchuk, 2014).

### **Rationale**

TFA merits study because it has become a significant player in education, particularly in the areas of alternative teacher preparation and, in general, teacher education reform. TFA's outreach extends to all regions of the country (Lipka, 2007), and TFA is a recognized partner in the nation's educational system (Humphrey & Wechsler, 2007). Its popularity with education reform constituencies (Lahann & Reagan, 2011) and its success acquiring federal and private funding (Dillon, 2010; Humphrey, Wechsler & Hough, 2008) signal that it has support from significant education stakeholders.

Moreover, TFA's programmatic reach into the nation's underserved public schools continues to expand (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011); teacher educators and professional organizations are strongly invested in monitoring the program's effect on underserved and underrepresented students, families, and communities (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Labaree, 2010). Globally, its partner program, Teach for All, is a catalyst that positions TFA as an international teacher recruitment and training program (Luke, 2011). TFA is a clearly a prominent educational organization.

An investigation of TFA's influence in preK-12 education concluded that the significant presence of TFA CMs in under-resourced schools (Darling-Hammond, 1994) and the growth of alternative teacher preparation programs make TFA an exceedingly important focus for education research (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). For example, some teacher educators' studies (Heineke, Carter, Desimone, & Cameron, 2010, p. 126) cited the benefits of strengthening nascent educators' commitment to social justice teaching agendas through working collaboratively with CMs in TFA and university partnership programs. Additionally, other articles and studies stated that there are key reasons why it is particularly important to study TFA (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012): (a) CMs work in a relatively small number of U.S. schools, yet TFA placements for CMs are overwhelmingly in high poverty communities' school systems (Kumashiro, 2012); (b) CMs serve a disproportionate number of the nation's underserved students of color and poor white students (Veltri, 2010); (c) CMs are placed in schools that frequently



experience high turnover rates in leadership, veteran<sup>8</sup> staff, and in sites that offer fewer resources (Talbert-Johnson, 2006, p. 149); (d) CMs teach students in communities that report lower than average rates for high school graduation; this data correlates with high incarceration rates for young Black men in poor communities (Darling-Hammond, 2009); As this literature shows, TFA CMs are imbedded in important and challenging environments. Certainly, this information confirms that how TFA CMs learn to teach is a significant influence and important topic for research. Nevertheless, TFA's legitimacy and role in public education remains a highly contested topic.

### **The Academic Study of TFA**

In light of TFA's significance in and influence on education today, education reform constituents remain at odds about TFA's effect on public school students. In the area of teacher preparedness and learning to teach, there are two primary points of contention (Xu, Hannaway, & Taylor, 2011). TFA critics state CMs' training leaves them underprepared to effectively assume roles as TOR in public schools. Next, sceptics assert TFA recruits are apt to leave the classroom and education upon completion of the two-year TFA tenure. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that these two concerns are embedded in broad debates about TFA's influence on education.

On the broader issues, proponents of TFA and teacher preparation deregulation assert TFA's abbreviated training attracts qualified candidates who are credentialed in content areas but do not consider an education career due to certification program costs in

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<sup>8</sup> Effective, consistent, and sustained school leadership is one of the key factors that contribute to school improvement (Ngo, 2010). Conversely, the absence of quality or inconsistent leadership contributes to high attrition rates among staff, particularly TFA CMs. For example, Donaldson & Johnson (2011) found that, between 2000-2002, their survey study of three cohorts of TFA CMs showed that 18% of the 2,029 TFA CMs sampled left teaching due to poor leadership and lack of professional support from leaders within their school site (p. 50).

an era where student loan debt is crippling for many undergraduates (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). Second career candidates cite schedule difficulties; work life, family, time, and the expectations of mainstream teacher preparation programs deter individuals who, in mid-life, might otherwise be excellent educators (Friedrichsen, Lannin, Abell, Arbaugh, & Volkmann, 2008). Moreover, proponents of TFA argue superior verbal skills, leadership ability, and an “innate” talent for teaching (Evans, 2011) are more important than an extended course and student teacher practicum experience (p. 271). Further, TFA advocates (Irizarry & Johnson, 2012) contend TFA provides a more effective way for people of color or paraprofessionals to pursue an education career, and their study showed strong retention rates among TFA teachers of color. Last, TFA supporters say CMs fill a gap; recruits work in the nation’s poorest and most understaffed schools (Xu, Hannaway, & Taylor, 2011).

Conversely, opponents of TFA and AC argue that these programs are not adequately selective about the caliber of candidates admitted to AC programs (Chait & McLaughlin, 2009), and TFA CMs are resume builders who remain uncommitted to students or long-term careers in education (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). Further, education experts maintain that alternatively certified educators lack content pedagogical knowledge, an understanding of child development, and extended time in classrooms with mentor and university supervision when they assume the TOR role in schools (Darling-Hammond, 2009). Moreover, opponents contend TFA CMs are overwhelmingly short-term teachers, and this interferes with the need to build stable school cultures, particularly in communities where schools typically experience a high rate of staff exodus

every year.

In the previous section the two main concerns about teacher preparedness and learning to teach were explained. Additionally, there was discussion about some broader issues and viewpoints that support and oppose TFA as a credible teacher recruitment program, a training program wherein CMs learn to teach. Interestingly, an implicit or explicit theme resurfaces in the concerns cited in each noted asset or failing: the articles and research provided limited description, explanation, or interpretation of how TFA CMs learn to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). Perhaps detailed information about these experiences could provide information to support in-depth examination of the concerns and claims about the program's contribution to U.S. teacher preparation. This could lead to an examination of the kinds of learning and programmatic frameworks that prepare educators – both AC and TC to be highly effective educators (Darling-Hammond, 2005). This is a central theme and key contention throughout traditional and alternative certification research and practitioner communities (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). Specific to the research on TFA's teacher recruitment and training program, opponents contend the argument is leveraged by the contention that teachers are best prepared when they obtain an education-specific undergraduate or graduate degree (Darling-Hammond, 2009), which the TFA corps member selection process does not require (Labaree, 2010). Since TFA's first CM cohort entered public schools in 1990, the absence of these traditional education credentials while CMs are teachers of record remains a strong point of contention among all education stakeholders.

Located within the debate surrounding TFA CMs is a strain of education research

that attempts to understand and assess the efficacy of their training. However, researchers (Grossman & Loeb, 2008) agree that scholarship insufficiently examines teacher preparation within alternative certification (AC) and, within research on AC, relatively few studies examine TFA and learning to teach, including professional learning at the CM placement site. More broadly, Zeichner and Conklin (2005) state that irrespective of preparation program affiliation, there is lack of research that examines the complexities of any kind of teacher preparation in colleges of education. They state that more attention to “in-depth examinations of the nature of preparation to teach reading and mathematics, to teach diverse learners, and the features of field experience [is needed]” (pp. 284-285). Ginsberg’s (as cited in Britzman, 2003) study found there was insufficient attention to detailed complexities of learning to teach embedded in course expectations (pp. 62-69). According to Britzman (2009) teacher educators use a “vocabulary [that] confines supervision to ... what is known as instruction on ‘best practices’ ” (p. 387). She asserts that this resembles a technical, behaviorist model of learning to teach (p. 387), and higher education has failed to adequately address the necessity of dynamic learning in teacher preparation programs. Similarly, Humphrey and Wechsler’s (2007) research into alternative teacher preparation recommends candidates’ programmatic experiences be examined within a particular program to capture the complexities of learning to teach in that context (pp. 519-522). On balance, literature reviews and empirical research studies state that contextual differences, nuanced program distinctions, and close examination of specific programmatic courses and facets of tacit learning are lacking in teacher education research and studies that focus on these areas of various teacher preparation

programs are needed (Ziechner & Conklin, 2005).

The search for research on this kind of teacher training is even more difficult when looking for studies that specifically examine TFA CMs' experiences training to become professional educators. For example, CM interview and ethnographic studies (Veltri, 2008, 2010) yield responses that loosely address CMs' concerns with time and TFA's training model (Albina, 2012). Questions about curriculum, planning, university courses, and professional development evoke vague responses that fail to identify and discuss specific programmatic weaknesses and strengths (Foote, 2008; Veltri, 2010). In sum, concerns about how CMs' learn to teach in relation to their "teacher ability" is a prominent problem, a key contention among education stakeholders (Veltri, 2008), and a topic in need of further research study.

The most robust collection of writing within the larger body of TFA-themed literature explicates issues of policy and politics (Reagan & Lahann, 2011). Here, experts assert and contest that TFA aligns with neoliberal politics, an education agenda that supports deregulation of teacher education and interestingly commingles this primary theme with a regulatory agenda for education and a social justice agenda for education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Lahann & Reagan, 2011). Further, the literature concerning alternative pathways to teacher preparation that explicitly references TFA as a high profile example or obtains samples of TFA corps members' experiences as subjects or participants for studies most frequently overtly or implicitly compares TFA training protocol to traditional teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith, 2005), situating TFA within key areas of teacher education (Little & Bartlett, 2010).

Educational research on teacher preparation refers to TFA's program as an alternative teacher recruitment program, categorizes it as an alternative route to teacher certification (Evans, 2011), and compares it with traditional teacher education certification (Cochran-Smith, 2009; Berliner & Laczko-Kerr, 2002). Recent research (Cochran-Smith, Cannady, McEarchern, Michell, Piazza, Power & Ryan, 2012) suggests examining TFA as one of many "effects" emerging within the broader backdrop of current trends in U. S. and western education reform (Koerner, Lynch, & Martin, 2008; Lahann & Reagan, 2011; Luke, 2011). For example, Humphrey and Wechsler (2007) use quantitative analysis to examine TFA as one of seven all-state alternative programs. The results show that individual variety and complexity of participant experience brings into question the validity of using generalizations to describe teacher learning in TFA.

Some studies (Humphrey & Wechsler, 2007; Lahann & Reagan, 2011), opinion papers, and reports on the TFA and learning to teach (Koerner, Lynch, & Martin, 2008) suggest that more recently scholars have applied research designs that consider the complexities of experience of TFA Corps members who learn to teach in U.S. schools (Heineke, Carter, Desimone, & Cameron, 2010). This epistemological shift demonstrates a transition away from dichotomous thinking of "good" versus "bad" toward an openness to research perspectives that take into consideration the complexities in how TFA Corps members learn to teach. This suggests it is time for teacher education research to ask how these findings could benefit teacher preparation in traditional and alternative settings.

The shortage of research that examines or critiques specific practical elements of TFA's curriculum and pedagogy indicates that extant research lacks access to the TFA's

D/discourse for learning to teach<sup>9</sup> and, without working knowledge of the relevant Discourses that undergird the program's pedagogy and curriculum, there is an inability to engage in detailed descriptions or productive critique that divine harmful and helpful teacher learning concepts and practices; this is the practical knowledge that leads to constructive, actionable commentary and designs for learning to teach. For a specific example, little is written about TFA's Teaching As Leader framework (TAL) assessment tool (Gabriel, 2011; Harding, 2012b). The TAL conceptual framework is used to support formative and summative CM performance assessment throughout TFA pre-Institute, Institute, and in-service learning to teach (Gabriel, 2011; Harding, 2012b). The absence of specific details about this essential framework in TFA's instruction and assessment procedures influences how research characterizes the curricular integrity; study of the TAL assessment framework could produce constructive conversations about teacher performance, assessment, and evaluation in the context of learning to teach.

One way to critique TFA's approach to helping CMs learn to teach is through accounts from actual corps members, a central aspect of this study. In the literature, the accounts of former corps members' stories about their training, however, tend to include elusive or tenuous language. For example, the CMs' accounts lack detailed descriptions and explanations of the theoretical concepts and practical methods that help CMs learn to teach (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Farr, Kopp, & Kamras, 2010; Gabriel, 2011; Hopkins, 2008; Veltri, 2010). Harding's (2012a) article about TFA training illustrates this point:

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<sup>9</sup> See TFA Web site for information about TFA specific preparation information. This information provides insight into the D/discourses that CMs learn to recognize and use to establish significance, make some activities more important than others, and become literate with acknowledged and respected TFA signs, systems, and knowledge. Particularly during the first year as TOR, CMs interrelate using TFA's Discourse to represent and reinforce their level of ability and success with learning to teach.

[CMs] are required to study key concepts of teaching by reading texts and watching videos; observe in classrooms in communities where they live; and reflect on the teacher actions that most powerfully accelerate student learning such as backward design<sup>10</sup> and investing in students so they believe they can be successful. (p. 60)

Similarly, in an article about TFA training, Darling-Hammond (2009) states:

The idea of a teaching residency, which couples strong training and mentoring with well-supported pathways into urban teaching, could allow TFA to capitalize on its existing strengths and contribute more effectively to ... low income students and the schools that serve them. (p. 730)

In one specific case, readings describe facets of TFA's Summer Institute, the five-week pre-service training program for CMs, but the D/discourse is typically about CM attitudes and reactions in recalling their experiences (Veltri, 2010). The language characteristic of the CM recollections in the research is vague in its description and explanation of how CMs learn to teach. This educational research about how TFA CMs learn to teach uses general phrases to describe and explain learning content: a) the TFA "key concepts" of teaching practice or b) the elements and sources of TFA's "existing strengths." The research language is indirect and elusive. It lacks tangible, detailed information about TFA's theoretical and instructional frameworks for training teachers.

In tandem, research studies that rely on CMs' accounts of their TFA tenure heavily depend on references to CM attitudes and reactions about learning to teach

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<sup>10</sup> See Wiggins & McTighe's (2005) text *Understanding by Design*. This is a professional development guide used for long and short term learning plans and curriculum development.



(Foote, 2008; Veltri, 2010). Absent from this qualitative research are detailed CM descriptions and analyses of the specific theories and instructional strategies they learn and apply during the TFA tenure. In studies that use qualitative analysis, ample information cites general and varied levels of CM satisfaction or confidence in training and coursework (Carter, Beardsley, & Hansen, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). At the same time, little information about the practical pedagogical learning that undergirds the CMs' attitudes and reactions is qualitatively expressed. For instance, Darling-Hammond's (2006) book, *Powerful Teacher Education*, includes this CM's reaction to TFA Summer Institute preparation:

I felt like, "OK, I did the workshops; I know science; and I care about these kids. You know, I had the motivation to help, but I didn't have the skill. It's sort of like wanting to fix someone's car and not having any idea how to fix a car. I wasn't equipped to deal with it, and I had no idea." (p. 30)

Similarly, Veltri's (2010) article in *Education and Urban Society* includes a CM's reaction to TFA placement and learning to teach:

We were all rubber-stamped. "You're TFA? Come on in!" And then at Institute [TFA's training] in Atlanta, we never really had to handle our own class for one entire day, let alone weeks on end, which is what happens when you begin to teach your own class. It was like an unreal situation. (p. 516)

The four qualitative excerpts critiquing TFA's program fail to provide the kind of insight required to assess programs and teacher training in depth. For example, Harding's (2012b) reference to "key concepts" and Darling-Hammond's (2009) recommendation to

include “well-supported pathways” are too general to provide fodder for constructive conversation about TFA’s conceptual frameworks. To move away from general language and provide evidence-based critiques, researchers could include tables, appendix artifacts, or critique-specific material. Without these detailed resources, it is difficult to constructively converse about the structures or concepts in question in these two excerpted program examples. Likewise, in the two anecdotal accounts of CM impressions about training (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Veltri, 2010), both quoted CMs are presented as simply dissatisfied with how they learn to teach. This may be the case and, if so, it merits investigation. Yet, the CM excerpts are not supported with artifacts or any systematic analysis that explains the how or why of the CMs’ expressed frustration. In this case, a CM training schedule at Institute or the template and protocol for CM science teacher training observations are artifacts that would help guide a constructive Institute-specific critique. Without evidence that clarifies the concerns and protocols generally referenced in the four claims about TFA programmatic structures and conceptual frameworks, it is difficult to move beyond an ideological critique and into a productive action-oriented evidence-based assessment. Experts contend studies that include these later characteristics are needed to support change and reform in teacher programs and teacher learning (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008).

In sum, the general references to TFA’s programmatic (two cited excerpts) and CM training (two cited excerpts) attributes and deficiencies in the four TFA CM training excerpts<sup>11</sup> lack details and explanations about CM experiences and programmatic support for learning to teach. Information examples that could constructively illuminate the

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<sup>11</sup> Harding, 2012a; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Veltri, 2010.

excerpt findings for the reader include: a) templates and guidelines used at Institute to help CMs plan a science lesson; b) an explanation that Backward Mapping refers to the Wiggins and McTighe (2005) curriculum design model; an *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development* (ASCD) publication that is used to lesson plan at Summer Institute<sup>12</sup>; c) learning about relationship development and cultural competency using the *Diversity, Community, & Achievement Handbook* (2011); d) classroom routines and management using the *Classroom Management & Culture Handbook* (2011); and e) reflection or prompts for deep descriptions, explanations, and contextual detail referring specifically to the CM observation and reflection debrief template (*Brick by Brick Handbook CMA Handbook*, 2012).

If these research accounts included concrete instructional or concept-specific artifacts about CM training, each illustration could provide material suitable to ignite constructive, professional inquiry into the TFA framework for learning to teach. Then the rationales and approaches, the theories and practices, could become the basis for constructive critique. However, without examples of substantive evidence-based critique-specific artifacts, options for reconstructive commentary are limited (Gee, 2004). The general claims about program or learning sans evidence of program or candidate work leave researchers and practitioners few options for actionably using evidence to investigate findings and move forward to tangibly support teacher learning.

Likewise, quantitative research about how TFA CMs experience learning yields research that lacks useful content and pedagogy-specific details (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004). A study in *Teachers College Record* (2011)

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<sup>12</sup> Referenced in the CM quote from Darling-Hammond's book (2006, p. 30).

used statistical analysis to show that TFA CMs were just dissatisfied with their university partnership program's master level courses. Findings indicated that: (a) CMs were dissatisfied with the quality of the coursework; (b) CMs were "more critical consumers" (p. 862) and wanted course content that was responsive to their teaching and student needs; (c) CMs considered themselves marginalized when they shared courses with pre-service teachers in mainstream teacher preparation cohorts; and (d) CMs "wanted instructors who modeled practical teaching strategies" (p. 862). Again, although there were well-documented explanations of the metric data collection and analyses, the studies lacked specifics about the university course content, methods, and training. Nor did the studies provide access to information about the specific class content and pedagogical approaches that sustained the CMs' responses about the university course work.

These quantitative studies rely on data gathered from surveys and standardized test measurements. Like the qualitative studies, the research is plagued by oblique language. The vague descriptions and metric explanations stymie critics' ability to constructively expound on the aspects of TFA CM learning that support the studies' observed shortcomings and/or improvements (Darling-Hammond, 2009). More broadly, the ambiguous information standstills teacher educators' and researchers' ability to consider the procedures, curriculum, pedagogy, and frameworks that are effective, require adaptation, or are best discarded in the interest of better TFA CM preparation.

A final observation shows that research offers few specific references to TFA's *Teaching as Leadership Framework* (TAL) (Gabriel, 2011; Harding, 2012b). This assessment tool is used to focus CM teaching priorities and, in a modified model, the

TAL is a requisite part of each CM's assessment protocol (Farr, Kopp, & Karmas, 2010; Harding, 2012b). Too little discussion about important curricular elements such as the TAL framework is analogous to overlooking discussion of how traditional teacher preparation programs use the *Interstate New Teachers' Assessment and Support Consortium* (INTASC) standards (CCSSO, 2014) or Charlotte Danielson's framework for teacher assessment in a description or explanation of a program's protocol for how pre-service educators learn to teach (Danielson, 2007; Harding, 2012b). The absence of specific details about this essential framework in TFA's instruction and assessment procedures influences how research characterizes the curricular integrity; study of the TAL assessment framework could produce constructive conversations about teacher performance, assessment, and evaluation in the context of learning to teach.

In sum, accounts of CM learning apply qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine CM attitudes and reactions to TFA training, partner university coursework, and professional development in tandem with CMs' PreK-12 classroom experiences. Some studies conclude that effective educators are prepared in traditional teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Other research contends that CM TFA training is comparable or even superior to traditional pathways to teacher preparation (Education Policy & Research, 2012). This harkens back to TFA research determined to establish a better or best approach to how teachers learn (Cochran-Smith, 2005). In these and more recent research that references TFA and CM preparation, the Discourse remains abstract and lacks information that describes and explains content or practices that add to practical knowledge of how TFA CMs learn to teach.

Furthermore, in these studies the CM language is unclear or lacks adequate contextualization to assess the motives or biases supporting the expressed experience. Further, researchers frame CM stories and quotes using an evaluative tenor without expressly disclosing the motives – personal and professional – that support the implied standpoint on the issue (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Harding, 2012b). This writing provides assessment about whether CMs are minimally or amply prepared to teach rather than a focus on particular theoretical or practical elements of CM training. As a result, the reader does not learn about CMs’ perceptions of the specifics of their TFA preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2006, pp. 28-32). Qualitatively, extant research could provide more specific CM reflection of learning to teach. For instance, studies could offer information and explanation that include CM analysis and synthesis of the “what,” “how,” and “why” a theory or practical approach served an instructional purpose and subsequently influenced how CMs learn to teach.

Perhaps the vague language and oblique descriptions of TFA CM preparation in the literature indicate that many researchers lack access to the TFA’s D/discourse for learning to teach. Without a working knowledge of the relevant Discourses that undergird the program’s pedagogy and curriculum, there is an inability to engage in detailed descriptions or productive critique that divine harmful and helpful teacher learning concepts and practices; this is the practical knowledge that leads to constructive, actionable commentary and designs for learning to teach.

This general examination of the literature shows that there is a need to hear more from corps members in the field, and how they make sense of the training, courses, and

professional development that comprise how TFA CMs learn to teach. In fact, it could be argued that within the TFA organization (Miner, 2010), the CMs are the most vulnerable and least heard from sub-group except in sanctioned or biased publications about TFA (Farr, Kopp, & Kamras, 2010; Kopp, 2011; Miner, 2010). Critical educators make note that published media often makes blanket generalizations about a group of individuals' identities for the benefit of or to push forward a particular position within a political, social, or professional agenda (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Rogers et al, 2005). It is time to look at TFA corps members (CMs) in a manner that questions the D/discourses addressing corps members as the scourge or the salvation of public education (Miner, 2010).

CMs' detailed perspectives about learning to teach were relatively absent not only because of researchers' limitations, but also because CMs themselves, as first- and second-year classroom teachers, found little time to think and write about their own experiences learning to teach. Until this study, few had been asked in great detail about the various issues of their training and teaching. Without an understanding of how instruction took place, was applied, reflected upon, adapted, reinforced, or discarded for another approach, it was not possible to know what did and did not prepare CMs and thus what theoretical and practical approaches were effective and which approaches required adjustment. Therefore, this study endeavoured to chip away at this problem. To do this, the study examined what one CM said about the TFA program's training: the specific theoretical concepts and practical elements of the TFA program's training, university course work, on-site professional development, and in-service learning that influenced

how a CM learned to teach.

There were several reasons for addressing this problem: (a) there was the need to move beyond what comes across in the media and literature as a competition between traditional teacher preparation and AC/TFA<sup>13</sup> – To disengage from dichotomous tendencies, researchers began to study AC/TFA and delve into the theoretical and practical specifics of, in this case, TFA teacher training programs; (b) there were university professionals who collaborate with TFA, and they found that reciprocal relationships among institutions and organizations fortified new teacher learning opportunities and resources (Koerner, Lynch, & Martin, 2008); and (c) research indicated there was a need to support nascent teachers' education beyond the completion of course-based and traditional field work.

The research on TFA and learning to teach revealed three key attributes: a) The research emphasized two major standpoints that criticized or praised TFA's teacher recruitment program; b) The research highlighted general rather than specific programmatic and structural characteristics; and c) Very little research delved into the complexities of alternative preparation and in particular TFA corps members' experiences learning to teach (Carter, Beardsley & Hansen, 2011; Grossman & Loeb, 2008). Clearly, a research gap existed. Additionally, since TFA was expanding its presence and outreach in public education, this gap was increasingly problematic. Thus, to bridge the gap in understanding the specifics of CM teacher development, this study

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<sup>13</sup> It is time to consider that traditional teacher education's collaboration with TFA offers a way to share resources and work together to positively influence programs that are reaching the most vulnerable students (Zeichner, 2006). It might be suggested that to do otherwise is problematic in that it is placing the interests of institutions before those of the students and communities that these organizations purport to serve (Koerner, Lynch, & Martin, 2008).



examined how one TFA CM learned to teach through a TFA and affiliate partnership: TFA training and supervision, university partnership courses, and school-sponsored professional development/mentorship and induction (Harding, 2012b).

### **The Present Study**

*CMA profile data: Taking Josephina off the pie chart.* The study proposed to examine how Josephina, a TFA CM placed in a city charter school, described learning to teach during the TFA tenure. Josephina's case was highlighted because her personal and academic traits most closely aligned with media and research descriptions of the kind of undergraduate TFA recruited, trained (Lipka, 2007), and placed in schools (Harding, 2012a). Josephina's CM profile met TFA's criteria for recruits who were successful teachers without education-specific training. Likewise, that same CM profile supported TFA opposition arguments that CM recruits failed to learn to teach. Using Josephina's profile offered a way to deconstruct the static persona that either polarity used in arguments to build a case for how CMs fare in their placement schools. Next is a short list of some of Josephina's academic and extra-curricular characteristics (F/N: Wednesday, November 11, 2014).

Josephina's SAT score was 1440, her undergraduate GPA was 3.61, she was a pre-med student, and she attended a prestigious university. Josephina was the president of a 200-plus undergraduate member philanthropic organization before graduating from her alma mater. Concurrently, she was a program leader for an animal advocacy program. Further, she volunteered at area children's hospital and in an after school arts program for youth in the city. In sum, Josephina's pre-TFA academic success and leadership

experiences aligned with what TFA critics and proponents stated were stereotypical of who TFA worked to recruit into its program (Lipka, 2007). A study of Josephina's CM experience complicated the literature's staid CM profile as evidence of a CM's potential for TOR training effectiveness or failure.

As mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 1, Josephina's TFA school placement site attracted high school students<sup>14</sup> who were English learners, immigrants, or refugees. Most had been in the United States for five or fewer years. During the CM's first two years, she participated in a TFA and university partnership program. Once she completed the TFA commitment, she taught for a third year at the same school. Then she resigned from teaching to pursue a non-education career.

*Brief overview: Theory, methodology and research questions.* The researcher combined critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2005) and ethno-methodologies to explore the explicit and tacit influences that guided the CM's teacher development during her three years as a classroom teacher.

Between 2011 and 2014, in three 90 minute interviews, two post-study Skype conferences, and several member check email exchanges to verify research data explanations,<sup>15</sup> this CM's interview responses, stories, TFA Institute and university course artifacts, classroom teaching evaluations, and observation field notes provided deep, varied, and rich accounts of Josephina's early teacher development: TFA training, graduate courses, school staff development, her and other teachers' classrooms, collegial,

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<sup>14</sup> The age range for students was 14 to 21 years old. Also, many students lacked documentation of birth date, claimed to have attended school in another country but had no record of school attendance, and sometimes produced inaccurate or in some cases forged transcripts (Observation Fieldnote: Friday, October 1, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> In addition to three 90 minute interviews, Josephina granted a fourth interview.

and, of course, student interactions. Some more than other data were more frequently referenced in her self-described teacher formation. More about these elements is included in the study data chapters.

To further narrow the scope of this study, Feiman-Nemser's (2008) observation about different facets of teacher learning was helpful (2008). When examining teacher learning, research must make a distinction between "the content of teacher learning" and "how teachers acquire, generate, and learn to use knowledge in teaching" (p. 697). The latter of these two facets of teacher learning is the focus of this research study. The study examined how one TFA CM learned to teach through the TFA framework of pre-Institute reading, Summer Institute training, TFA professional development, university partnership courses, and school-based staff development.

*The research questions.* The study focused on one broad question: "How do Teach For America (TFA) corps members (CMs) learn to teach in TFA training, professional development, university course work, and TOR in-service learning model?" From the larger question, sub-topic questions guided the participant interviews. The sub-questions were formulated using Feiman-Nemser's (2008) framework for learning to teach:

- 1) In what ways were the CM's teacher preparation programs<sup>16</sup> represented in her conversation about content, pedagogy, and professionalism in her teacher

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<sup>16</sup> Institute training, university courses, school-based professional development, TFA training, and in-service learning as TOR.

preparation courses? What D/discourses were represented? (Think/Know)<sup>17</sup>

2) In what ways did the TFA corps member's teacher preparation program influence her everyday classroom teaching/practice? What D/discourses were represented? (Think/Know/Act/Feel)

3) In what ways did the TFA corps member's teacher preparation programs influence how she talked about the teacher she saw herself becoming? What D/discourses were represented? (Act/Feel)

As a method of inquiry, CDA helped identify and question the 'common sense' of a field of study, as it governed people's thoughts and actions. When language reached the level of Discourse, it was often unspoken, unwritten, and uncontested. It became "truth," even though it was arbitrary in its social construction. CDA was the vehicle for uncovering and contesting the D/discourses the CM study participant used to talk about learning to teach (Gee, 2008). Finally, CDA was supported by ethno-methodologies, because learning is context and situation-specific.

*Alternative discourses: Teacher learning and education research.* Earlier in the review, four excerpts from articles critiquing TFA's teacher preparedness program illustrated how vague language impeded efforts to productively tackle teacher preparation and learning concerns (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2009; Harding, 2012b; Veltri, 2010).

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<sup>17</sup> The "Thematic Framework for Learning To Teach" includes: (a) learning to think like a teacher, (b) learning to know like a teacher, (c) learning to act like a teacher, and (d) learning to feel like a teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2008, pp. 698-699).

Perhaps the vague language and lack of explicit evidence meant that TFA's critics were insufficiently literate in TFA D/discourses of how CMs learn to teach. According to Gee (2008, p. 176), if a secondary Discourse – such as TFA's CM recruitment and training program – was needed but not sufficiently acquired, this could account for a researcher's inability to pointedly address topics particular to TFA's teacher recruitment and training program. To develop literacy in TFA's Discourse required access to and agency in its Discourse community, and some researchers (Miner, 2010) attested to the challenges of gaining access to TFA's community. Marginal or emergent fluency in this secondary D/discourse contributed to gaps in explanations and assessments of the TFA program. This meant that perhaps critics were not sufficiently literate in TFA's approach to CM training (Gee, 2008, pp. 175-176). The lack of literacy and associated agency needed to address TFA CMs' experiences could explain the lack of specificity in much of the research that critiques how TFA CMs learned to teach. The attention to discourse here helped educate critics and researchers in addition to teachers.

*Theoretical touchstones to further guide the study.* Several theories were used to support methodological decisions, data collection, interview analysis, and explain findings. First, sociocultural theoretical frameworks helped to understand how people's comprehension and actions were affected by contexts within which people are at interplay with others and their experiences (Lewis, Encisco, & Moje, 2007). Second, critical pedagogy helped understand the work of the TFA CM and the researcher in a reflexive way that worked across their socio-cultural differences. For example, critical pedagogy provided a reflexive framework that the researcher and CMs could use to

inform socially and internally mediated learning. In turn, this had potential to enhance the researcher's and CM's reflexive capacities and expand options for transformative learning (Johnson, 2003). Third, post-structural feminist theory was applied to examine teacher learning in a way that sees it as having diverse rather than singular intellectual origins (Ellsworth, 2005; hooks, 1990).

*Learning TFA Discourse: Fieldwork and training.* As a lead teacher and classroom educator – explained in more depth in Chapter 3 – I taught and guided staff development in TFA CM-staffed schools, and I examined closely the training at the TFA Institute (Chicago, 2012). Further, I attended CM professional development conferences (J. Waggoner-Norquest, Personal Communication, November 7, 2013). I related these experiences in Chapter 4 and in other parts of this dissertation. In later chapters, I used narrative storytelling of my own experience to provide a perspective not often seen in studies of TFA CMs. This perspective of both the researcher and the CMs being studied served as a reflexive approach to critical pedagogy described in more detail in Chapter 2.

### **General Findings**

The theoretical approaches to, and analysis of, the TFA CM's interviews and an analysis of her artifacts and researcher fieldnotes showed the CM learned to teach through compliance, resistance, uncertainty, defiance, and use of extant social and cultural capital. The CM's experiences complicated socially constructed preconceptions about CMs, TFA, traditional certification (TC), and school-based norms of effective teacher preparation. Static renditions of CMs and learning to teach were interrupted by

the multiple, competing D/discourses that filtered through an educator's daily efforts while – in and out of classroom – she was learning to teach (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006, pp. 38-55). This influenced the CM's perceptions and preparedness to teach, particularly as she found herself in a school system and encountered its micro-political proclivities (Achinstein, 2006, pp. 136-151). These factors influenced the ways the CM shaped and was shaped by socially mediated learning interaction with TFA, teacher educators, on-site staff, and a student community that was ethnically, racially, socially, and economically diverse (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006). This later dynamic was further complicated as the school's students were predominantly people who were recent immigrants and who resolutely maintained a primary allegiance to their home languages, culture, secular or religious traditions, rituals, and customs (Leet-Otley, 2012).

That said, in the interviews, the TFA CM contended that she did not receive adequate learning support from any of the teacher preparation systems that were part of the TFA tenure agreement. This support was supposed to occur in TFA-organized, school-based, and university-sponsored instructional support systems as described in TFA structural and conceptual framework resources (Harding, 2012b).

More frequently, the CM described substantive support came from other CMs with whom she formed professional relationships (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). These connections developed into informal affinity groups, instructional exchange networks, and peer support communities. TFA, university partners, and CMs' placement sites strived to supplement this learning through informal extended mentorship and induction embedded in new teachers' learning (Harding, 2012b).

In sum, research deemed that regional differences in TFA requisites to teach in public schools influenced how effectively these programs supported CM learning (Humphrey, Weschler, & Hough, 2008). For example, in some regions higher education faculty continued to work with CMs during the first three to five years of classroom teaching (Heineke, Carter, Desimone, & Cameron, 2010). In contrast, CMs described TFA and university partnership as a mechanism for a) satisfying state requirements needed for CMs to be a TOR in public schools (Grossman & Loeb, 2008); b) generating revenue with minimal investment in student learning outcomes (Miner, 2010); and c) a contested arena where TFA and higher education professionals grappled with philosophical differences about AC and TFA and this, in turn, detrimentally influenced CM learning in the program structure (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008).

However, this problem was not, surprisingly, a major obstacle. This study will show how one CM learned to teach in other ways, with the help of networks of other teachers, borrowing systems and frameworks. Although the CM interviewed in this study noted that the concrete – though highly prescriptive – TFA approach to teaching was a helpful mainstay early in her tenure, she sought to move beyond that stage to meet students' needs in the classroom. This is where she ran into problems getting support for the kinds of knowledge, pedagogy, and learning theories – along with classroom observations and ongoing feedback – that she was promised during her recruitment period: from TFA, university partners, or on-site school-based professional development mentorship support. According to research on AC preparation, in-service learner support was frequently inconsistent and inadequate (Grossman & Loeb, 2008).



One unexpected discovery of this study was actually one of similarity, not difference. Indeed, literature showed that many of the issues that were purportedly unique to TFA (deemed worthwhile or destructive) existed in many pre-service traditional programs too (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). The lessons learned in this study could improve teacher preparation and learning efforts for all educators (irrespective of their educative background) in these communities (Koerner, Lynch, & Martin, 2008).

### **Chapter Plan**

This dissertation is primarily divided into two parts: theoretical and methodological chapters in the first half, and narrative and data chapters in the second half. Chapter 2 explains the theories that supported and emerged in the dissertation data analysis and interpretations. Primary reference is made to CDA and other theories further informed data interpretation and explanation in the study. Chapter 3 explains the methodology and the reliable and verifiable collection and analysis of the study participant's comments in interviews and in artifact documents.

To narrow the scope of this broad and complex subject, this study concentrates on one CM's personal educative background, recruitment history, and the CM's experiences learning to teach through TFA's requisite protocol and associated experience. The first data section, Chapter 4 is a narrative, self-reflexive chapter that partially explains: (a) the researcher's interest in TFA CM trained teachers; (b) provides a snapshot of the context wherein the CM was a teacher of record as she learned to teach; and (c) examines the researcher as teacher-educator and colleague along-side CMs learning to teach in schools. The chapter also explains how critical pedagogy and theories of teacher learning are used

to explicate the experience in the narrative account. Chapter 5 uses CDA (Gee, 2005) to examine and analyze the Discourses that informed, shaped, and were shaped in the CM's own K-16 and TFA educative experiences. Chapter 6 uses CDA and draws on three of Gee's (2005) seven building tasks to excavate and explain what the CM makes significant about her TFA experience learning to teach.<sup>18</sup> Equally important in Chapter 6 is Josephina's references to the influences of micro-politics at school. She discussed the impact of school culture factors on how she learned to teach. School leadership and culture prominently figured in Josephina chose to leave the education profession. Chapter 7 explains the overall findings and implications of the study for TFA researchers and researchers of teacher education in general.

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<sup>18</sup> The phrase "One phase" includes TFA pre-service training; university partner courses and assignments; TFA classroom observation and debrief sessions; school-sponsored professional development; and TFA monthly professional conference Saturday sessions.

## Chapter 2 – Theory

As mentioned in Chapter 1, in addition to other research, this study primarily applied the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (Gee, 2005; Rogers, 2004, Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley Hui, & O’Garro-Joseph, 2005) to interviews with TFA CMs to examine how TFA CMs talk about specific theoretical and practical elements of learning to teach, filling a gap in the research on TFA CMs.

As noted at the end of Chapter 1, eventually, Josephina’s CM experience learning to teach became the dissertation’s case study. This provided time to conduct an in-depth focus on the experience of one CM, A recruit whose TFA profile aligned with personal and professional characteristics that TFA proponents and opponents claimed were assets or detriments to a CM’s teacher effectiveness, respectively. Then, CDA was used to address Josephina’s responses to the research questions. She also supplied more supplemental artefact material than the five co-participants. The university course syllabi for two graduate classes, assigned graduate research paper, completed debrief reflections from Summer Institute training, and other artifacts enriched Josephina’s data cache. Having the document evidence of Josephina’s TFA learning to teach experience was an added persuasive factor that made her case suited to studying how she learned to teach.

Josephina’s stories enriched extant research explanations of TFA CM training because the data addressed varied facets of TFA’s teacher recruitment program: TFA training, graduate courses, site-based staff development, and in-service teacher

development.<sup>19</sup> The transcribed interviews and artifacts from the five other CM participants' were used to cross check, corroborate and, at times, complicate the analysis of Josephina's data.

CDA was particularly useful in this case because the interview study hinged on an investigation of "the relationship between language and social configurations of education" (Rogers, 2004, p. 3). In this research study, one specific social configuration was *Teach For America's* (TFA) teacher recruitment and training program and, more pointedly, how one CM explained her experience in all phases of the program design.

Early in Chapter 1, a section acknowledged that language was political and this, in concert with how Josephina learned to teach amidst teacher education and learning reform controversies, intensified the complexities of Josephina's teacher learner role. For example, Josephina's CM status made her particularly vulnerable to conversations about policy agendas, teacher program structural and conceptual frameworks, teacher learning orientations, and local micro-political issues.<sup>20</sup> Concerns about social justice and education equity figured prominently in CMs' learning and teaching TFA tenure, too. CDA applied to Josephina's interviews<sup>21</sup> problematized documented suppositions about CMs' affinity to TFA and the role of CM agency – or lack thereof – as CMs navigated TFA's teacher development model in relationship to TFA's organizational mission and mandates. In the service of excavating these complexities, Rogers (2004) described a

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<sup>19</sup> Recognizing that there is a degree of "support" continuum, the value placed on learning outcomes varies and is rarely adequately understood as either effective or ineffective. The study seeks to consider how the grey areas of what one TFA CMs says comprise the theories and methods of learning to teach.

<sup>20</sup> For all eight of the foundational principles of CDA that support the use of CDA for the purpose of this study, see Rogers, R. (2004). *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (p. 2). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

<sup>21</sup> Interview data analysis was often supported or illustrated using supplemental artifact data referenced as appendices and included in the dissertation.

CDA model wherein researchers examined social problems through CDA analysis and subsequently made recommendations for social and political action. An examination of Josephina's data provided a way to examine the influence of the political in language on how Josephina was learning to teach.

In particular, experts claimed that teachers' own educative experience significantly influenced how they learned to teach (Lortie, 1975; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Researchers who examined AC teacher preparation concluded this was particularly evident in AC in-service teacher learning (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). By working from an analysis of Josephina's interview texts to an examination of the political and social contexts wherein the texts emerged, the researcher could engage in critical deconstruction of the occurrence's discursively constructed foundation. Using CDA was a way to look deeply into the influences at work as Josephina learned to teach. Further, CDA was a way to interpret and explain how and why certain influences prevalently factored into how she learned to teach in TFA's program. Lortie (1975) and Feiman-Nemser (2012) assert the influences were frequently grounded in the novice's early primary and secondary home discourses (Gee, 2008). The novice experienced these home-based discourses as common-sense realities and social "truths."

In CDA, the "truths" aligned with different ideological stances (Gee, 2008). As novices entered classrooms, these "truths" influenced what they believed it meant to learn to teach. The Discourses and discourses/language built the theories and practices that prepared people to teach and undergirded how they enacted teaching with students in classrooms (Kennedy, 1999). CDA as theory and methodology was a way to consider

how Josephina might draw upon primary and secondary Discourses to learn to teach.

At the same time, as certain theories and practices were normalized, internalized, resisted, or questioned, the language used to explain how one was learning to teach was transformed (Rogers, 2004; Gee, 2005, 2008). The everyday experience of teaching was a place wherein these discursively figured experiences happened. In these instances, Discourse Studies were a way to explore novices' capacities for discursively “‘reconstructive’<sup>22</sup> aspects of power” (Rogers, Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005, p. 384). Through interactional classroom discourse, the everyday experience learning to teach became a way to understand how discourse practices evolve[ed] in relation to “time and contexts” in experience with learning to teach (pp. 384-385). A critical discourse analysis of Josephina’s interview data “provid[ed] insight into the ways people in various ages learn” through in-service AC and teacher development programs (p. 385).

Discourse was a key consideration in this project as well because it uncovered the often unspoken assumptions of people and their communities, assumptions that condition and cloud the way people understood and analyzed TFA, CMs, and the way TFA CMs understand the training and teaching work. Literature and studies on TFA’s teacher recruitment and preparation program concluded that scholarship about TFA shaped and was shaped by a D/discourse of praise or vilification for the program and its recruits (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). To illustrate, two research studies that used CDA to learn about TFA and CM experiences focused on: (a) TFA publications in relation to broad

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<sup>22</sup> Rogers et al. (2005, p. 388) recommended “productive, constructive CDA approaches ... used to shape constructive interventions in policy and practice in education. In 2012, approximately 10,000 TFA CMs taught over 600,000 students in regionally located under-resourced U.S. urban and rural public schools” (Harding, 2012b).

education reform and policy issues (Lahann & Reagan, 2011), and (b) CM teachers' D/discourses of resistance and compliance, and emergent teacher identities shaped by TFA change theory (See Appendix B), social justice imperatives, and district and state curriculum mandates (Heineke & Cameron, 2011). Neither study focused, however, on CMs' courses, training, professional development experiences, or in-service practice learning to teach. Yet, it is likely that associated competing and complementary D/discourses that construct and are constructed by TFA and corps members' experiences created different approaches and reified existing approaches to how educators learned (Rogers et al., 2005). For example, in the TFA-focused studies that used CDA as theory and methodology, the researchers demonstrated that CDA was suited to identifying and questioning common sense rhetoric (Gramsci as cited in Gee, 2008, p. 61) embedded in scholarship about TFA teacher preparation and how corps members learn to teach.

Education research also provided a novel site for the application of CDA. Indeed, Rogers (2004) asserted that there was a need to apply CDA to matters of learning. This was particularly the case as ideologically charged D/discourses have created a climate of fear in all areas of education reform (Gee, 2013).

Using CDA also drew attention to the sociocultural and political education reform agendas (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Kumashiro, 2012) that vie for "front-row" consideration in determining what and how educators learn to teach (Pennycook, 2004, p. 129). According to Gee and Britzman (as cited in Rodgers & Scott, 2008) these agendas placed nascent teachers in a precarious position in their first formal program of professional development. For instance, CMs were expected to demonstrate fidelity to the

TFA framework for learning to teach and concurrently grapple with adapting that framework and its underlying ideologies to their particular experience; this was rich with interpersonal and group affiliations that contributed to how CMs networked as a way to learn to teach (Veltri, 2010). Sociocultural theoretical frameworks posited that a person's ways of understanding and acting were sculpted by contexts, actions, interplay with people, and the composite of these experiences (Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, & Place, 2000; Rowe, 2004; Wenger, 1998). Considering the broad-based descriptions of TFA CM training and university partnership course work, CMs spend a considerable amount of time in TFA affinity groups and their university course structures; interpersonal contacts may slightly vary (Carter, Beardsley & Hansen, 2011). However in all instances these sociocultural learning experiences interface with how CMs internalize, apply, and practice teaching (Gee, 2004; Harding, 2012a).

Applied to the interviews in this study, CDA became a vehicle for uncovering the D/discourses CMs' use to talk about learning to teach – insight rarely found in the literature. Using CDA, one CM was positioned within her experience learning to teach and its greater network of meaning. In Gee's (as cited in Rodgers & Scott, 2008, pp. 734-735) CDA work, he posited that people in interactions co-construct a culture, an "interpretive system" (p. 734) that included verbal and non-verbal communication and action, providing a common mental scaffold. The scaffold framed and extended the possibilities for shared understanding among participants (Gee, 2004). Gee's "affinity spaces" concept fit with how Josephina and other CMs related and lent each other support while they were learning to teach. For example, education studies showed that, in the



context of how new teachers learned to teach (Smagorinsky et al. as cited in Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Samuel & Stephens, as cited in Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 478), CDA as methodology revealed multiple layers of complexity as novices negotiated various levels of relationships<sup>23</sup> that included elements such as: (a) personal background, (b) TFA CM affinities, (c) university, school, and district requirements and micro-political intricacies that contributed to institution or organization-based learning (Achinstein, 2006; Zeichner, 1999); (d) state requirements for student achievement, and (e) CMs characterized as “embodying [education] reform by being ‘the impetus for change’ including acting as critics to the very [educators] who are assigned to be their mentors” (Lipka, 2007; Samuel & Stephens as cited in Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 735).

A strain of thinking, however, was missing. In D/discourses that constituted how people make sense of learning to teach, a question remained: what D/discourses did CMs identify as central to how they were taught and how they learned to teach? The research on novice teacher development has not explicitly focused on how these influences were manifest in: (a) nascent educators’ training and courses, and (b) nascent educators’ accounts of their structured learning. Likewise, few studies examined how novice teachers exercised agency and questioned, adapted, or worked outside organization-sanctioned norms for a TC or AC program of learning to teach (Britzman, 2003). CDA studies that explore these phenomena could contribute to the literature about how new educators learn to teach (Grossman & Loeb, 2008).

This study applied Gee’s (2005) theory and method of CDA-analyzed interview

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<sup>23</sup> “Relationship” is one of Gee’s (2005) building tasks (p. 12) in his theory and method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

data, interpreted, and explained how some parts of TFA CM training, relationships, and university courses influenced CM experiences learning to teach (Grossman, Schoenfeld, & Lee, 2005). CMs' home experience, what and how they learned before and during preK-16 exposure and, subsequently, what they trusted were universal social customaries or codes, comprised the CM's primary Discourse community. Each CM use his or her "home D/discourses" to inhabit and establish membership in certain social worlds. Gee (2008) pointed out that a person who had "really mastered" (p. 172) a Discourse typically moved through that Discourse unaware of its norms while simultaneously working within the boundaries defined and also limited what was conceivable within the realm of that Discourse community.

To develop one way to conduct a CDA analysis, Gee (2004) identified "seven areas of reality" (p. 11) that formed a literacy/discursive system: significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign-systems and knowledge. A CM brought his or her primary Discourses into interaction with the secondary literacies he or she encountered in diverse social and cultural worlds. In these experiences, the CM acquired and/or learned secondary Discourses<sup>24</sup> (Gee, 2008, pp. 172-173). The primary Discourse was the scaffold for how anyone, in this case the CM, acquired and learned subsequent secondary Discourses.

In turn, secondary Discourses shape and are shaped by primary Discourses (p. 173). Gee (2008) explained that in a diverse society like the U.S., there were continuous negotiations of social, cultural, and economic mobility and position. Thus, among some

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<sup>24</sup> Learning and acquiring a Discourse is not an "either/or" endeavor. Many people have little or some access to secondary Discourses. Other people learn, acquire, and become fluent in certain secondary Discourse/literacy communities (Gee, 2008).

groups, Discourse was used to “hide one’s initial socialization if it was not ‘mainstream’ enough, [and] there are many complexities around the notion of ‘primary Discourse’ and the problems in tracing its fate through individual lives” (p. 173). Fecho (2004) referenced his social-class-based experience with this notion (p. 20). He marked the time when, as a working class, white man who graduated university, he learned when and how to use the “impersonal pronoun ‘one’ as opposed to the more personal use of the pronoun, ‘you’ ” (p. 20). He reflected: “If the goals were economic and social advancement, the price was personal change and a certain degree of acceptance of or fluency in the language and systems of the middle class” (p. 20). The acquisition and learning of a secondary Discourse changed one’s identity. It also promised access and agency in that other newly acquired Discourse and its social world, in this case the world of education.

Analyzing which secondary discourses CMs brought to their training and teaching required knowledge of an individual’s personal and professional profile. It required information about the CM’s community-based and public sphere Discourse enculturation. TFA CMs transitioned to their TOR role with strongly internalized secondary Discourses from their home lives and educative experiences (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Research confirmed pre-service teachers bring their Discursive positions into their work world irrespective of TC/AC preparation background (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). To the degree that CMs acquired and learned TFA’s secondary Discourse, their attachment to it grew more or less stable (Veltri, 2010). However, CMs’ contractual fidelity to TFA and the attribute of being self-identified leaders (See Harding, 2012a; Lipka, 2007) dovetailed to forge a commitment to being successful CMs and TOR (Foote, 2008; Veltri, 2010).

This merged successful CM and TOR identity interfaced two powerful secondary Discourse communities: a) TFA's Discourse of learning to teach; and b) a model of social justice education grounded in neoliberal politics and education. While CM TOR

These Discourses differed in fundamental, significant ways from the public and community-based secondary Discourses<sup>25</sup> of a) traditional graduate education programs; b) public PreK-12 education systems/micro-political literacy; and c) community-based Discourses representative of the communities where CMs teach. According to TFA's Institute curriculum, recruits are expected to be minimally literate in all of these Discourses to work effectively with varied Discourse communities, comprised of diverse education stakeholders, during their TFA tenure (See Ladson-Billings as cited in Kumashiro, 2004; Fecho, 2004).

To illustrate this theoretical position, Gee (2008) asserted: "If one has not mastered a particular secondary Discourse which nonetheless one must try to use, several things can happen, things which resemble what can happen when one has failed to fluently master a second language" (p. 175). In these situations, Gee (2008) stated a person resorts to his or her primary Discourse and attempts to "fit it to the needed functions" (p. 175) rather than fumble about in the yet-un-mastered secondary D/discourse. According to Gee, this was ineffective (p. 175). To exemplify, a frustrated CM was interviewed and remarks, "We were all rubber-stamped. 'You're TFA? Come on in!' " (Veltri, 2010, p. 516). The CM's choice to use "primary informal Discourse" in this

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<sup>25</sup> A community-based discourse is represented by literacies in how a person responds to public authorities in a specific community: police, firefighters, local politicians, storekeepers, faith-based organizations, etc. (Gee, 2008). At times, community-based secondary Discourses extend into public sphere secondary Discourse communities. Distinct boundaries do not exist among many Discourses or literacies.

context characterized him as someone who is ambivalent, possibly cavalier, and perhaps frustrated with TFA's placement protocol. According to Gee (2008), the CM's D/discourse presents him as an " 'everyday person,' not a specialist of some sort" (p. 168); the D/discourse does not represent the speaker as someone who is able to speak to the specific issues and frustrations about TFA's and the school site's placement protocol. For instance, maybe the CM was misinformed and was upset about his or her site placement. Or, maybe the CM had questions about how placement decisions were made and was bewildered by the school's management of this protocol.

These speculations about the underlying tension in the CMs' exasperation about as a TFA CM "being rubber-stamped to teach (anything?)" is that there is too little information and no context that helps the reader discern the CM's specific concern. A researcher's request for more information about the CM's comment: "We were all rubber-stamped" (Veltri, 2010, p. 516) would have been helpful. From it, a researcher or teacher educator could have gathered constructive insight to productively critique the CM's concern. However, the remark as cited does little more than express frustration and intimate a lack of organization or maybe push forth an ideological position about TFA's approach to teacher preparedness. Gee (2013) stated that evidence, not ideology, is what is needed to move education reforms forward in action-oriented ways. In short, as cited the specifics of the CM's concern with his training and site placement are unclear and, with added coaxing, the CM might have elaborated in a manner that provided information that could ignite a useful critique. More in-depth discussion about the CM's concerns could perhaps uncover an articulate, pointed critique of his CM experience. Insights that

communicate sincere reflection and concern about a particular issue would signify the CM expected TFA and the school site to understand the importance of making intentional and prudent decisions about how and what CMs teach on site. This would position the CM as a TOR who took seriously – and expected the program partners to do so as well – how staffing and curricular decisions were made in the best interest of novice educators as they prepare to guide student learning in a school. Thus, the CM’s remark, expressed in an informal, primary vernacular, edged with an intertextual uneducated phrase, “Come on in!” intimated the CM’s belief that the school wherein he was placed lacked a serious commitment to ensure the students’ teachers were effectively prepared. The comment did nothing to constructively pinpoint the real issue, represented the school as ambivalent about securing effective teachers, and failed to represent the CM as a committed teaching professional. Discursively, it is likely there were issues underlying the CM’s informal remark. However, the exchange failed to capture information that productively benefited any of the education stakeholders.

This was an illustration of how reverting to a primary informal Discourse, when unexamined in the research analysis as such, may not capture the research participant’s underlying knowledge or understanding of how he or she thinks or feels about TFA’s program for learn to teach (Gee, 2008).

Next, Gee (2008) said the people who tried to use a secondary Discourse wherein they had no mastery usually drew from an already familiar and related secondary D/discourse (p. 175). An example of this second strategy would be illustrated in an article that used the Discourse of teacher preparation or learning to teach to explicate or critique

TFA's teacher recruitment and training programs (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Gabriel, 2011). Conversely, an instance of this second approach would be media coverage wherein TFA proponents use neo-liberal Discourse to tout TFA's CM successes. However the media accounts of TFA fail to delve into the substance of the CM's training and teacher preparation (Katz, 2007; Lahann & Reagan, 2011). Once again, without acquisition and learning that led to fluency in the secondary D/discourse, the writers resorted to a familiar secondary D/discourse that, at best, opaquely represented CMs' effectiveness and experiences learning to teach (Gee, 2008, p. 175).

Gee (2008) offered one more option that education stakeholders used to attempt working within a secondary D/discourse within which they were not yet literate. The author "use[d] a simplified, or stereotyped version of the required secondary Discourse" (p. 175). In this case, that could be typecast versions of CMs' profiles, backgrounds, and organization-based, or media-generated propaganda (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Lipka, 2007; Tatel, 1999). It could be a simplified version of TFA Discourse about the learning that occurs at the Summer Institute (Foote, 2008).

In the later case that Gee described, the mischaracterization of CMs within the research is only recently being contested in studies produced by former TFA CMs and teacher educators from TFA partner universities. Gee concluded that bi-discoursal people more frequently find ways to loosen the "log-jam" in reform progress caused by polarization of thought and position (Gee, 2008).

When applied to this research, there was evidence that articles and research that moved beyond dichotomies in teacher learning reform were written by researchers and

teacher educators with histories of working with CMs: a) in and outside of the university, b) in collaboration with TFA supervisors, and c) in the CMs' classrooms and school placements (Heineke & Cameron, 2011; Lahann & Reagan, 2011). Gee (2008) stated: "for all the real challenges they face, bi-discoursal people (people who have or are mastering two contesting or conflicting Discourses) are the ultimate source of change" (p. 167). In teacher education and learning to teach, past resistance to bi-partisan dialogue resulted in the diminished possibility to inspire generative thinking and learning instead of oppositional critiques.

Critical scholarship is amply represented by oppositional critiques that used CDA and attend to matters of teacher learning. At the same time, the research lacked accounts that amplified the efficacious and resilient critical events and incidents that were also part of every day's school experience (Rogers, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

CDA as theory and methodology can be used to examine issues of power with an aim to encourage a focus on expansive vulnerability instead of contracted failure and cynicism in scholarship. It can inspire researchers to courageously move into and remain in what Alsup (2006) referred to as the borderlands: the discursively diverse "in-between ground, the place of becoming, the space of ambiguity and reflection" where it is advantageous for the researcher to learn about and within varied ways of learning to teach (p. 9). According to Gee (2013), it was necessary to wonder at and whole-heartedly work within the mysteries and perplexities that complicate learning to teach in 21st century education reforms.

Gee (2005) reminded his readers that at its best, CDA engaged the researcher in



“a human task” (p. xii). The most important outcome of an application of CDA was to pay attention, to think deeply about what people say, about the words they use *and* what those words meant to them. CDA is a means to investigate an individual’s or a community’s experience. The process can concurrently teach the researcher how to listen past disagreement, how to become a more compassionate teacher or scholarly opponent, and how to be in conflict that actually produced learning (p. xii).

Listening past disagreement was an underlying part of Chapter 4. The realization that there was a need to “pay attention, to think deeply about what people say” (p. xii) led to an invaluable reflexive moment, a reconnection with professional dispositions I realized I took for granted. All this cascaded from a discursive analysis of a seemingly uneventful conversation. The discussion that foregrounds the Chapter 4 data analysis was, in part, a lesson to pay attention to the discourses one invokes and the purposes for doing so in conversation participation.

### **Benefits of Applying CDA**

CDA was particularly useful as a research method in this context as it shines light on teachers’ discourses for researchers and also for teachers. With support from practiced critical educators and teacher educators, novice teachers can learn to recognize how the D/discourses that inform educative decision-making shape and are shaped by social contexts. They can realize their agency and choices when faced with decisions about normative educative forces. For example, studies show that, in the context of how new teachers learn to teach (Smagorinsky et al. as cited in Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Samuel & Stephens, as cited in Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 478), CDA as methodology reveals

multiple layers of complexity as novices negotiate various levels of relationship<sup>26</sup> that include elements such as: a) personal educative background; b) TFA CM affinities; c) university graduate school requisites; d) school/district requirements, micro-political intricacies, and organization-based learning (Achinstein, 2006; Zeichner, 1999); e) state requirements for student achievement; and f) “embodying [education] reform by being ‘the impetus for change’ including acting as critics to the very [educators] who are assigned to be their mentors” (Samuel & Stephens as cited in Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 735). A study of learning to teach that is grounded in CDA: a) provides teacher educators with insight into what and how CMs learn in their teacher preparation programs; b) produces an analysis of the findings to contribute to scholarly conversation and action in teacher education reform; c) demonstrates how CDA, when applied to CM conversation can explicate the D/discourses embedded in how they learn to teach; and d) uncovers ways to integrate critical discourse studies into teacher and student learning experiences (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

More detailed information about how TFA CMs learned to teach increased traditional teacher educators’ familiarity with the organizational Discourse, and the particular D/discourse used in CM training. Discourse Studies applied in this way became a reconstructive tool (Lewis, 2006, pp. 376-377). It was a way to examine the socio-cultural and political influences affecting TFA CM training and learning (Lewis, Enciso, & Lewis, 2007, pp. 16-21). For example, CDA applied to CM learning could demonstrate how learning to teach through a particular program required CMs to “accumulate,

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<sup>26</sup> “Relationship” was one of Gee’s (2005) building tasks (p. 12) in his theory and method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

assimilate, and accommodate information, ideas, [and] concepts” (p. 18) that signified their solidarity with TFA’s program and methods. Likewise, as CMs assimilated to TFA’s program, simultaneously or over time they made decisions to reproduce, resist, and reconceptualise their own pre-existing and TFA received skills and knowledge about learning to teach (p. 18).

This presupposed that some CMs engaged in learning to the degree that they gained acquisition and learned access/agency in “contesting and conflicting” (Gee, 2008, p. 167) Discourse communities over the two-year tenure. Further, it suggested CMs enacted practices that demonstrated the value of working within competing Discourses when one or another learning orientation more effectively supported their own and students’ learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

According to Gee (2008, p. 167), bi-discoursal people were in unique positions to transform, interrupt, and take-up established or entrenched Discourses. From that position, they integrated an unfamiliar Discourse into one that was considered oppositional and thus created something different, a Discourse that became a “source of challenge and change” (p. 167). For example, Gabriel (2011) engaged in this process as she examined how Ball and Cohen’s (1999) professional development model intersected with TFA’s *Teacher As Leader* (TAL) professional development assessment model. As a former TFA CM and doctoral candidate in curriculum and instruction, Gabriel (2011) was uniquely positioned to critique the assets and deficiencies of how TFACMs learned to teach. Likewise, her access and agency in the realm of traditional teacher education positioned her to contribute similarly to traditional teacher learning models. In Gabriel’s

article, the intent was to explicate productive intersections between what some consider oppositional Discourse communities.<sup>27</sup> The purpose of the article is to provide a practical professional development framework wherein teacher learners have a shared language through which to critique and reflect on their practice.

According to Gee (2008), bi-discoursal people like Gabriel have the ability to work through and within multiple and competing discourses and “are the ultimate source of change, just as bilinguals very often are in the history of language” (p. 167). Listening to Apple (2001), Gee (2008), and Lewis (2006), a traditional teacher educator, practitioner, or critical pedagogue who acquires access and agency in TFA’s Discourse could, in theory, collaborate and potentially “challenge and change” how CMs learn to teach. Through conversations that acknowledge CMs’ efforts as worth of inquiry and use CDA to engage in productive critique, it might be possible to work within TFA’s system and further a progressive, “deeply democratic” (Apple, 2001) learning agenda for teachers. In sum, CDA is useful as a pathway into conversations that connect programmatic structures and conceptual frameworks with enacted classroom practices. Equally important, the conversation could extend to how, in the 21st century, education policy directs decisions about teacher education and learning in AC and TC programs (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Thus, learning to teach through TFA’s program could include conversations that use CDA to explicitly examine: neo-liberal socio-economics’ influences on education reform agendas; teacher education and learning to teach;

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<sup>27</sup> Oppositional Discourses (much like education policy agendas differ and sometimes take a similar position on one or another point within education reform) refers to different ideological and epistemological description and enactment in teaching (Kennedy 1999). For example, Feiman-Nemser (2012) presents different learning “orientations” in teacher development: technological, practical, academic, critical/social, and personal “orientations.”

epistemological orientations in everyday classroom practice; and the underlying ideological principles that guide CMs TOR responsibilities (Lahann & Reagan, 2011).

### **Other Relevant Theories**

Furthermore, this study's approach drew on three secondary theoretical frameworks to negotiate the complexities of understanding how TFA CMs – and all educators – learn to teach. The companion theoretical considerations included: Feiman-Nemser's framework for how people learn to teach (2008); critical pedagogy's commitment to critical questions and reflexivity (Fecho, 2004; Kincheloe, 2004); and post-structural feminists' (Britzman, 2003 & 2009; Ellsworth, 1989, 1997, 2005; Lather, 1991) challenges to established norms for teacher preparation (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012).

First, Feiman-Nemser's (2008) thematic framework for learning to teach ensured that adequate attention was given to “the interconnectedness of content, process, and contexts in learning to teach” (p. 698). Her framework provided tenets for developing open-ended interview questions that addressed the following areas: (a) learning to think like a teacher, (b) learning to know like a teacher, (c) learning to feel like a teacher, and (d) learning to act like a teacher (pp. 698-700). The language of Feiman-Nemser's (2008) framework invited possibilities for conceptually expansive interpretations of learning to teach. That allowed participants to exhibit diverse perspectives in their descriptions and accounts of how they described learning in TFA training, professional development, university courses, and classroom practice. For example, “learning to think like a teacher” (p. 698) might be interpreted differently depending on a person's ideological

perspective or his/her underlying agenda for what mattered most in teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). The research design for this study assumed that descriptions and interpretations expressed in an interview yielded dialectical juxtapositions (Lather, 1991, p. 49) that represented participants' competing and contradictory agendas for teacher learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). For instance, some researchers (Gay & Howard, 2000; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012) contended that most of the curricular and pedagogical tenets of expert-endorsed teacher preparation programs were conceptualized from a deeply embedded Eurocentric approach to education. Other studies contended that a person's preK-12 experience (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1015-1016) or learning in a high stakes testing/regulatory reform environment within "shape[ed his/her] pedagogical development" (Brown, 2010, p. 477). Thus, Feiman-Nemser's (2008) framework of four broad themes provided flexible parameters for the CM interviews. It encouraged participant interpretation from whatever experiences and associated interpretations were accessible to the interviewee (Felman, 1982).

Next, critical pedagogy was an important undergirding theory for this study because it recognizes the struggles of working for an emancipatory research/education agenda<sup>28</sup> and seeks to participate in people's journeys toward "gain[ing] the power to make their own life decisions in solidarity with a justice-oriented community"

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<sup>28</sup> Kincheloe (2004) asserts that critical pedagogy does not promote "emancipatory" practices that presuppose that the goal of an emancipatory effort involves uncritical adoption of Western mainstream norms. He acknowledges the lack of critical self-reflection inherent in any approach to critical pedagogy where there is the intent to "emancipate" another group. The intent is to participate in co-constructing a journey toward learning that is mutually emancipatory or transformative (p. 51). Freire (1975) asserts that wherever there is oppression both the oppressed or oppressor live a life void of freedom. Each group is ensnared a certain role's web and bound to enact behaviors the reify inequities, squelch possibilities for new forms of community, and are ensnared in the service of preserving a status quo.

(Kincheloe, 2004, p. 51). In this case, people making the journey were TFA CMs, and critical pedagogy helped them avoid falling into the trap of education practices that did not represent students' and schools interests.

Critical pedagogy (Fecho, 2004; Kincheloe, 2004) commits the researcher/teacher to reflexive self-monitoring of her or his practice (Lather, 1991, pp. 41-50), which is considered in depth in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. The researcher-teacher considers learning to teach (Ellsworth, 1989) to be less about a vested interest in building consensus with a student or group around a preconceived ideological premise and more about an interest “in working together across differences” (Lather, 1991, p. 43). This concept is valuable in this study as CMs are frequently profiled in the literature in a unitary manner (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Tatel, 1999; Sass, 2011). However, it is important to note that research has begun to dispel this view (Kumashiro, 2012) through studies that reveal the complexities that more aptly portray the identities and experiences of TFA recruits (Donaldson & Johnson, 2012; Heineke & Cameron, 2011).

In these areas, critical pedagogy moves researchers and practitioners beyond Enlightenment era views of “emancipatory” education that left little room for difference in conversation and action (Kincheloe, 2004, pp. 48-49). Instead, an expansive critical pedagogy expansively addresses the realities of learning to teach for novice educators and how they learn with students. This approach to critical pedagogy encourages novices – in this case, the CM – to openly talk about learning using a language of uncertainty, vulnerability, doubt, failure, and ambiguity (Britzman, 2003). Likewise, an expansive critical pedagogy necessarily amplifies the CM's responsibility for an activist approach to

social justice. Activism is a central tenet in critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2014).

Earlier research on AC (particularly TFA) represented one or another ideological standpoint about TFA and public education (Harding, 2012b; Miner, 2010). Drawing from critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework supported a study wherein it was assumed that research participants: (a) learned to teach within an organization that was politically and socially controversial,<sup>29</sup> and (b) learned to teach knowing that TFA's social justice imperative<sup>30</sup> inspired many CMs to want to teach.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, CMs knew that TFA critics invoked a social justice Discourse to reason CMs' presence in U.S. schools detrimentally affected public education interests (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Kumashiro, 2012).

Amidst social justice controversies and multiple education reform issues, CMs were caught-up in the larger political and policy conflicts about TFA and its supporters. Yet, they found ways to navigate the systemic challenges. With this in mind, Miner (2010) made an important distinction: it was important to separate the organization's broader purpose from the CMs experiences learning to teach. It did not make sense that everyone working in an education organization necessarily adopted and enacted the mission and vision of the organization as stated. People were able to draw from competing Discourses to respond to diverse agendas within what appeared to be a static, rigid system. Britzman (2003) reminded researchers and teacher educators that this happened with novices learning to teach.

Equally, irrespective of AC or TC preparation, people entered teaching for varied

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<sup>29</sup> See Labaree, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> See Lahann & Reagan, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> See Heineke & Cameron, 2011.



reasons. Moreover, they may do so without knowledge of the workings of systemic inequities in education. Attention to broader social and political issues in education may not be part of the teacher education program course requisites. Programs without a social justice focus exist given the diversity of conceptual frameworks that guide learning in the nation's TC and AC teacher preparation programs (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). Thus, AC and TC novices became TOR working from technological or academic orientations instead of a social or critical approach to learning to teach. However, research demonstrates that, over time, novices exercise agency and adopt difference orientations in how they continue learning to teach (Britzman, 2003; Fecho, 2004). Frequently, educators commit to some kind of learning orientation transformation once they are TOR in the classroom (Fecho, 2004).

As Ellsworth observed, critical pedagogues have a responsibility to think about the presuppositions imposed upon any affinity group, particularly in ways that essentialize people's identities. Ellsworth concluded that both educator and course participants hold partial knowledge of the multiple, simultaneously contradictory and common standpoints taken up by people within both affinity groups and as individuals. In thinking about Josephina's interviews and artefact data, this amplified post-structural feminist understanding of critical pedagogy was important to this study.

Aptly expressed in Ellsworth's (1989) article, she stated, "One of the crucial features of discourse is the intimate tie between knowledge and interest, the latter being understood as a 'standpoint' from which to grasp reality" (p. 304). This critical pedagogy reminded the principle investigator it is the researcher/educator's responsibility to

mindfully and compassionately wrestle with his or her: (a) vested interests in certain standpoints, (b) discoveries of difference and commonalities; (c) recognition that knowledge and motives were at times contradictory and always partial, and (d) the outcome of learning is not sameness of purpose in a militant sense. With these and other attestations to the uncertainty of learning to teach, the impossibility of the profession's aims becomes evident. Instead of seeking certainty as evidence of becoming a good teacher, "learning" to teach more aptly aligned with the rejection of any semblance or desire for a pasteurization of thought. One can let go of attachments to predictability regarding what was "deemed" learning.

Rather, learning as critical pedagogues was to collectively practice a sense of "unity" that tolerated "interpersonal, personal, and political" fragmentation that is not stable or predictable. This is the semblance of unity that is sought out and cherished (p. 315). This application of critical pedagogy supported interview conversation that invited "juxtaposition as interrogation" (Lather, 1991, p. 49) as Josephina talked about learning to teach from different standpoints. Initially Josephina's desire to enact teaching correctly inhibited her ability to trust what she was learning. However, gradually she became more relaxed about conveying evidence of contradictory agendas that simultaneously influenced how she learned to teach. At any moment, certain observations or borrowed phrases were positioned as central, center, and marginal to orthodox accounts – other people's accounts that is – of how she learned to teach. This last cautionary point about methodology reminded the researcher to continuously: (a) self-monitor her agenda for what "counted" as learning and (b) mindfully consider what Josephina described as

meaningful learning in her interview and supplemental data. I consider these issues in more depth in the next chapter on Methodology.

Critical pedagogy in this study helped the PI to consider the dichotomies in the ideological debates over TFA and to be hopeful about how learning about a CM's experience could contribute useful information about how young educators learn. The transition away from polarized views about AC/TC programs and learning to teach created a pathway to productive inquiry in teacher learning. Recent research invested in excavating productive AC/TC critique represented experts' movements toward working across difference. A study that examined a TFA CM's learning experience was a step in that direction (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008).

Michael Apple (2001) explained the value of working across different agendas and epistemological standpoints. He observed that organizations and individuals with varied or oppositional agendas sometimes locate sites of alignment where they work across ideological differences. Perhaps they meet and share resources to achieve a common desired outcome (pp. 220-226). Why is this so? Apple posited this strategy strengthened both or several factions' abilities to further a mutual area of their agendas for reform or change (pp. 222-224). Apple (2001) illustrated how well the "Right" used this strategy to amplify the importance of their goals for U.S. education reform (pp. 68-69, 194-195). Likewise, to a lesser extent the "Left," organized similar alliances (pp. 96-98, 228). He reminded critical pedagogues of the need for action-oriented critique (pp. 33, 64, 96-98, 218-219). Using examples of "critically inclined practicing educators" (p. 228), Apple urged critical pedagogues to enact practical reform strategies in the same

way that the “Right” gathered its constituents and used common interests to collectively gain influence in education reforms. He concluded that more action-oriented critical research – the kind done in this study – was needed to amend a research imbalance that favored theoretical studies and lacked community-based practical research applications. Moreover, Feiman-Nemser (2012) agreed with Apple, noting that “the discourse about critically oriented teacher preparation was often quite theoretical, and practices to achieve particular purposes have not been clearly articulated” (p. 88).

In this vein of advice, to make critically oriented teacher learning practical and tangible, Apple (2001) urged critical pedagogues to contribute more action-oriented studies and secondary research to stimulate critical momentum in education reform. To illustrate, Feiman-Nemser (2012) named five “instructional strategies” common in a critical approach to learning to teach: journal writing, action research, emancipatory supervision, curriculum analysis and development, and ethnographic studies (p. 89). Here she posited: “it is not the strategies themselves but the purposes to which they are put that justifies the link with the critical orientation” (p. 89). Thus, in learning to teach, teacher educators like TFA CMs must understand how to mesh critical theoretical and practical ways of learning to make explicit how strategies, through instructional learning and practice, were applied in social justice oriented approaches to learning to teach. Subsequently, novice teachers can then adapt and similarly apply these strategies for progressive learning with students when the new educators are TOR. In university courses, where frequently CMs learn along-side TC university teacher candidates, there were opportunities to apply the critical strategies to pre- and in-service teacher learning

expectations: collaborative ethnographic studies in CM classrooms; partner journal expectations that have AC and TC participants thinking through powerful course readings through different views about teacher learning; and action research that has CM and TC participants excavating multiple meanings of social justice and how these practices are professed and then how they are (or are not) enacted in classrooms. These were possible examples of the ways that a critical orientation in teacher learning could be a catalyst for having course participants from diverse preparation backgrounds working together with access to classrooms and options. These were some examples of how a critical orientation applied simultaneously to diverse structural and conceptual frameworks and different ideologies could lead to action-oriented, collaborative cultures for teacher learning.

The movement toward collaboration and building solidarities across differences is grounded in critical theory and pedagogies. Next, post-structural feminist theories work dynamically with critical pedagogy in learning to teach (Britzman, 2003). Post-structural feminist theoretical perspectives' contribution to the study is the topic of this following section.

*Post-structural feminism as a research support framework.* Another theoretical framework that supported a study of how one CM learned to teach was the work of post-structural feminist educators. This framework acknowledged and encouraged consideration of the “diverse intellectual roots on teacher learning” (Feiman-Nemser, 2008, p. 698). This gave the researcher a theoretical lens that invited interplay among

standpoints<sup>32</sup> and likewise created fissures that encouraged Josephina to feel safe to access and use multiple D/discourses to discuss learning to teach – if that practice permitted her to more aptly convey how she learned to teach.

Already, research shows that CMs grappled with competing Discourses that emerged in how they experienced learning to teach in TFA’s program. For example, Reagan and Lahann (2010) uncovered competing Discourses among TFA CMs’ ideological and epistemological standpoints about educational policy and practice. Moreover, Britzman’s (2003, 2009) and Ellsworth’s (1989, 1997) investigations into the uncertainties of learning to teach found this was prevalent in TC candidates’ student teacher practicums. By providing options for novices to openly examine the competing Discursive influences, there was more possibility for accessible productive critical critique.

For example, poststructuralist psychoanalytical (Felman, 1982) theory asserted that people’s encounters with resistance to learning (in content or context) may in theory signify a person who is on the cusp of new terrain for professional development. Opportunities to question and contest the structural, conceptual, and learning orientations used in programs for teacher learning could initiate the scaffolding needed to encourage CMs’ to feel safe enough to risk taking action and redefining their horizons for CMs’ professional learning.

The “post” theories (Kincheloe, 2004) may contribute to efforts to revision and reform teacher preparation by providing a divergent option for exploring and analyzing

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<sup>32</sup> For example, research agendas for teacher education; political and sociocultural ideological perspectives on teacher learning; interdisciplinary perspectives on learning to teach, etc. (Apple, 2001; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2008; hooks, 1990).

D/discourses and creating affinity spaces (Gee, 2004) where CMs can safely risk talking openly and constructively about their experiences learning to teach. This helps to understand how this study of TFA CMs may lead to knowledge useful in teacher education more broadly.

### **Conclusion**

The theories underlying this dissertation – critical discourse studies (CDA), critical pedagogy, teacher learning theories and frameworks, and post-structural feminist theories – were described above to provide a sense to the reader of the approach taken in designing and undertaking the research study of this dissertation. The research described in narrative form in later chapters is born out of this approach and should be seen as exemplifying the theories under consideration, both for the elucidation of the TFA CMs experience and the experience of the researcher. This approach to collecting data and analyzing the data – which will be explained in more depth in Chapter 3 – provides the best “way in” or access to the discourses and experiences of these new teachers.

### Chapter 3 – Methodology

The path to selection of the interview participants – and the collection of associated data – and then to my focus on one participant, was a long and winding one. But it is important to understand how the process led to the selection of TFA CMs and to the discovery of a wealth of data about their teaching, the teaching of others, and TFA’s training program.<sup>33</sup> Let us begin with my recent teaching history, which sparked this investigation.

I worked at Prospect Charter High School from September of 2009 to August of 2010. One TFA CM was on staff during this time. In September of 2009, I was hired part-time to monitor and work with staff development. During the year, a full-time language arts position became available; I applied and was hired. I worked as an educator and staff development resource person until the end of the school year (June 2010). During this year on-staff, I met and first worked with a TFA CM; I facilitated staff development, observed in classrooms, and collaborated with TFA program directors and school staff. As the school’s staff development resource teacher, I was curious about TFA’s program and its approach to teacher recruitment and preparation. Moreover, the school’s executive director was excited about TFA CMs, and we briefly talked about the program and site staffing in the next school year.

At the end of the 2009-2010 year, the school went through a whole-scale restructuring initiative; this included evaluation of school personnel. It led to retention

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<sup>33</sup> References to TFA’s training model include: TFA pre-work, Summer Institute, university partnership program courses, school-based TOR on-site staff development, TFA professional development Saturday training conferences, MTLD and Program Director observations and instructional evaluations, and school/district evaluations. These requisites are specific to the region wherein the participants trained and prepared to teach.



and release of staff members in every area of the school system. Naturally, that meant administration needed to seek out candidates for the newly open teacher positions.

The executive director decided to attend TFA CM interview/hiring fairs and hired eight TFA CMs for some of the school's open teacher positions. Three educators were retained from the 2009-2010 staff (we'd all been evaluated by an outside consultant in spring 2010), and 11 new staff members were hired to teach: several were traditionally trained, licensed staff. Eight TFA CMs were hired; Six were first-year recruits. Two CMs were second year CMs who completed year one at a different placement site.

In June 2010, I was invited to stay on staff, and I accepted a contract as a lead teacher in charge of staff development (and other administrative work). Additionally, I taught one language arts course throughout the year. I started this position in June 2010 and worked as lead teacher and assistant administrator until the beginning of June 2011.

Early into the 2010-2011 academic year, I began to think about the CMs' work at the school. Knowing only hearsay, media renditions, and academic critiques of TFA, the controversy caught my interest; I was interested in what, from a "normed perspective" was considered contrary, and I knew I had to learn more about the organization and how CMs learned to teach if I wanted to be an effective resource for the school's TFA trained TOR.

But, in the midst of popular and unpopular opinion, I resisted studying TFA because it was a group deemed representative of society's "elite" (Lipka, 2007). As a White, privileged woman, I needed to learn a lot about people whose worldviews and perspectives I knew were significantly different than my own. At the same time, I wanted

to study the experience of young White educators, a group that researchers claimed had limited conscious awareness of White racism and the realities of oppressive social systems (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Lipka, 2007; McIntyre, 1997). It was difficult to decide on a research topic.

At that point, I considered initiating a student-focused study with the seniors in my language arts course. On the other hand, no White students attended the school, and the staff majority was White women teachers. This interested me because early into my graduate courses, Whiteness studies had captured my attention, particularly in relation to White women teachers' work in schools (McIntyre, 1997).

Further, I had always been aware that social class and race-centered inquiry tended to study marginalized rather than privileged groups' norms and school experience. So, I was drawn to hooks' (1990) writing that recommended White scholars work toward a "discourse on race that interrogated whiteness" (p. 54). She theorized that "Otherness," referenced studies about brown and black people – but not White people. Moreover, hooks posited that an ongoing, committed, and thorough Whiteness critique could provide grist for an examination of the well-intentioned tendencies that led White people in one of two directions: (a) recognition of White supremacy's dominant grip followed by a "professed commitment to eradicate racism" (p. 54); or (b) reproduction of "a discourse on race that perpetuated racial domination" (p. 54). hooks was saying White people needed to examine what it meant to be White – an interrogation of Whiteness rather than continuing to position themselves outside of relationship with "the Other."

In thinking about culturally responsive education it made sense to examine

Whiteness as a precursor to delving into the development of culturally responsive curriculum: How could a White educator develop anti-oppressive curriculum while being immersed in and virtually blind to a White, Eurocentric education system? White educators needed to be in process with self-emancipation if they were to contribute to multicultural curricular innovation in ways that addressed pervasively Eurocentric curricular and education norms.

Yes, interrogating Whiteness was different from what was recommended by TFA's core value statement about "Diversity" – absent from its rhetoric was any explicit reference to racism's influence on education inequities. Yet, I posited that the lack of specific reference to White racism in TFA's core value Diversity statement further validated hooks' recommendation that educators interrogate Whiteness as a first step toward deconstructing hegemony in the daily structures and concepts foundational in the education system. Thus, TFA's failure to pointedly address White racism or social class in its Diversity statement was evidence that an interrogation of Whiteness was needed inside of the "weak multiculturalism" professed in the organization's core Diversity values statement.

Again, my research interests were drawn back to TFA and the organization's core values (See Appendix C). As stated, the Diversity statement assured respect for the ideas and insights of black, brown, and white people who understood poverty and education inequities: "We value the perspective and credibility that individuals who share the racial and economic backgrounds of the students with whom we work can bring to our organization, classrooms, and the long-term effort for change" (*Brick by Brick CMA*

*Handbook*, Chicago Institute, 2012, p. 8).

Therefore, if Whites wanted to understand how little we listened, how much racism remained invisible to many Whites, and how much Whites have to unlearn in the service of anti-racist efforts, an interrogation of Whiteness was needed to support multicultural education beyond lessons about foods, clothing, music, or sensationalized displays that exoticized the racialized “Other’s” world.

hooks’ life experience and background aligned with TFA’s diversity expert credibility criteria. Would TFA be open to a critique of the Diversity statement? Would CMs be interested in deconstructing it from a theory of Whiteness studies? Was it possible to educate CMs to heed the recommendations of hooks and also satisfy TFA’s core Diversity commitment to listen to the leaders in the communities the schools served? Would TFA CMs be prepared and act through practice to acknowledge white supremacy and target race-based inequities through a commitment to anti-oppressive education? What TFA framework of educative practices and experiences prepared CMs to teach for social justice and education equity?

Most CMs were white, middle- and upper-class females (Harding, 2012b). Literature about learning to teach asserted irrespective of professional preparation, White pre-service teachers tended to retain and enact in practice the beliefs and values they held about Whiteness and race prior to their teacher preparation (McIntyre, 1997). In many instances, these beliefs and values aligned with color-blind racism or race evasion (Frankenberg, 1993): the former included discursive practices where participants claimed they did not see “race,” or in the context of classroom instruction, race was rarely

acknowledged as a signifier that correlated more or equally with socioeconomic factors that reproduced the education inequities in communities of color. In broad society, color-blind racism was considered the “ ‘polite’ language of race” (p. 142).

According to Frankenberg (1993), color evasion was how White people (particularly women) addressed what remained for most whites a fearful topic. Characteristically, a color evasion discourse selectively discussed race as an engagement with difference (pp.142-143). Color evasion in D/discourses was at times used “against essentialist racism,” an early race D/discourse that claimed physical, biological, and altitudinal differences affirmed White supremacy and provided a rationale for white privilege and racism. More recently, color evasion was D/discursively employed by White women and men in ways that reproduced “structural and institutional” inequities (p. 143).

At the same time, studies of White women in pre-service teacher education showed they seldom transcended early beliefs and values about Whiteness and race in ways that allowed them to move beyond reliance on color-blind and color evasion D/discursive norms in their classroom practices (McIntyre, 1997). Yet research on how to effectively prepare teachers to work in under-resourced, poor communities of color concluded that pre-service teachers who learned in-practice in a classroom immersion model learned to become more effective educators in communities of color and poverty than educators prepared primarily through college courses culminating in a classroom-situated student teacher practicum (Haberman, 1995). Furthermore, teacher educators concluded that teacher candidates trained in-practice were more likely to remain in the

schools teaching low-income, racially diverse or majority non-white students (Haberman, 1998).

I wondered if and how CMs might react to the inevitable need to confront their Whiteness in a school wherein white people were the minority, though they constituted most of the school's teacher population. hooks (1990) talked about her White colleagues who in years past were disinterested in studies about race, gender, class, and the varied sociocultural ways people were "Othered" in our social worlds. More recently, hooks said these same scholars later wrote about race, class, and "Othering" (p. 54). hooks was intrigued by the apparent change in perspective, the recognition that her colleagues experienced a standpoint shift: that race, class, gender, etc., was indeed important work. A possible parallel between hooks' observations of colleagues' perspective shifts over time and this study was the idea that CMs enter classrooms without conscious whiteness awareness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, pp. 25-52). Or they might enter classrooms with a Whiteness awareness that aligned with Frankenberg's (1997) colorblind or color evasion D/discourses and, over time, see their perspective shift toward hooks' views of the implications of Whiteness awareness on how they responded to racism: (a) with actionable intent to "eradicate" White racism; or (b) with rationales that reproduced colorblind or color evasion racism as an underlying factor while they advanced through the TFA tenure.

Given that TFA CM pre-work reading in addition to Institute training included texts such as *Defining Race* (Tatum, 2003), *The New Jim Crow* (Alexander, 2012) and *Unequal Childhoods* (Lareau, 2011), about race, class, gender, and perhaps sexual

orientation, TFA was taking steps to prepare CMs to recognize Whiteness, racial, and social class origins of education inequities in the daily experience of becoming an educator.

Perhaps, like hooks' colleagues, TFA CMs' awareness of Whiteness, racism, and other social constructs would be altered as they worked with children, young adults, and families within systems that reinforced education inequities, institution racism, and maintained status quo norms. Day after day, immersed in settings wherein poor Whites and people of color are trapped by systemic inequity made it impossible to ignore race and class-based privilege, particularly as it is reproduced in education institutions (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997). What implications could the convergence of CMs' primary Discursive experiences and the Discursive and vernacular experiences of poor communities have for how TFA CMs learned to teach? Over time, how might CMs' external learning, once internalized transform CMs' socio cognitive and sociocultural realities (Johnson, 2003; Lewis, Encisco & Moje, 2007)?

hooks' (1990) interest in her colleagues' perspectival shift was about its implications for "the development of solidarity [and an] ... enhanced awareness of the epistemological shifts" whereby people discarded Discourses that supported dominant structures and "moved into new and oppositional directions" (p. 54). To take up oppositional D/discourses involved the alignment of one's language, actions, and identities with anti-oppressive Discourse communities, and it meant learning how to be in solidarity with the oppressed in an effort to forge equity in education and society.

Here is where I saw the CMs, poised to participate in lived experience wherein

daily they encountered their individual and our collective Whiteness (Scheurich, 1997), strategically positioned to learn about how White racism intersected with the experience of learning to teach (Fecho, 2004). This opened up the possibility for learning to be transformational or, conversely, hooks (1990) said it was equally possible that it could lead to CMs' furthering the reinforcement of a discourse of domination.

But it is not only hooks' (1990) observations that verify the possibility that white teachers can, through praxis, learn about Whiteness and racism, and through spontaneous and orchestrated interventions have their teaching transformed. I cite Lather's (1991) concept, catalytic validity, to acknowledge educators do learn in practice what it means to take up an anti-oppressive instructional approach and transform themselves through learning with students in the classroom (Fecho, 2004). Through action research and practical research methodologies, articles document incidents of educators' transformative experiences (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Thus, despite a system's effort to control teachers' work, even in conservative or neoliberal education institutions, counterhegemonic movements are initiated and fostered (Apple & Buras, 2006, pp. 276-277). Documentation of such instances in CMs' classrooms is already evident in academic research (Heineke & Cameron, 2011).

According to Apple and Buras (2006), teacher and researcher activists do engage in counterhegemonic efforts (Fecho, 2004). For example, teachers design curriculum that addresses school mandates *and* integrates these requisites into learning that fosters critical thinking, social awareness, and extends academic content and processes (Heineke & Cameron, 2011); the curriculum not only addresses "the western canon," it educates



students about Eurocentric education, draws on literature, local experience, and critical discussion in ways that interrupt common sense notions of what there is to learn or what “counts” as knowledge (Kumashiro, 2012; Scheurich, 1997). The perspectives describe above informed my consideration of methodological concerns, as I describe below.

Aware of my professional biases, I accepted the position of lead teacher and assumed the role of educator support. Along with this responsibility, I was obliged to encourage a nonjudgmental and supportive atmosphere, as these were key components of a successful induction and mentorship program. My responsibility was to build positive relationships with all staff, irrespective of how they learned to teach. Meanwhile, I worried about critical colleagues who would misconstrue my efforts to support CMs’ learning to teach. On the other hand, I recalled Gee’s (2008) observation that working across and within oppositional D/discourses created space to consider or recognize unknown possibilities, to participate with others in a productive renovation of education.

To further fortify the legitimacy of this topic choice, I took the position of “Feminism’s ‘no more experts’ credo, premised on the sturdy sureness that, given enabling conditions, every woman had something important to say about the disjunctures in her own life and the means necessary for change” (Lather, 1991, xviii). As a traditional teacher and teacher educator, I knew that work with TFA and CMs represented a significant disconnect between my and TFA CMs’ knowledge of what constituted learning to teach. Further, Spivak (1993/2009) cautioned against unequivocal adoption of an essentialist standpoint, a reminder that to do so meant “the masterword had to be persistent all along the way, even when it seemed that to remind oneself of it was

counterproductive” (pp. 4-5). I resisted strategically positioned research and media Discourses that urged readers to essentialize CMs as bad for schools and education. This was necessary as I assumed responsibility for on-site teacher and CM TOR development. I decided that supporting CMs in classrooms was a more pressing than any need to make a point about TFA CMs’ preparedness to teach. I decided to foster a bi-partisan atmosphere and remain focused on our particular and collective local educative potential.

It was an ethical choice, ironically, a decision made to refrain from inhibiting CM students and my own learning; I believed most of the CMs sincerely sought to engage in transformational work toward equity in education. I also knew that it was impossible to predict or control what was to be learned in any educative context (Felman, 1982).

Freire’s (1970/2000) remarks about the necessary inclusion of middle and upper class allies in transformative efforts to address the “objective” social circumstances and move toward a more just world caught my attention; I thought about CMs’ work in schools. I wondered if TFA training, fortified with professional learning centered on critical inquiry and critical language awareness (CLA), was a way to make visible more of the sociocultural dynamics that made TFA’s mission and program such a high stakes proposition for public education. Certainly not all CMs were interested in a long-term commitment to social justice that by definition transformed the lives of oppressor and oppressed into a wholly different social configuration, one that renounced hegemony and hierarchical subjectivities and material or objective experience.

On the other hand, I was equally convinced that as young adults concerned about the nation’s future, many CMs were acting from a commitment to education reform that

sought freedom from historical and social reproduction of society's materialism, racism, and poverty (Giroux, 2013). What CMs seemed to lack was a D/discourse through which they could express their views about issues of racism, poverty, and classism and how to move out of the status quo's reproductive treadmill. Some CMs talked of being part of a mission to ensure that all Americans could attain the American, middle-class dream. It seemed to be the limit – the horizon – of how they were, at that point, capable of explaining how society would be if education and social equities were achieved. That was the vision of equity they carried with them as they became recruits and TFA CM educators.

Extrapolating this to the CM experience of learning to teach, I acknowledged the implications of “the big D” in TFA's Discourse (Gee, 2006). There was policy research about the organization's progressive, neo-liberal public education agenda (Lahann & Reagan, 2010), and I considered scholars' warnings about its intentions for public education (Labaree, 2010; Veltri, 2010). I considered how the policy Discourse influenced classroom practice.

At the local level, I thought about the CMs: When I thought about classrooms, students, families, and new teachers, I contemplated the scholars and educators' autobiographies about learning to teach. For example, Fecho's (2004) transformation into a critical pedagogue, a white man teaching African-American high school students in south Philadelphia; In *Funds of Knowledge*, ineffective educators transformed by students and their families through teacher home visits and by bringing students' “funds of knowledge” into the classroom (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005); Ladson-Billings'

account of her first years as an African American teacher teaching working class Jews, Irish, Italians, and Poles at a high school in South Philadelphia; she said it was necessary to gain community trust before addressing issues of race, class and culture in the classroom (see Kumashiro, 2012, pp. XV-XVI). From a theoretical perspective, Spivak's (2009) caution to resist essentialism as this stance can manifest that which it purports to defy was a warning that a perception of CMs as inept could effectively provide the impetus to prove that to be true. I was not interested in contributing to the discouragement of any new teacher to capture evidence of an education program's ineptness.

Further, I considered the welfare of my students and teachers: the CMs. Ethically and professionally, if I sought to encourage young educators to see students not as "an abstract category and see them as persons...[to] stop making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risk acts of love" (Friere, 1970/2005), I must model these ethical and moral dispositions in my relationships and work with CMs, traditionally educated colleagues, staff, and students (Murrell, Diez, Feiman-Nemser, & Schussler, 2010); I must invite CMs into my own reflexive engagement with and collaboration, co-constructing conceptions of social justice in our school (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Kumashiro, 2012). To work in solidarity with CMs, I needed to move past seeing them as emblematic of the organization (Miner, 2010). Britzman's (2003) critique of teacher preparation reminded me that this was an issue in traditional teacher preparation irrespective of whether novices were TFA corps members or traditionally prepared new teachers.

Ethically, I recognized some concerns before I committed to the study: (a) my role as the school supervisor in charge of teacher evaluation; and (b) a request to participate in an interview-focused research study. Thus, I postponed the study's initiation until: (a) I resigned from a supervisory position at the charter school in June of 2011; and (b) CMs completed the TFA two-year tenure at the end of June of 2012. Other ethical dilemmas emerged as I spent time with CMs in interviews and developed professional and collegial relationships that spanned nearly five years. More about these ethical concerns are addressed in subsequent chapters. Meanwhile, additional preparation was made to engage in TFA-related research in a preK-12 school setting. Some of these procedures are described in the next section.

While it was not yet time to query people interested in the study, from 2010-2012, I could gather information about the school site (referenced research setting). Also, I could collect information about TFA's program training design and seek out ways to learn more about the ongoing staff development at the university and site-based levels.

On a curricular level, I learned more about TFA's teacher assessment and evaluation through TFA CM recommended reading and curriculum.<sup>34</sup> For example, the *Teacher As Leadership* text (Farr, 2010) included an explanation of TFA's teacher effectiveness criteria. The Teacher as Leader rubric (TAL) is TFA's evaluation tool used to assess CM effectiveness (Farr, Kopp, & Kamras, 2010, pp. 237-268). I studied the TAL rubric, and I identified elements that indicated TFA used a specific Discourse and associated acronyms in how CMs learned to teach.

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<sup>34</sup> Both the school executive director and the CMs provided me with material and direction to find TFA-related curricular and assessment frameworks and tools.

Learning about the TAL rubric was particularly important because I was charged with TFA CM performance assessment. These were novice teachers, and the organization used the TAL performance proficiency levels to gauge CM TOR effectiveness. So, I decided to incorporate TFA language into daily learning and assessment d/Discursive practices. I developed an observation rubric that used some of TFA's acronyms. I used the TAL rubric as the standard for teacher performance; however, I noticed the rubric lacked specific references to culturally responsive teacher dispositions, knowledge, and practice (Gay, 2000). I augmented the TAL rubric and developed an overarching teacher development rubric that included culturally relevant teacher preparation; I used the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the area of competencies for educators working with diverse communities of learners. These and other research artifacts enriched ethnographic observations and acted as a springboard for discussion and participant interview participation.

This information served as data and supplemented the materials provided through interviews; specifically, I gained an in-depth contextual understanding of the social world of TFA: the figured world that CMs' negotiate while learning to teach in practice.<sup>35</sup>

Other supplemental artifacts included access to school staff development records. The school's executive director granted research permission to use any data with teacher permission gathered between September 2010 and August 2013 from the school site: CM teacher evaluations, staff development training, and TFA site-based learning. These tools could be referenced or used to enrich interview conversation. Equally, it was helpful to

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<sup>35</sup> Learning to teach "in practice" refers to a method of teacher preparation wherein educators are TOR while enrolled in education content and methods course work and receive guidance and mentorship as format for educator preparedness.

know access to these data tools was available if data analysis indicated these resources significantly informed the direction of the study.

In June of 2011, I resigned my staff position. I stayed in contact with the school staff and when, in the spring of 2012, CMs completed their corps tenure, I contacted each person and asked if he or she was interested in taking part in a study. Meanwhile, I knew gaps existed in my understanding of TFA training and there were additional ways to increase my preparedness for a TFA CM-related research study.

In July 2012, I petitioned and received permission from the national TFA organization to attend its Summer Institute at the Illinois Institute of Technology campus in Chicago, Illinois. I went, and I stayed on site for four consecutive days. My lodging was at an area hostel, and each day I attended TFA's Summer Institute training. While I was there I went to workshops, observed corps member advisors' (CMA) coaching sessions for new corps members (CM), was introduced to area educators in the Chicago Public School partnership, observed corps members learning to teach, and participated in other aspects of the Institute's socio-cultural experience.

In November 2013, I was asked to present a session at one TFA regional weekend professional development conference. The TFA regional executive director attended the sessions I facilitated. I had opportunities to talk about my research with TFA corps members, managers of teacher leadership and development (MTLD)<sup>36</sup> supervisors, and

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<sup>36</sup> The MTLT responsibilities include regular observation, evaluation, coaching, and support practices and sessions with TFA corps member (CM) cohorts of about 34 new and second year recruits within one urban or rural region. MTLT's work extends to consults with school principals and professional development school faculty. The goal of this latter relationship is to partner with the school site to provide TFA CMs with the ongoing, site-based professional development that is a central part of the TFA and school site agreement that CMs understand is part of what they will receive during their TFA tenure in order to strengthen their abilities as classroom teachers during the school year (Teach For America, 2012).

MTLD corps support personnel, and I observed the topics and levels of engagement at the weekend staff development conference.

In addition, between 2011 and 2014 I served as a peer coach/lead teacher observing and providing feedback to TFA corps members at two urban charter schools. I also was a classroom educator and administrator, a university student teacher supervisor, a professional development specialist, graduate instructor, and professional development advisor.

Pre-study research helped lay the groundwork to study how TFA CMs learned to teach during their two-year tenure and beyond.<sup>37</sup> The time spent familiarizing myself with the varied contexts and facets of TFA's professional learning framework better prepared me to interact with CM research data. For example, I saw how the TFA *TAL* and similar program tools interfaced with CM interview data and D/discourses about learning to teach. Engagement at TFA Institute and opportunities to work within that Discourse through associated D/discursive events aided in the construction of more complexity in research interaction, interview protocols, and participant engagement about learning with CM research participants.

In 2012, I formally obtained IRB approval. Then I sent one e-mail to 12 CMs I met during the 2010-2012 period. Not all of them were people I had worked with during the 2010-2011 academic year, though I wanted to try and obtain as many interested CMs as was possible for the study. After earning IRB approval and completing the IRB

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<sup>37</sup> TFA Program directors, CMAs, MTLDS, and CMs shared curriculum from Institute, monthly TFA professional development, and university partnership program resources for learning to teach. Further, CMs, MTLDS, Program Directors, CMs, and TFA alumnus met with me either via Skype, phone conference calls, or face-to-face to talk about how the TFA partnership program was designed to help them learn to teach.



protocol to conduct the study, research interviews and other data collection began early summer 2012 and ended fall 2013. I ended up interviewing seven and choosing six CMs for the research study. From these six study participants' individual interview and supplemental data I chose to focus on Josephina's CM experience learning to teach. The study used in-depth CDA (Gee, 2005) analysis of Josephina's interviews supported with supplemental data she supplied from all facets of how she learned to teach in TFA and in the one year after she taught beyond her tenure completion. Other study participants' interview and fieldnote data was used to corroborate and cross check Josephina's accounts of learning to teach.

After obtaining informed consent, I did ask and gained permission from some CMs in the study to use earlier work/conversations as data for the research study. Research and interview communication was supplemented using Skype, text, e-mail, and phone. At times, I scheduled individual meetings with Josephina at cafés and we talked about teaching and education. During the time I worked at the school, I maintained a degree of professional distance, and conversation always centered on topics in education. It was a good decision both to maintain distance and, when we were no longer colleagues, a somewhat more holistic – though certainly still partial – self.

The varied types and places wherein CMs learned to teach and the relatively significant time frame, 2009-2014, structured different types of educational conversation in a multitude of contexts: different school sites, university campuses, bookstores, coffee cafés, a restaurant, an art exhibit, a bowling alley, a wedding, and two karaoke bars. These

are some of the contexts wherein we talked about education.<sup>38</sup>

At times, I was reluctant to attend what felt like social “outings” with colleagues. Activities like an art opening, bowling alley gatherings, a wedding, and time at the karaoke bar led to some mutual self-disclosure yet, except for jovial remarks and light conversation, our talk remained centered on learning – their teaching, learning, and my own through participants’ involvement in my dissertation study. Typically, I went to social events alone and left early. Although the “field” wherein we met and talked sometimes changed over time, the common interest in education was the relationship’s foundation.

Over time, I recognized the CMs were as invested in what I was learning about learning to teach as was I invested in uncovering how they learned to teach. In an organic manner, we exchanged information, shared what we knew about pedagogy, content, state mandates, assessment, and school culture. We collaborated on planning courses during the summer. In time, the study took shape as a mutually reciprocal learning experience. This enhanced the vitality and sincerity of ensuing conversation. Yet, it was understood that these were not lateral or peer relationships. Thus, when conversation digressed from an educational focus, mine was a listener’s role, hearing about CMs’ teaching, continuing education, life experiences, families, and future plans. Similarly, CMs seldom talked about their personal lives except when it intersected with or complicated the experience of learning to teach.

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<sup>38</sup> During the time I was the CM supervisor, all interaction and conversation took place at school or at coffee cafés. All interviews took place in libraries, bookstores, universities, or via Skype.

The longevity of the researcher and participant relationship provided added insight into how CMs' learned to teach in TFA's "figured world," how that experience influenced their instructional development post-TFA, and whether CMs' membership and agency therein reinforced, resisted, or otherwise connected with their identities and memberships in the many Discourse models and social worlds.

In the fall of 2014, two members of the study sample left education altogether. One person left teaching but maintained a career in education. Four CMs remained in teaching and stayed in the classroom. Of the four CMs who stayed in teaching, three left their CM corps placement and continued teaching in high needs secondary settings, and one CM left the CM corps placement and continued teaching at a private school in an international setting (see Appendix D – Table of Yearly Participants).

The CMs who completed TFA's tenure and left classroom teaching claimed frustration with the school site culture prominently figured into a decision to leave teaching: one sought employment as an assistant school administrator but was hired by a corporation as a business analyst. The second CM taught for one year beyond the TFA tenure to determine if she wanted to become a career educator. At the end of the third year, she, too, left the classroom. She cited these reasons: micro-politics; poor school leadership; and the de-professionalization of educators.

### **Site and Population Selection**

In a study by Donaldson and Moore-Johnson (2010), participant CM samples yielded more reliable results when the samples represented recruits who met the same

selection criteria, experienced the same TFA program staff development, and took the same pre-service program at a university campus (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008).

The effort to find participants and a reasonable sample size (N=6) for an interview study using CDA theory and methodology necessitated the use of purposive sampling strategies to invite CMs whose training and teaching experience were similarly aligned with one another (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). This provided more consistency across CM experiences and had the potential to strengthen the reliability of explained and interpreted data (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). Thus for the purpose of this study, it was important to select a study site and participant population that complied with cautionary factors to ensure a greater degree of finding validity when studying AC and TFA CM experiences learning to teach.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In preparation for data collection and analysis, Rogers, et al. (2005) stated that CDA and ethno-methodologies supplemented each other. I used CDA (Gee, 2005) and ethnographic (Carspecken, 1996; Charmaz, 2006) methodologies to contextualize and complement the later interview data collection and CDA-based analysis. For instance, in the first research phase, grounded theory and ethnographic open and axial coding of interview data resulted in the development of themes for further research using CDA methodology (Gee, 2005). The themes drawn from systematic coding provided a framework to support CDA building task and conversational tool selection in the CDA data collection and analysis used in the study (Gee, 2011).

Although the study ended up focusing solely on Josephina's TFA CM experience, all six participants were assigned a pseudonym from the beginning of the study and each CM was individually interviewed. Each CM participated in a minimum of three individual interviews with the researcher. Each interview extended from 60 to 90 minutes. CMs knew they could be asked for follow-up interviews or in some cases for another interview. Some CMs shared artifact documents from their TFA training and university course work. Here, more than the other participants, Josephina voluntarily provided artifacts from different facets of her TFA's training program. This was another reason she became the study's focus participant.

Interviews were digitally recorded, transferred to a password-protected personal computer, and then transcribed verbatim into MS Word documents. Each interview produced a transcript, an average of 18 to 20 single-spaced word-processed pages. Participant pseudonyms were used in all transcription, coding, observation notes, and written work. All files were organized using Scrivener software and backed up on another personal password protected computer kept in the researcher's home. Any files that were not scanned and stored electronically were kept in a locked file cabinet inside the researcher's home office. The researcher was the only person with access to the file cabinet.

Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, and Vetter (2005) suggested that researchers use constant comparative analysis (Creswell, 2008) to repeatedly examine data and develop data codes and categories. In this study, this process included organizing data using two of the three coding strategies: (a) open coding, and (b) axial coding (pp. 434-435).

Researchers (Ngo & Leet-Otley, 2011) applied Grounded Theory and used a similar coding approach to organize data for a critical discourse analysis of interview data (pp. 74-89). Jill Leet-Otley, PhD, and I each separately read the interview transcripts and co-developed a codebook from participant interview transcripts. Then we met and compared themes we saw in the interview data. We talked about common themes in each of our interview readings, and we identified agreed upon primary themes in the interview data.

I took this information and created a codebook of primary codes for use in finding particularly important excerpts in the interview data for reading and CDA analysis. This method draws from aspects of Ngo and Leet-Otley's (2011) methodology to devise a system to organize and code transcribed interviews, and subsequently to make further decisions about how to use CDA to interpret study data (Gee, 1995).

In the themes derived from the codebook, it was evidence that social and cultural capital significantly contributed to how Josephina learned to teach. At this point in using Gee's (2005) CDA methodology to analyze the data, I collaborated with Leet-Otley, who read and engaged with the data, and with the researcher developed a process of constant comparative analysis. This included reconnecting with Josephina – and other study participants - in the final stages of data analysis and engagement. There were follow-up interviews with four of the original six study participants. Since the study had shifted to examining Josephina's data, follow-up interview data was used to crosscheck themes or assertions in Josephina's data. These were the ways that data was initially examined for commonalities and distinctions.

The constant comparative analysis was an important transition to using Gee's (2005) critical discourse analysis' seven building tasks (pp. 11-19) to further analyze the data because the codebook themes helped the researcher hone in on several related and prominent building task themes in the research. That supported researcher decisions to focus on several building tasks in the study data analysis. Gee stated that it was likely several of the building tasks would take on more prominence than others and become a main focus in a study.

For example, Ngo and Leet-Otley's (2011) study used Gee's critical discourse analysis. The CDA portion of the study "focused on the sections of data ... involving [the building tasks called] activities and identities" (Gee, 2005, p. 102). Here, data analysis looked for the most relevant of the seven building tasks and tools with which to examine the knowledge and practices TFA participants learned through their teacher education program.

Because context and language interact to create realities and make certain incidents and events significant, and research on how teachers learn to teach emphasized that a person's personal history prominently figured into how a person learned to teach, the first CDA-specific section, Chapter 5, focused on an in-depth analysis, interpretation, and explanation of the Discourses that shaped and were shaped by Josephina's early life experiences.

Chapter 5 examined Josephina's preK-16 education and used CDA analysis to tease out and explain the prominent Discourses that influenced Josephina's preK-16 education and how her primary familiarity with these Discourse communities influenced

how she learned to teach in TFA's program. After Chapter 5, the next chapter applied Gee's (2005) CDA theory and method to examine how Josephina learned to teach.

Chapter 6 showed how Josephina used her familiarity with the mainstream Discourses as a tool to establish what significantly influenced how she learned to teach, made certain activities more meaningful in relation to how she learned to teach, and invoked particular sign systems and knowledge to represent evidence of how she learned to teach.

For example, Josephina positioned herself within the Discourse of Academic Success and shared a copy of a letter of thanks she received from a prestigious college. The letter artifact recognized Josephina as the teacher who most significantly contributed to one student's success. It praised her teaching abilities, and Josephina discursively positioned discussion of the letter as a way to show that she had successfully learned to teach and significantly participated in efforts to stem education inequities for students in underserved communities. Josephina used the inquiry tool Discourses to highlight how certain sign systems and knowledge demonstrated how she learned to teach. Chapter 6 includes more about sign systems and knowledge, activities, and significance in relation to how she learned to teach.

Throughout the analysis, I explored tangential or explicit connections to theories of learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2008), critical pedagogy (Fecho, 2004; Kincheloe, 2004) and poststructuralist feminist theories (Britzman, 2003; Ellsworth, 1997; Felman, 1982) of learning to teach using the overarching theory and methodology of discourse



analysis as a way to further understand how TFA CMs interpret their teacher preparation program.

Furthermore, during this research period, TFA continued to develop, and the organization's protocol changed. I kept abreast of programmatic reform through CM, MTL, and university course-related artifacts, and observed student instruction in former CM classrooms at different school sites. As stated earlier, Josephina and other participants continued to respond to questions about the data, and the IRB study approval was renewed until April 2015.

Data collection, analysis, and subsequent writing required thinking about the “how” and the “why” of instructional practice. Preparation for the study, interviews, and other data-rich events produced a chronology of reflection and reflexive thinking: CMs as the participants and I, as the research instrument, observed and discussed four years' progression in the midst of learning to teach.

### **Researcher Background and Biases**

The researcher's background and biases have a bearing on what is recorded, considered significant, analyzed, interpreted, and represented in the study's findings. Some of these factors are considered explicitly here and in parts of the data analysis, particularly in Chapter 4.

As I began this project, I was aware of the limits of my understanding of TFA as an organization and how CMs learn to teach. As a traditionally certified preK-12 teacher with an undergraduate degree in English Literature, an undergraduate degree in Literacy Education, an MA in Literacy Education, and NBPTS certification. I believed in

traditional teacher preparation. I shared my biases and preconceptions about alternative certification programs with CMs. We discussed traditional education programs in the same way.

I was also aware of my position as a middle-aged White woman educator, and my biases that led me to support anti-racist, anti-oppressive education and social justice reform agendas in education. I noted that there are different definitions and approaches to social justice reform among education stakeholders, and I wondered if this theme would come up in participant data. Additionally, my working class background, and my upbringing in a predominantly socialist/Marxist household that valued learning, yet quite clearly understood the purpose of schooling and its plans for my potential, led me to continually question – and sometimes resist – what I was required to learn. From an early age I internalized the necessity of working in human services or the helping professions. In my family, working in a for-profit profession was not viewed as honorable work. Everyone in my family worked in the human services professions. People in my family attended rallies for social causes, protested wars, read *The Progressive*, attended benefits or events with other socialists, believed in public transportation, and worked at cooperatives to buy foods.<sup>39</sup>

I struggled with preconceptions of people who embraced Capitalism. I recognized that this bias led me to pre-judge people who worked in the private sector and achieved upper middle or upper class socio-economic status. I was aware of this and talked with my critical friend/colleague about these aspects of the research throughout the study.

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<sup>39</sup> This was before food cooperatives were incorporated and coopted by commercialized enterprises.

Further, I was aware of how I took in my surroundings and made assumptions about where I was and how I needed to act (in terms of social class and related normed behaviors) in most social settings. I learned this from my mother. I cannot remember a time when I did not know there were social and political systems with different levels of privilege based upon people's race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, education and other realms of difference and context. Perhaps this was because my mother was a domestic servant from the age of 16, and my father grew up during the 1920s in a poor Irish Catholic and Jewish neighbourhood. As a young boy, he was an invalid due to polio. So, my parents openly talked about the ways society was shaped by difference, discrimination, and social class. Over time, mother talked about her encounters with finding work and ageism.<sup>40</sup> These ways of thinking about the world were attitudes and beliefs that led me to think about biases I recognized and tried to set aside when talking with CMs. My mother's observations about ageism helped me think about how I was susceptible to ageist ideas about young educators. Likewise, I recognized people younger or older than I might make ageist assumptions about me: professionally, personally, and otherwise.

When dilemmas about relationships and difference emerged in my fieldwork (Wolf, 1996), I asked a co-lead teacher on site at the school to act as a critical friend. He provided a second vantage point on my field-based observations. We did this in an informal, conversational manner. To support coding and data analysis, arrangements

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<sup>40</sup> My father died in the late 1970s. There were still three children under 15 years old at home to support. Beyond what we as a family contributed, my mother worked two jobs. She actively sought "temp" work until she was almost 80 years old. As an elderly woman, she talked about how ageism made it increasingly difficult for anyone to find employment.

were made to engage another educator who earned a PhD at the University of Minnesota to collaborate with the PI and review codes and interpretations of data when that was prudent.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was a key consideration in the evaluation of the data in this study and other studies of this sort. Trustworthiness is the researcher's way of responding to the question: what factors must be applied in the study to persuade one's readers that the results or findings are of practical or theoretical value? In positivist research, these are the factors typically considered: reliability, internal validity, external validity, and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In qualitative or naturalistic research, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) "alternative criteria" to positivistic research's foundation of the aforementioned "trustworthiness" instruments are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (p. 290). To ensure credibility, this study includes "prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation" in the field: one year of daily lived on-site experience with Josephina and other CMs. I attended TFA's Summer Institute and TFA's professional development conferences. TFA and university course work was examined through TFA CMA handbook criteria used during Institute, observations at Institute, course syllabi, student course work, and CM journal entries (p. 301). Moreover, the relationships with Josephina and other study participants spanned five-years. The data collection included interviews, artifact collection, and TFA site specific field work in years one through four and follow-up interviews accompanied by member checks with participants on transcript information

and some data chapter manuscripts in the fifth year. Persistent observation was part of the first year's lived experience in the field. Further observations included classroom teaching observations and debrief sessions, meet-ups at coffee cafés, and social time at a bowling alley. Field notes and jottings were included in these observations to ensure prolonged observation. To provide perspective on the observations, a co-lead teacher acted as a critical friend and provided a second vantage point to talk about field work observations.

In the study, triangulation was addressed through checking sources in interview data over time and across CM participants' responses. Josephina and three more participants agreed to and participated in follow-up interviews in 2014. During these final interviews, participants clarified information and verified earlier transcription through similar recollections of events and incidents in 2012-2013 interviews. Cross-interview comparisons were made to check participant accounts of common experiences. Triangulation was further covered using different data collection methods: interview transcripts, CM performance assessments and observations, written artifacts, course syllabi, and CM university and site-based curriculum and research. As mentioned above, colleagues independently examined transcripts, helped developed a coding system and met with the researcher who had independently done the same. From their independent coding systems, they discussed the transcripts and identified common prevalent codes in the interview data.

In addition to the grounded theory approaches to trustworthiness characteristic of ethnographic methodologies, this CDA research study relied on Gee's (2005) criteria for

validity (p. 113). These elements included: convergence, agreement, and coverage. Convergence was addressed when the participant responses were increasingly viewed as “compatible and convincing” (p. 113); Agreement was satisfied when other researchers or participants who were familiar with the social languages and D/discourses under examination agreed and supported the research findings: this was verified through member checks of participant data chapters, interview data convergence, and follow-up interviews with participants, particularly Josephina. Finally, Gee stated coverage was achieved when the analysis used was viably applied to data similar to that under analysis in the particular study. This included using the data to engage in sense-making about past and future experiences in the particular D/discourses and the ability to engage in discussions related to predictions in similar circumstances (pp. 113-114). This was addressed through member checking debrief sessions with participants’ post-research accounts of later experiences with learning to teach, discussions with TFA MTLTD staff about ongoing TFA program development and designs for CM support with learning to teach, and collaboration with curriculum development with former CMs who currently mentored new TFA CMs.

### **Delimitations**

Some delimitations establish boundaries within which the study was situated. The first was that all findings were context-specific and particular to Josephina’s “learning to teach” experience.

Second, research showed that AC programs and TFA CMs’ training and experiences learning to teach differed depending on variables such as region, state,

district, and school mandates (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). Therefore, there was no certainty that the findings and implications from the study were fully applicable to other TFA training circumstances and stories about learning to teach. However, the study sought to contribute to known knowledge on CM perspectives and TFA training rather than generalizable findings for unilateral cross-region applications.

Third, there was a possibility that some aspects of the study findings might be transferable and applied to how programs consider CMs' learning and site partnerships (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007). For example, Josephina's experiences learning to teach were likely similar to those of participants in other AC programs (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). So an examination of one CM's account of learning to teach in the same region and setting could ideas or insights that could be used to work with CMs on a small scale.<sup>41</sup>

Beyond these delimitations, there are some limitations or weaknesses of the study to consider. The more evident of these limitations include: (a) the small sample size: N=1; (b) that Josephina's data represented one CM's regional TFA experience; (c) the study attracted mostly women and only one man; and (d) its location in a small, charter school where demographically the students and the teachers were atypical in relation to most districts and high schools (e.g. TFA CMs comprised a "critical mass" of the teaching staff).

These recognized limitations acknowledged the subjective and particular nature of this study. The researcher knew about these limitations. Moreover, additional limitations

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<sup>41</sup> Humphreys, Wechsler, & Hough (2008) recommend that studies use samples of participants with similar experiences.

could be identified during or after research. In short, the researcher conceded that, while the study contributed to research on how TFA CMs learn to teach and included information applicable to teacher learning research, the perspective herein and the research context remained partial and does not claim to represent a constant, objective representation of all CM experiences in learning to teach.

### **Conclusion**

This explanation of the study methodology described elements used in this kind of research undertaking. The path to the eventual study – the main part being the interviews with Josephina – is a circuitous but eventually fruitful one. The data chapters to come in the second part of this dissertation represent the outcome of this careful planning. Issues described above – and CDA points – will be touched on occasionally throughout the narratives. Now, let us look at Chapter 4, a narrative that describes the impetus for studying how Josephina learned to teach in TFA amidst AC and TC controversies about teacher learning and education reform.



## Chapter 4 – Horizons and Unfamiliar Pathways

*The mature person, to put it in moral terms, has no right to withhold from the young on given occasions whatever capacity for sympathetic understanding his own experience has given him.* – John Dewey, 1938, Chapter 3, p. 38.

### Learning to Teach

It was 6:30 a.m. on a January morning. In the dim light, shivering in the cold weather, I jabbed a key into the front door lock. Jiggling metal into the icy keyhole, the lock clicked open. I slipped through the glassed entry. The door whined shut and locked behind me.<sup>42</sup>

Inside, three *Teach for America* (TFA) corps members (CMs) gathered in the foyer, standing around the more reliable of two pre-owned school copiers. The machine rattled and strained under users' repeat demands for multiple double-sided copies, collated and stapled in the papers' left corner.

### Routines, Procedures, and Learning to Teach

“Good morning,” I interjected: the CMs stopped talking and appeared nervous. Then I heard “good morning,” barely audible over the rumbling machine. I walked by to check my mailbox, and then the inevitable happened: the copy machine screeched like a grocery store shopping cart's broken wheels, and everyone looked worried that the gears would seize up before each of them could use it. Phil kneeled down beside the copier, poised to pull out ruined paper that was stuck in the multiple folds of ink-covered rubber. But the machine continued to churn out the copies.

“That sound can't be good, or maybe it's a self-correction,” Phil quipped, as he

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<sup>42</sup> This chapter was sent to conversation participants to read and confirm its accuracy. All CM conversation participants consented to participate in the study and went through the IRB informed consent process prior to the study start date.

looked concerned. We all chuckled nervously. It was a tense moment. My right side was to the group, and I thumbed through my mail. I glanced over at Phil. He wore the required teacher attire: white, long-sleeve dress shirt, brown, black or navy dress pants, belt, and leather dress shoes. Phil was short, stocky, and his hair was combed back closely sculpted around his head. He had low affect and a dry sense of humor. Yet, when he talked about something he enjoyed, his face filled out with a broad smile. I thought Phil's stern visage was a way he maintained order and authority in the classroom. I was almost done sorting mail, and I needed some coffee. I nestled my mail in the crook of my arm and stepped toward the classroom.

“Hey Louise,” said Yolanda. I stopped looking at the paper in my hands and turned. I was surprised she would speak to me.

“Yes,” I smiled, and my voice carried an “at your service,” tone. I glanced up at Yolanda, holding a form in her hand. She had developed a rubric for teaching math. I looked down at the letters again.

Yolanda faced me. Her hair was pulled back with a navy blue elastic hair-band. Right now, she leaned back on the administrative assistant's desk. She patiently waited for Phil to finish copying the physical education handouts he created for class.

Josephina leaned over the school administrative assistant's desk. Head bent, brow furrowed, her short hair was draped over her ear. She scanned two articles placed side by side on the desk. Josephina taught several different classes. She looked at the sample articles she found on the Internet. Maybe she planned to show students what they were expected to do to pass one of the state's basic standard exams.

I glanced at the young teachers around me, and my thoughts trailed back to my first year teaching. All the CMs were White and all of them were from middle or upper middle class families. I was older, closer to 30 when I started my career. In this school, every first-year CM was less than 24 years old.<sup>43</sup> I remembered my first year in the classroom. Omitting the details, I admit it was bad. During spring semester, I was offered a full-time teacher contract for the next school year. But, I wanted to start over and leave my first year teaching in the past. I accepted a position in another district.

Seeing these three at the copy machine reminded me of how, as a novice, I coped with learning to teach. When I was a new teacher, I, too, needed an early start on the day. Years later, that habit remained, but my reliance on the copy machine was no longer the same.

### **I Have A Question**

“So Louise, you’ve taught some graduate classes, haven’t you?” Yolanda spoke, Phil and Josephina moved closer together, and we stood in a circle.

“Yes,” I said, “Why? Oh, and how are your classes going? You guys started the new semester, your course work, right?” I added, shuffling through my mail.

“Well, yeah, we’re all in the same class this semester – on Tuesdays – and we were just talking about class last night.” She paused, and I looked up. I was listening, a little worried, thinking about what to say. Yolanda glanced at Phil and Josephina before continuing.

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<sup>43</sup> State law permitted students to remain in high school until age 21. Some of the newcomers were over 18 years old but had not completed high school. Some of the students were nearly the same age as the CM teachers in the building. Some students needed reminders about appropriate relationship boundaries between teacher and student. This was a challenge for teachers when students struggled with this professional expectation. New teachers needed to know they could expect veteran staff or administration to intervene if needed.

“Last night, the instructor was 15 minutes late – which wasn’t that big a deal except because of our school’s extended day, we had to tear out of here to make it to class on time, and we did it – then he, he came in and, well, he was eating caramel corn, and he sat on the side of the desk, and then he started talking, going on and on about what a hectic week it was already, the class really got started about a half hour in.” Here she stopped, and I made eye contact. Yolanda continued:

“He’s an adjunct instructor who works in a school district and teaches this graduate course because it’s, well, basically he’s that school district’s expert on the topic. But we don’t, I mean we all agree that we need to learn this stuff, it’s about working with students with ‘exceptionalities,’ and really we all need to know about that,” Yolanda set the paper on a nearby table, crossed her arms, and glanced at Phil and Josephina. She shook her head.

“Uh-huh,” I said.

“The readings are pretty good, but we don’t do much with them in class,” Josephina offered, “and the other people in class? The people who are not TFA and getting their license? It’s like they sit away from us, and they sigh or sit back and look around at each other when we talk about trying things in the classroom,” she added.

“That’s because they don’t have classrooms,” Phil remarked, voice flat, head in the copier. His tie was thrown up over the shoulder of his worn, white dress shirt. He removed his papers and put the original copy of Yolanda’s rubric on the machine. “How many?” he said.

“Forty,” replied Yolanda, and Phil pressed the button. Then his short fingers

reached up to his neck. He straightened his tie.

“It’s fine, you know,” Josephina started, “But I get the sense that we’re different. Like we aren’t really teachers, and we are.” She made a sweeping gesture that circled the school with her arm.

“Yeah, someone, another instructor, made a comment about how TFA isn’t good for education.” Phil’s voice betrayed a tinge of cynicism, a little disdain. He continued, “And then the instructor looked at us and said it wasn’t the corps members, it’s the organization, whatever that meant, like that’s supposed to make us less uncomfortable, and that was during class, in front of everyone.”

While he talked, Phil looked at his copies except for the “in front of everyone,” comment. Then he looked up at me. Our eyes met. Our eyes matched for two, maybe three seconds. I was first to glance away. *How to redirect?* I said to myself.

“Well, sounds like I’d be disappointed in the course as you’re explaining it.” I said to myself. I felt embarrassed, and I had a foot in two different arenas here.

“Hey, do you know J.K.?” Yolanda came right out and named the instructor whose class they were taking, who they were critiquing. My arms relaxed, I shifted the mail to my other side, and paused.

### **“Received wisdom” to the rescue**

I looked up at the ceiling and lightly sighed.

“You guys, it sounds frustrating and hard. I’m not sure if whether I know J.K. will mean you’ll get more out of the class, or if it’ll help with some of the TFA conversations in classes.” I stopped. They were silent, so I said more. “What I can tell you is that as a

young teacher, my first year, there were lots of problems: with staff, with students, with the curriculum I was allowed to teach. I asked teachers who seemed to work well with students if I could watch them teach, if they had a minute to look over a lesson plan I made. Yeah, and I looked for people who helped me learn what I needed to learn, because I wasn't finding it in classes or from supervisors. Without help from one teacher in the building who invited me to have dinner with her and her husband at their house, without the weekly calls to my professor, I doubt I would've made it past my first year." I looked at all of them and waited for a response. For about five seconds: nothing.

Phil shifted, put a paper clip on a stack of handouts, looked at me and smiled. Josephina smiled, too. Yolanda asked, "What do you know about working with students with 'exceptionalities'?" and we laughed – ruefully. *I avoided their questions. My remarks redirected the conversation away from the CMs' thoughts about their instructor and the course. What bearing did that have on how they would learn to teach here in this school?*

I knew what I said sounded like an elevator speech. I was fairly certain Phil, Yolanda, and Josephina did too. Now it was daylight. More staff arrived. The students pushed through the front doors, coming in from the cold. We walked away from the copier and locked into the daily school routine.

### **The Practical and Uncertain in Learning: Common Sense and Good Sense.**

*Here was my reaction to the early morning conversation.* Later that day, I thought about the early morning conversation: the CMs' concerns, questions, and my responses. When I thought honestly about what happened, I knew I was unsettled by the questions

and floundered for a “right way” to simplify a complicated discussion. And, I was completely unfamiliar with how to discursively engage with CMs from their vernacular of learning to teach.

That morning in the foyer, I realized I needed to know more of what it meant to be a CM learning to teach in TFA’s program. I did not understand TFA’s university agreement. I shied away from talking with Josephina, Phil, and Yolanda about the university course content. There were too many different directions the talk could go. Now, hours later, I asked myself, “What did they need, what did I need, in that moment and from that conversation? If I had responded from this mindset, I would have addressed the CMs’ questions about the course and their concerns about content and learning. Instead, my response aligned with what I learned as a young educator: acceptance of the status quo (Britzman, 2003).

*Common sense: What some say is learning to teach.* My actual response to the CMs questions was not what I considered a proud moment. I had no discursive knowledge about TFA’s work at the university, and I presumed they were unfamiliar with how I talked or thought about education. Using Gee (2008) to theorize what happened next, my lack of familiarity with TFA’s Discourse prompted me to fall back on my own internalized Discourses of learning to teach. In part, that included suggesting the CMs rely on their prior knowledge, informal mentor relationships, and networking (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). So, I responded to the CMs with teacher “folk wisdom” (Cuban, 1989),<sup>44</sup> and my reply to the CMs invoked the veteran educator’s old adage: *The first year is*

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<sup>44</sup> Cuban describes “Folk wisdom” as advice “harnessed [from] veteran teachers ... [that] suggests that familiar techniques of managing a class and of introducing material will pay off” (p. 800).

*baptism by fire.*<sup>45</sup> *You cannot rely on organizational support mechanisms or resources while you are learning to teach. To guide your learning, find what you need wherever and from whomever you can. You are on your own, so be resourceful, do not be vulnerable* (Britzman, 2003, p. 21; Kumashiro, 2012, p. 2).

Further, I demonstrated how quickly I fell prey to Kennedy's (1999) "problem of enactment": I could have acted in ways that aligned with my beliefs and vision for supporting teacher learning. For example, by suggesting we plan staff development – together – focused on that topic. Yet, in the midst of what Kumashiro (2002b) called a teaching "crisis," I enacted something that was out of alignment with my beliefs: I reverted to safe, familiar renditions of how educators learned from common sense about teaching, classroom experience, and the veteran's toolkit of proven norms.

In short, I reassured the CMs that, in asking other educators, in time they would find and become comfortable with that one way to teach (Britzman, 2003, p. 63). I confirmed that learning to teach could be a "recipe." One they were most likely to learn from resident staff with more years in the classroom. I advised them to find mentors who would share their lessons, units, and advice about discipline. I suggested that simple strategies would mean they were well equipped to become effective educators and help them gain confidence and certainty as they learned to teach (p. 63). I wanted to reassure them, provide simple, concrete answers, and I directed the conversation away from the graduate course, instructor topic, and the deeper, complex questions.

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<sup>45</sup> See Futrell (2008), *Changing the paradigm: Preparing teacher educators and teacher for the twenty-first century*, pp. 536-537.



*Here is what I would do differently if I could re-live that moment.* I would have responded to new teachers' questions using a Discourse of social change (Britzman, 2003, p. 68). I would have respectfully addressed the CMs' common sense expectations for course learning. I would have taken seriously their requests for and provided curricular concepts, strategies, and templates related to "exceptionalities in the classroom" (pp. 68-69). Moreover, I would have made sure I already understood enough about TFA to actively incorporate the TFA lesson plan format or *TAL* rubric for effective teaching into how I talked about lesson plan design. By meeting these curricular needs, I would have engaged "common sense" as way to enter into mutual learning.

While I would have worked to meet what they saw as immediate, urgent needs, I would not have tried to circumvent the novices' concerns because I thought I had a deeper understanding of what the CMs needed and what their students lacked (Kennedy, 2006). Considering what now I recognized as my ability to lapse into normative Discourse, I would not judge common sense as a bad or ignorant construct. According to Britzman (2003) common sense was the "starting point of theory ... for it is there where passion, intellect, philosophy, activity, and subjectivity commingle" (p. 69). Instead, I would have viewed it as a typical discursive place where people start when learning or unlearning to teach (pp. 68-69). I would have acknowledged it was important that novice teachers had access to practical, technological learning tools in the class (Feiman-Nemser, 2012), particularly given that the Institute's TFA training framework used followed a technological norm as its framework for learning to teach (2012). However, at that point, I would have noted that the discussion and learning about student

“exceptionalities” had just started.

After we had examined course content and a practical instructional framework (Kennedy, 2006), the exceptionalities discussion would have transitioned to how the offered content and framework could be adapted or necessarily modified. Next, together the CMs and I would have begun to experiment and critique the initial practical course offerings. This would happen after the CMs had time to teach the content through the offered framework and/or the TFA framework for learning to teach as TOR in their classrooms (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). As I reflected on how I would talk differently about the CMs’ learning concerns, I realized the conversation would have expanded to on-site learning during the school day. The conversation itself would have been much shorter.

#### **Reflexive examination and future reparations**

I in the previous section, I acknowledged my actual response not only reinforced teacher folk wisdom. Equally unfortunately, I let go a chance to deeply engage with questions about graduate school, instructors, and that aspect of learning to teach. There were regrets about how I responded and I considered what I would have changed.

Had I caught myself in the midst of trying to justify or reassure them that their experiences were not unique, Yolanda’s question could have acted as a way into a critical conversation about learning to teach. In my imagination, as a teacher educator I would have engaged the CMs in a vigorous and energized discussion wherein we deconstructed, critiqued, and thought about what they described was an unrewarding class. Yet, in the moment when Yolanda asked, what I enacted demonstrated my deeply engrained compliance with tradition norms about teaching rather than what I valued or believed was

possible in the service of teacher education reform (Kennedy, 1999).

I continued to think about how I responded to the CMs' stories, thoughts and questions. I was amazed at how easily I slipped into an enactment of normative teacher development practices. First, my replies reinforced the idea that "school reality appears as given, [and] so too [is] the knowledge it conveys" (p. 62). This endorsed a technological orientation for learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). From a practical standpoint, I recognized novices needed concrete tools: routines, procedures, and support structures (Kennedy, 2006). Teachers (2006) "practices reflect concerns with six different things" (p. 206): (a) teaching content; (b) creating learning activities that help students learn content; (c) investing students in learning the content; (d) supporting students to accomplish learning targets; (e) fostering classroom community; and (f) attending to their own (the teacher's) social and emotional needs (p. 205). I had not productively addressed any of these areas. I considered reliance on a technological learning orientation a common teacher education training approach (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). In many ways, TFA's training program was modeled after a technological teacher learning orientation. For example, TFA had lesson plan templates, assessments, observation tools, and recommended lesson delivery approaches. These norms aligned with a technological conceptual orientation, emphasizing teaching that was concrete, prescriptive, skill, and knowledge-driven (Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

My responses to the CMs' questions both directed the conversation from critiquing the graduate course and instructor and reinforced the CMs' idea that learning to teach was "an accomplished fact ... [and] curriculum and its presentations [were] not

considered in dialogic relationship to the lives of students and teachers” (Britzman, 2003, p. 62). Ironically, my response insufficiently addressed what it meant to learn and teach as an educator in both graduate and high school classrooms. At the end of our morning conversation, I could tell I had not offered substantive direction. The three novices were uninspired by my recommendations. They would continue relying on TFA’s concrete lesson plan templates, assessments, and lesson delivery approaches to anchor instruction (Gabriel, 2011). Equally likely, CMs would seek answers to their questions by networking with TFA peers and, perhaps, approaching one or two of the experienced staff members whose teaching they respected.

I posited this was probable because CMs were highly sceptical of anything that suggested there were easy fixes in the arena of learning to teach or in education (Farr, Kopp, & Kamras, 2010). This was because the TFA rhetoric cautioned CMs to be highly sceptical of the success “track record” of existing preK-12 education structural and conceptual norms (see Appendix B – TFA Change Theory). An excerpt from the TFA Change Theory statement illustrated how TFA presented to CMs information about some education gap specifics:

Today in the United States, 9-year-olds growing up in low-income communities are already three grade levels behind their peers in high-income communities. Half of them won’t graduate from high school. Those who do graduate will on average read and do math at the level of eighth graders in high-income communities.... This academic achievement gap is our nation’s most pressing problem – and it can be solved. Teach For America corps members are providing

students growing up in low-income communities today with the educational change to help close the achievement gap for good. (*Teach For America*, 2012a)

Thus, I recognized my remarks reinforced mainstream teacher development norms and CMs views that TC and in-service educators in the system were part of the problem. From the standpoint of TFA's Theory of Change, teacher effectiveness was responsible for student learning disparities. Further, words like mine further exacerbated what was inadequate in teacher preparation and learning programs.

Despite the missed chance to theorize about "common sense" with CMs that cold morning, Britzman's (2003) study demonstrated novice educators exercised agency and questioned and resisted normed recommendations. Initially, when CMs discussed learning to teach, they used TFA's TAL and associated classroom practice Discourse, with its focus on curriculum development, to talk about what they taught, what they planned to revise or retain, and how student assessment and growth results informed their ideas for future curricular decision-making. However, all CMs did not unilaterally demonstrate fidelity to TFA's framework. For example, Josephina stated:

I don't always do things the way TFA would want them .... I'm not doing it the TFA way, the right way..... (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

Likewise, novice educators took up less prescriptive approaches to curriculum after they experienced critical incidents in their school setting that led them to wrestle with their beliefs about learning to teach (Fecho, 2004). They began to develop their critical capacities on their own, aided by collegial or academic support, or sometimes through reading about critical literacy or anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2004).

Moreover, when novice teachers observed their own practice through action research (Anderson, Nihlen, & Herr, 2003) or another research methodology (Britzman, 2003, p. 66-67), it led them to question common-sense approaches to learning to teach. In TFA, the CMs who accessed their capacity to critically question common sense continued to integrate critical reflection into their developmental trajectory during the TFA tenure (Heineke & Cameron, 2011). Like Josephina's data will show in Chapters 5 and 6, over time she moved between theories of both common and good sense when she talked and enacted learning to teach (Britzman, 2003). At the start, Josephina built her practice on teacher models from her student experience and TFA's technocratic, methods-centered approach (Britzman, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). During the TFA tenure, data showed a weakened confidence in TFA and strengthened relationships with her students contributed to evidence of an instructional shift. Though she remained strongly attached to meritocratic norms, she developed some classroom practices and curriculum that addressed educational inequities (Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

In time, Josephina gained enough confidence in her instructional decision-making to grow beyond TFA's prescriptive ways of learning to teach. Josephina started to openly display this tendency toward the end of the first CM year. Josephina's data will show at least two factors encouraged and at times accelerated this tendency to move beyond TFA's approach to learning to teach. First, often CMs became disillusioned with the learning support offered through TFA and its program affiliates. Second, as CMs spent time teaching, they learned that the realities of classrooms were unpredictable, uncertain, and complex.

To develop the means to constructively cope and learn from the complexities of teaching, Britzman (2003) offered several different ways that educators moved from a practice separated from theory to teaching that recognized the practical as the source and reciprocal companion of theory. For example, Pinar's (as cited in Britzman, 2003) practical approach to integrating theory back into practice is grounded in an intellectual, autobiographic approach to teacher development. In Pinar's "Currere" approach to learning to teach, a person asked many but certainly one dominant question: "What has been and what is now the nature of my educative experience?" (p. 67). Using one direct and thoughtful question circuitously engaged the novice with the "how" and the "why" of every day classroom practice. This fostered a disposition of praxis that saw neither success nor failure in practice. Rather, all teaching efforts and effects were momentum that furthered one's knowledge and consciousness about learning to teach.

During our early morning conversation and the CMs' questions, I neglected to ask Josephina, Phil, and Yolanda for more information about the class. I had not respectfully listened to their concerns and offered ideas for initiating constructive conversation with the instructor. I overlooked the chance to model an assumption that a graduate instructor would want to know the CMs questions about how to work with their students. I had not reassured them that the course likely would improve their ability to teach and help high school students learn. I was not constructively inquisitive about how or what they did in the class.

Underneath it all, I had not wanted to admit or hear that the CMs' university teacher preparation program warranted critique. Even more so, I did not want to have that

conversation with CMs. To sympathize with them over their concerns with a university instructor was to acknowledge to CMs that it was possible they were not receiving the training they had been promised. Because there was no communication between TFA and its affiliates – the school site staff development program was one of the affiliates – I considered how their concerns were in part my responsibility too.

As I look back, CMs possibly exaggerated their course-based experiences. Maybe the instructor was effective and there were other reasons the CMs were critical of the university class. However, having been a classroom teacher for many years, I heard colleagues talk about taking courses for credit, classes where the content was superficially related to the classes they taught. Often, I wondered how some classes were endorsed by one or another college or university. So, maybe the CMs provided an accurate account.

Or, perhaps the instructor did need coaching or direction from the university's TFA partner program director. Had the university staff come together to map out a scope and sequence for CMs' course work? Had the university partner and TFA worked out a plan to develop a cohesive course program?

Since I was an affiliate representative (the school site staff development specialist) and had not been invited to any such effort, I questioned whether the partners were working as a team. So, I tended to think the CMs accurately expressed their concerns with the instructor and TFA's learning program. But I did not really know about the university or TFA – maybe the institution and organization were doing exceptional work and the CMs – in their under-preparedness – were being unreasonably critical or



uninterested in the course work.

Certainly different scenarios could account for the CMs' frustration with the course. In my position, I considered that too many variables existed to know whether the CMs received the instructional support they needed from the instructor and their courses. However, as a partner affiliate I did know there was discontinuity between what CMs experienced from TFA, the university partner, and the support they received at the school site for learning to teach.

So I relied on a Discourse steeped in teacher folk wisdom (Cuban, 1989) and deflected our conversation away from any chance for them to (a) directly ask for assistance and work to further develop a productive relationship with the instructor, or (b) invite them to talk about what they thought was needed and what was missing in their graduate course program. I was caught off guard and in the moment did not know how to address their concerns.

In January, when this early morning encounter happened, relationships between CMs and school personnel with teacher support responsibilities were tenuous and strained because CMs had little confidence that they would receive the professional support they expected was part of their in-service preparation to teach.

**Facing my unproductive resistance: Getting out of my own way**

Now I was concerned. If the CM class was accurately described, would that kind of course work be more effective than what critics claimed were instructionally weak TFA instructional training sessions? I wanted the CMs' university experience to fortify the abbreviated summer training and increase their sense of classroom competence and

efficacy. I wanted the staff development component of the TFA CM program to be partnership-aligned and support CM learning too.

I thought back to the copy machine meet-up. We could have talked about graduate education courses. I could have done more, but I didn't. I risked little with or for them. This led me to consider how the school and site staff development role needed to be different.

### **Stepping into the borderlands**

Because I was working with colleagues who were strongly invested in TFA, it was important to take seriously their learning and their role in the school. What closely followed this thought was my admission that all I knew about TFA was sourced from mainstream media, academic writing, and schoolhouse hearsay. All of what I knew either touted TFA's success or spotlighted its failures. The academic literature provided ample information if my goal was to hail or disparage the organization's work in schools.

Moreover, I knew nothing about the Discourse of TFA's teacher training model. If I could not demonstrate some knowledge of TFA's mission, training, vernacular, and strategies, how could I teach, learn, work, and build trust with my CM colleagues? I needed to learn more about TFA and how the organization prepared CMs to teach. It's strange how in a different context, a school I worked in with eight first-year TFA CMs, it quickly became apparent that despite my traditional teacher preparation, education, professional development, and experience, I had more learning to do.

Learning that there were oppositional Discourses – in this case, Discourses that differently influenced what we thought about and enacted while learning to teach – and

how to work within and through them led to “increased metacognitive awareness and identity growth” (Alsup, 2006, p. 9). To familiarize myself with TFA’s Discourse meant studying and asking questions about TFA training, curriculum, and strategies for learning to teach. It meant learning more about TFA and traditional education’s philosophical and instructional differences and perhaps similarities.

Further, it meant taking time to learn about the CMs on staff. And while I was learning about CMs’ experiences, I needed to monitor my investment in my own internalized fixed professional knowledge: the Discourse of learning to teach with which I most identified, and how it had shaped and limited the ways I thought and responded to others’ educative preparation and practice (Ellsworth, p. 10).

### **Getting closer to finding the teacher within**

If I managed to learn about TFA’s teacher training program, perhaps together the CMs and I could learn to question and challenge the ways we learned to teach. Perhaps while teaching in the same building and working with the same students, we could learn from one another even though the other’s approaches and practices were somewhat or even vastly different from our own.

### **Remembering why we learn to teach: Where are the students?**

If I chose to reject or resist CM efforts to teach from TFA’s framework, then I would become emblematic of the traditional education’s attachment to the status quo. I decided that there was another way to remain aligned with a desire to reform learning: I would not choose a side. Avoiding that, I could remain aligned with and support public education and acknowledge my responsibility to collaborate with colleagues whose

purpose, like mine, was to learn and teach with the students. Further, though I understood TFA's ideological underpinnings, I did not know what, if anything at all, CMs thought about TFA's organization and what they thought in relation to public education. Much like Kumashiro (2004) discussed how he joined the Peace Corps as a young undergraduate who "wanted to 'help'... and found no better opportunity that that offered by the American Peace Corps" (p. xvii), it was possible that CMs, too, joined TFA believing it was an excellent opportunity to begin a career in teaching or to further cultivate a commitment to social responsibility (Miner, 2010). That would take time to learn.

### **Expanding horizons: Learning to teach with CMs**

The early morning conversation could have been an action research project aimed at stimulating a strong collaborative relationship among the TFA program affiliates at the school. However, as the year progressed the site administration redefined my role at the school. My added responsibilities left me with less not more time to support teacher development at the school. I continued to be intrigued by different programs for teacher learning, and I developed a curiosity about how CMs learned to teach. I set aside ideas about TFA as a neoliberal organization that churned-out like-minded people who "drank the Kool-Aid" (Gabby, Personal Communication, June 12, 2012). I decided it was possible that not all CMs were coached to demonstrate unwavering fidelity to one framework for learning to teach. Instead, I decided: a) to learn about TFA's mission, recruitment, training, and professional development; b) use elements of TFA's Discourse of learning to teach in the staff professional development sessions; and c) ask CMs to

teach me TFA's data management system, the role of MTLDs, evaluation processes, and curriculum and lesson assessment and evaluation. In turn, I offered ideas and knowledge from the Discourses of learning to teach most familiar to me. As a staff, we slowly moved toward becoming a bi-discoursal (Gee, 2008) staff community.

To remain open to learning to teach and to *Teach for America*, I looked at the human side of TFA: the CMs. The pathway to teaching that Phil, Yolanda, and Josephina were on in no way resembled how I learned to teach more than 20 years ago. The CMs' experience was quite different than mine: *Teach for America* was wrought with political, pedagogical, and philosophical issues. I did not begin my teaching when the educators in the profession were openly targeted as solely responsible for social and racial inequities in U. S. public schools. Further, the TFA corps members were teaching and learning with students in classrooms where there were great needs and few resources. These were only some of the ways the CMs' early experiences learning to teach differed from my own.

However, despite socio-historical differences there were key similarities in how the CMs and I learned to teach. Like all teachers new to the profession, they wanted to give their students the best possible opportunities to learn. And the idealism of a novice was something we had in common, too: what was most important to all of us was finding "ways to meet students' academic needs" irrespective of what our pedagogical preferences might be (Ladson-Billings as cited in Kumashiro, 2004, p. xiv). As a teacher educator and a high school teacher on site, I needed to think about what this meant for the CMs as well as the school's students.

I continued to think about Yolanda, Phil, and Josephina at the copy machine. I

thought about them at the stoplight, staring at my hands on the steering wheel, waiting for the red light to go green. I remembered our early morning talk when I observed students and teachers in classrooms or watched teachers leave the building for evening classes at a university graduate school. I remembered how much it meant to me, as a young teacher, to be accepted, valued, validated, and mentored through my early career years.

### **Seeing similarities emerge**

Without moving into education research on teacher mentorship and induction programs (Johnson, 2004), my recollection of being a novice educator, experiences with mentorship and induction programs, and graduate research confirmed the importance of providing new educators with professional support (Britzman, 2003). As a first-year educator teaching eighth grade language arts, the difficulties and hopelessness was grounded in what that school and community taught me about education *and* about learning to teach: to earn an identity as a teacher, it was unacceptable to express my humanity, that is, my feelings, my vulnerabilities, and my insecurities about becoming an educator. There, no one wanted to talk with me about first-year complications while I delved into the early phases of learning to teach (Britzman, 2003). Over 20 years later, I looked back, and I knew the importance of encouraging CMs' to express the complexities of being nascent teachers.

The January morning talk with Yolanda, Phil, and Josephina was awkward and turned out to be a catalyst that culminated in mutually beneficial learning for the CMs and for me. Too often, the institutions and media circulated sanctioned versions of CM work. For example, TFA was the solution or the demise of public education, and CMs

were its army. The CM stories that were circulated were frequently showcased to make a point one way or another about the organization rather than to engender understanding of the CM experience learning to teach (Miner, 2010). And because frequently CMs were overwhelmed with their corps tenure, the un-extraordinary CM learning to teach stories simply went untold and overlooked.

### **Using Discourse to find common ground and build trust**

The talk with three idealistic, vulnerable, educators spiralled into a yearning to learn more about CMs and at the same time examine my “passion for ignorance” about “learning to teach” (Britzman, 2003). I decided to study TFA CMs and, as the research instrument, I sought to study my researcher-teacher self. To their credit, my study participants insisted on it!

The early morning conversation with CMs prompted some constructive reflexive thinking about how and why I reverted to familiar, normative Discourses as I continued learning to teach. It reminded me to remain open to all kinds of learning, to pay attention to what evokes ire or an urge to dismiss and perhaps look more closely in those directions. This first data chapter explained how TFA CMs afforded me another pathway to uncovering more about learning to teach. As is often the case when one works with students, frequently the teacher learns as much if not more from a common educative context.

## Chapter 5 – Josephina: A Chronology of Learning to Teach

In this chapter, I examined interview excerpts taken from conversations with one TFA trainee I worked with, Josephina because the case of Josephina showed some important evidence of a candidate profile closely aligned with generalized CM descriptions (See Appendix E – TFA Corps Profile Information). In Appendix E, TFA outlines the criteria it used to select recruits. Josephina’s information most closely aligned with TFA’s published criteria and with mainstream media descriptions of CM recruits (Lipka, 2007). For example, Josephina’s undergraduate GPA was over 3.5, her undergraduate degrees were not in education, and she was a student-body president and established leader at her alma mater (Harding, 2012b). Moreover, Josephina graduated from a prestigious university, and she self-identified as White and upper-middle class (Lipka, 2007). Further, Josephina finished TFA’s two-year commitment, taught a third year, and then left teaching for a non-education profession.<sup>46</sup> Without close examination, her choice to leave the classroom simply affirmed critics’ views that CMs are high achievers, ambitious, privileged students, White, and do not commit to an education career. In short, CMs are underprepared to teach and do not remain educators.

To move beyond dichotomous, discursively fashioned views about CMs, this chapter uses CDA to look closely at a chronological account of Josephina’s K-16 education and her TFA CM experience learning to teach. This phase of the CDA interpretation and analysis produces insight into prevalent literacies and themes that were

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<sup>46</sup> Information about the circumstances that persuaded Josephina to leave teaching is included in Chapters 6 and 7. Also, specific details about Josephina’s post-TFA career trajectory were omitted to further ensure her identity confidentiality.



important in her K-16 education and her training to teach through TFA's teacher recruitment program.

In her interview data, Josephina talked about her heightened sense of responsibility. She acknowledged TFA sought to recruit people who were overachievers; this organization custom was corroborated in the literature (Lipka 2007). Josephina's leadership evidence showed she was a respected leader amongst peers and in her home community. Josephina's "perfectionist mindset" meant from the beginning of her CM tenure she sought to appear competent in her teaching, even when she knew otherwise.

I think I'm able to be real with some people but I think it's TFA mentality; you know everyone's been very successful and you don't want to be the one whose not doing well, it's the type of person TFA attracts, the perfectionist mindset, and I've known some CMs long enough that we don't have to put on that everything is going great. My first year, I wanted to put on that everything was great.

(Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

After a short candidate profile, the chapter continues with a contextualized explanation of the significance of CDA as a way to examine learning to teach. Gee's building tasks and inquiry tools were used to examine and explain Josephina's interview data. Third, data excerpts examine descriptions of Josephina's K-16 education and the analysis considers how this information factors into Josephina's explanations of TFA CM training and in-service learning to teach. Following the close analysis of the data excerpts, the chapter more broadly examines Josephina's use of the three building tasks to prominently

position certain aspects of how she learned to think, feel, act, and know like an educator (Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

### **Josephina's TFA Candidate Profile**

Several things come to the forefront when I think about general descriptors of Josephina: she was an observant, inquisitive, 23-year-old White middle class woman. She noted that from an early age she was driven to be successful:

I've always had ever since I was a little kid, I was always self-motivated, never felt any pressure from my parents, which from the outside it may have seemed like, "Oh, her parents are pushing her," but it was the opposite. My parents were telling me, "Oh, relax, go back," and I knew what I wanted and I was so motivated internally that I think it almost scared my parents sometimes (chuckles here a little) how serious I was about my education, um, and both of my parents are professional athletes, and so I think I put this pressure upon myself to, expect, not just in school but in everything that I did so um, so yeah, that was something that just came naturally to me, for better or for worse. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012)

She came from a family that esteemed athletics and academics. Her parents did not encourage her to overachieve in school and extra-curricular activities, yet she mentioned her parents had been professional athletes – a field that required a competitive mindset and Josephina stated she was predisposed to respond competitively to her older brother's achievements and success:

The fact that you bring up my brother, I think that also had a huge impact, I was a very competitive child, and he was very intelligent and always at the top of his class, so I pushed myself, I wanted to do better than he did, I wanted to excel and make a name for myself, not just be the little sister, and so that was a huge part (chuckles), you know, sibling rivalry. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012)

Later, Josephina talked about gender discrimination when she discussed her professional work and career trajectory. She was attuned to the ways that women were characterized as less capable than men. Perhaps sibling competition with a successful older brother heightened Josephina's awareness of gender-related biases when she competed for positions or sought recognition for accomplishments.

Thus far, evidence showed that Josephina grew up in a family where hard work, achievement, and competition led to recognition and success. Education and athletics were important. Equally evident, Josephina's family valued service work and participated in church-sponsored activities. Josephina described an early church youth group "mission" trip that influenced her decision to work in human services:

I was on a mission trip to Tijuana with my church and it was my spring break and we went to Tijuana to rebuild some houses that had been lost to flooding, and so I did that three spring breaks in a row, and just being able to see into the family and, I don't know, something in me, I just felt like I really want to give back in a way that's in, helping them... We were working next to a community of workers and they lived in horrible conditions, there was no community doctor or anything

like that, and ... that was the first time it really crossed my mind. I wanted to give back in that sort of capacity. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012)

Here Josephina expressed an interest in helping poor people. Her interest was likely grounded in a Christian Discourse of good works that included faith-based projects that served the poor.

In sum, her family esteemed athletics, academics, and Christian values. She fondly talked about sibling competition, and I inferred that faith was a central part of her upbringing. These values and beliefs were integrated into Josephina's primary home D/discourse (Gee, 2008), a primary D/discursive upbringing that strongly emphasized that a life well lived included hard work, achievement, service, and perseverance. It made sense that Josephina's interviews and field note observations included strong evidence that she intended to work in the human services professions. This intent was corroborated through crosscheck references in co-participant interviews when other CM interviewees shared unsolicited knowledge of Josephina's character and career interests (F/N: 11/11/13).

### **Learning to Teach, Building Tasks, and Inquiry Tools: Feiman-Nemser, Gee, and Josephina's Data**

A great significance can be found in an exploration of the Discourses at work in Josephine's pre-TFA life and school involvement. To support this line of inquiry, Feiman-Nemser (2012) asserted that people draw from as far back as their early life experiences as they enact and perform an educator's professional work and practice. This made Josephina's early descriptions of learning, school, and education important and

significant. The discursively produced memorable learning events and incidents that comprised her own education shaped and continued to shape how Josephina saw herself as an eligible CM candidate and how she sought to embrace TFA's vision, mission, and CM preparation program.

The transcripts analysis, interpretation, and explanation produced evidence that these early events supported her experience learning to teach. At the same time, these incidents served as teacher resources and memorable encouragement during her TFA tenure and Josephina's third year in the classroom. This is particularly significant because upon successful completion of her K-16 education, Josephina entered TFA confident that she understood how to successfully learn and achieve in school. She viewed knowledge of the education system as a mastered asset. She believed her acknowledged literacy in the Discourse of school success could be transferred to her teaching and subsequent students' learning. Josephina found ways to use that knowledge to help students in her classes understand how to navigate the education system, prepare for college, and produce class work that demonstrated they were ready to attend college.

Next, the chapter starts with Josephina's early elementary years and moves through her preK-16 education. It examines how Josephina's background equipped her with the social and cultural capital she in turn shared with her students during the TFA CM tenure.

### **Elementary education experiences**

Josephina stated that "school was always really easy for me growing up ... I went to a very good elementary school ... where I was challenged and the teachers were really

motivated” (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012). Josephina explained her elementary school experience. Her story begins with early education memories:

I remember my first grade teacher who was the most influential and she challenged us to see how many books we could read ... I remember reading over a hundred books in first grade and I, that’s when I really remember taking off and just loving to learn. ... I already had the mindset and that self-motivation that I was going to succeed and I was going to do well in school. And I graduated Valedictorian so school’s always a very positive place for me, I always felt very at home and like it was my element. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Talking about her elementary school, Josephina described teachers’ practices, indicating that they adhered to pedagogic principles that aligned with Cochran-Smith and Fries’ (2005) explanation of a teacher “training” model.<sup>47</sup> These ways of learning aligned with Feiman-Nemser’s (2012) research about how educators learned to teach. For example, between the 1950s and 1970s, effective educator preparation subscribed to a behaviorist model and people were “trained” to be educators. When these methods were properly implemented, the results were predictable student performance norms (Kumashiro, 2004).

Behaviorist pedagogic methods encouraged teachers to interface content with instructional practices that incentivized external rewards, individual achievement, and

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<sup>47</sup> This was a “process-product” approach. Teacher candidates learned generic procedures and strategies that influenced teacher behavior and demeanor in the classroom. The independent variables for teacher effectiveness comprised candidate selection criteria: interaction analysis, lecture, demonstration, microteaching, behavior modification, and immediate or delayed student feedback. Equally important were the dependent variables that teachers were expected to master: establishment and student provision of clearly stated learning objectives, effective questioning techniques, application of varied teaching practices, and attitudinal demonstrations deemed appropriate to the educator’s role in the classroom. Teacher effectiveness was evaluated using videotapes, supervisor observations, and observers targeted and sought to see specific behaviors in teachers’ classroom practice as evidence of competency (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005, pp. 77-78).

competition. Implicitly and explicitly, students learned these traits signified and symbolized schooling achievement. To learn, acquire, and display one's academic success by way of dedication to such principles was to establish for himself or herself a student identity among the "elite" and promising students. In elementary and secondary settings, this was a position that brought with it added academic attention and positive reinforcement from teachers, schools, and communities that sought to provide students with what was needed to succeed in a white man's world.

Acquisition of incentivized, external rewards, individual achievement, and competition aligned with American individualism and capitalist principles of meritocracy (McLaren, 2007). Students learned that their school performance represented their individual academic capabilities (Gee, 2005). Further, competition among students was encouraged. It was important to follow normed rules to do and be the best student (Kumashiro, 2012). These D/discursive, meritocratic traits were principle elements in Josephina's descriptions of her elementary education.

Within the master narrative of Meritocracy, as a first grade student Josephina had internalized an athletic, competitive Discourse as part of her student identity. In interviews she used this discursive trait to depict memorable incidents and events in her elementary education. For example, when Josephina recalled her early reading activities, she described the number rather than content of books she read: "over a hundred books"; she represented school as the "taking-off" place for learning; as a child she remembered she entered school with an innate "mindset" and "self-motivation" to "succeed" and to "do well."

In this brief paragraph, Josephina's comments represent elements of a primary D/discourse strongly grounded in a master narrative of Meritocracy; here what is valued includes competition, hard work, and self-reliance. Equal to evidence of meritocracy and its attachment to individualism and competition is Josephina's primary D/discourse's signification of middle class cultural capital, what McLeod (1995) theorized middle and upper class children learned and acquired from family and community mainstream norms (pp. 13-17). Her ability to speak the language of power added layers of benefit in student to teacher interaction. Josephina's use of language signified she was born and raised in a mainstream environment. In turn, teachers recognized this, too. Educators assessed Josephina's use of language as evidence of exceptional learning potential, and mirrored back to her that she was student of promise. This kind of interaction further secured Josephina's efficacy and confidence as a primary school student.

Evidence of a discursive conditioning for school success was drawn from the same brief paragraph wherein Josephina self-described her elementary student identity: In first grade "I already had the mindset and that self-motivation that I was going to succeed and I was going to do well in school. ... I always felt very at home and like it was my element." Underlying elements of the meritocracy D/discourse were evidence that the schooling culture acted as a reproduction site for middle-class sociocultural standards for the signs, symbols, and knowledge legitimated in the recognized educational system. This was part of Josephina's pre-school and home experience, and it ensured she entered school acculturated to its norms in a manner that schooling routines and expectations



were already familiar, and at school she “always felt very at home ... it was her element” (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012).

As mentioned in relation to Feiman-Nemser’s (2008) work, Josephina described an elementary experience grounded in a training model of teaching. Underlying this pedagogical framework was the Discourse of the American success story (Gee, 2005). Josephina was further discursively positioned for academic success through teacher-to-student instructional design. For example, her teacher used external motivation through competition to encourage students to read more books. Josephina’s positive elementary memory included description of her zealous work to read a large number of books, and she was rewarded with recognition of an outstanding individual achievement. How this student pedagogically engaged with content further reinforced a meritocratic approach to school success.

In another vein, Josephina expressed a passion for reading; however, the memorable story of her elementary literacy learning was not discursively recounted or positioned as a content-focused or cherished *literacy* event. Josephina’s very positive description of this early education experience showed it reinforced competition, individual hard work, achievement, and a guarantee of subsequent external rewards for work well-done. This was an example of Josephina’s early educational experience and produced evidence that the ways Josephina was conditioned to learn informed how she imagined, practiced, and performed while learning to teach.

While this is a critical incident in itself, Josephina’s understanding of this elementary school experience as a significant educative accomplishment reinforced that

meritocratic systems supported student success, and thus its universal application was a viable way to interrupt education inequities. This value and belief undergirded what she explained she knew about how she thought, felt, and acted as a teacher during her TFA TOR tenure and in her third and final year as a classroom educator (Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

Next, an excerpt from Josephina's secondary educative experience supplies additional insight into her social imaginary of learning to teach prior to becoming a TFA recruit and of the experience of formally learning to teach. A shift in Josephina's thinking began in high school. She was tracked into advanced courses and recognized this meant she had different post-secondary opportunities than did some of her peers.

### **Secondary education experiences**

Josephina was a young woman as adept in her grasp of calculus as she was comfortably literate in Spanish. The valedictorian of her high school's graduating class, she was slight in figure, had intense eyes, and a vibrant smile. In high school, Josephina was aware of the education inequities among affluent, White, and the poor students who were mostly students of color, and her classmates whose first language was not English. Interview data, highlighted later in this section, discusses this difference in relation to race, social class, and students' education options. Here, this same speech segment is mentioned to establish that as early as high school, Josephina began to observe how education "tracked" students into certain learning tiers. Critical thinking was encouraged by certain teachers' pedagogical norms. This approach to learning led Josephina to further question socially structured norms and value learning that was critical, inquiry-

based, and examined social issues. Her excitement about critical, inquiry-based learning was illustrated in a description of a history class and a respected high school teacher:

One of my most memorable teachers was my Western history teacher ... he ... really prepared me for college ... he also really pushed the critical thinking perspective and looking at problems ... just really pushed me to look at issues and challenged my own beliefs in ways that I never really had, you know, thinking about issues like, gay marriage, which where I grew up, was a hotly debated issue and you know, republicans vs. democrats ... and I'd just thought, oh, what my parents believed ... I think he had a huge part in me being able to find myself, and what I really believed apart from what the environment told me to believe.

(Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Here, Josephina's repeated use of the word "pushed," and the phrases: "prepared me for college ... critical thinking ... looking at problems ... issues and challenged my own beliefs," and her reference to politics – "republicans vs. democrats" – and identity – "being able to find myself ... what I really believed" – suggested an inkling or desire to think differently about equity and social justice issues. Though learning how to "think critically" in itself is not evidence of becoming a critical pedagogue, in Freire's (1970) work, the first step toward recognizing one's role in an oppressive system was being able to think critically and move from a "common sense" way of seeing the world. Though Josephina may not have acquired the knowledge to enact critical pedagogy, her interest in examining issues from other than mainstream standpoints positioned her to move toward that direction in her thinking and learning to teach.

Thus, how Josephina chose to interpret her teacher's instructional intent was a possible first step toward a Discourse of critical pedagogy (Fecho, 2004). Josephina described her history teacher's methods as provocative, steeped in real-world controversies, and a challenge to regional common sense beliefs and values (Kumashiro, 2004). As she described the teachers she most valued in her school experiences, Josephina spoke of educators who focused on early and ongoing literacy development and critical thinking, teachers who challenged established norms. In concert with her developing sensibility about "difference," Josephina's talk about high school included where and how she observed education inequities and the effects of such on students with lesser social and cultural capital:

I had classes where I spoke Spanish with some of the students to help them understand what was going on like in art class, non-core classes. ... I mentored students ... who were struggling in classes. ... Everybody should have the same opportunities to learn regardless of where they come from or what they look like. ... A lot of middle class white Americans ... whether it's private schools or they go to schools where it's more affluent, they don't ... experience what it's like for a minority group or someone of a lower socio-economic group. ... I ... have always had a ... strong conscience for making sure ... that those things like socio-economic factors ... don't get in the way, like proving others wrong. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Josephina's TFA recruit and candidate potential included her strong literacy skills in key content areas: mathematics, biology, chemistry, and Spanish as a second language.

Equally important, Josephina understood the value of the tacit cultural capital that bolstered her own K-16 academic success (Gee, 2005, pp. 86-87). In high school, she talked about circumstances that demonstrate Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction (p. 87). Although Josephina had no knowledge of Bourdieu's theory, she recognized the significance of students' different educative experiences. She referenced this aspect of her high school education:

I grew up going to a high school that was very diverse in (names a state) we had a lot of African American and Latino students ... I had classes where I spoke Spanish with some students to help them understand what was going on in non-core classes. I would mentor students who were struggling in classes, so I always felt a connection to the fact that everybody should have the same opportunities to learn regardless of where they come from or what they look like.... I guess I just have always had a strong conscience for making sure that ... things like socio-economic factors don't get in the way ... like proving others wrong. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Josephina acknowledged that many of her high school peers did not enter ninth grade with the acquired or learned mainstream literacies that signified agency and, from an early age, subsequently positioned them for academic success (Gee, 2008). She saw these students struggle through school and exit the preK-12 system in the transition to adult lives with fewer opportunities than their middle class peers (Valenzuela, 1999). She acknowledged that these disparities were unimportant to many white, affluent, privileged peers. Yet she lacked D/discursive models and language that could have provided her

with the knowledge and the tools of critical language awareness (CLA) to address social injustice from anything other than the meritocratic paradigm she drew from to make sense of her world (Pennycook, 2001; Rogers, 2004).

### **Undergraduate education experiences**

As an undergraduate, Josephina found that some of her professors expected students to examine societal and global issues, think critically about course topics, and recognize the moral and ethical discontinuities overcasting the world. She thoughtfully described her college years:

I was no longer the top of the top, there were other students ... much smarter than me, and ... my first year was really hard, I wanted to give up a lot of times. ... It was very in-depth, you would be thrown things you had never seen before, it was all about application and. ... I wasn't used to that higher level of thinking in the science sense, but that was something that I, was able to learn ... and I'm really thankful for that experience because now I look at a problem and I don't just get frustrated if I don't know the answer right away, but I'm able to work through it, and you know, figure out a way to solve it. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012)

As stated earlier, Josephina earned an undergraduate degree at a prestigious public university. She said an undergraduate professor was a major influence in her decision to pursue a career that addressed social injustice:

One of my favorite teachers was Professor \_\_\_\_\_, and he taught medicine, anthropology, and political economy of health, and he was, is, a physician and an

anthropologist, so he's both, and to me that was the most fascinating thing, he was my idol, because he really worked to blend in the social perspective with medicine. It was unique because I learned how other cultures perceived medicine and research and studies in that area. Also in the public health class, looking at the health care disparities across the world, it opened my eyes to the possibilities and the needs, in medicine, so those were some important things. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012)

In particular, when people imposed negative stereotypes upon poor, immigrant, or non-white people, Josephina was quick to respond:

Anytime I go out I talk positively of my students and the community that I work in because I feel like you can change the mindset one person at a time. I just feel there's so much of that ignorance and hatred going around. I feel that part of my responsibility, as a teacher is to combat that ignorance. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

However, Josephina's frustration with social inequities lacked the words and phrases that signified familiarity with the discursive capability to talk about white racism's color-blind racism and color evasiveness. She could not speak from a standpoint that looked at education and social inequities from lenses of sociocultural theories, anti-racist, or anti-oppressive education. This indicated Josephina's limited awareness of how systemic hegemony continued to be reproduced through educative norms.

Josephina's limited comprehension and access to counter-hegemonic D/discourses were barriers to her ability to engage in more expansive systems thinking

about race, class, and marginalization in general. An examination of interview transcripts and an overview of university partner course syllabi indicated this invaluable information was not accessible to Josephina during the TFA CM tenure. Perhaps with access to the D/discursive cultural capital that signified agency and membership in anti-oppressive educative D/discourse communities, Josephina could have examined her experiences through that lens, incorporated anti-oppressive theories into her own K-16 and graduate level external and internal socially mediated learning, and thus worked – in her CM TOR classroom practice – to interrupt the renditions of learning to teach that, in her past, she herself experienced as a learner. On the other hand, as hooks (1990) stated, it was also equally if not more possible that Josephina could reject theories about race as a social construct and move on, teaching students that social and economic achievement were gained when one embraced meritocratic, color-blind beliefs about how to learn and acquire the sign systems and knowledge that equal opportunities in education.

#### **Pre-work and TFA Institute training and onsite school year readiness**

Ever mindful of how she had benefited from preK-12 and university systems' effective teachers, Josephina was keenly aware of her teacher responsibilities. She arrived at the TFA placement school on schedule: two weeks prior to the academic year start date. There, she realized how little she knew about curriculum and instruction. When asked about TFA's Institute, she said:

I was thinking of Institute, so that was the very beginning of it, getting some experience in the classroom and then watching your peers teach gave us the initial, "Okay, this is how you do it," but I think I came into it just really not



having an idea of how it worked or at least getting the format of how a lesson works. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

During Institute, Josephina was assigned to a region, informed she was teaching high school, and designated a content area. Her descriptions about Institute were vague and limited. Her impressions about her initial placement site appeared uninformative. The following excerpt was one example of how Josephina's Institute and first days at the school site were described in that small segment of Josephina's interview text:

I think that the thing that was most challenging for my situation was that I didn't really know what I was going to teach until last minute. I was told that I was English as a Second Language, and that that would kind of be applicable wherever I was put. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

A first reading without application of CDA yields vague, pointedly unproductive textual descriptions of Institute and early placement learning experiences. Frequently, qualitative research accounts of TFA CM experiences compiled similar reports of CM Institute and pre-service description. However, an application of CDA shows the language and phrases within Josephina's sample text are more complex. For example, in the short responses there is an undertone of her assessment of her CM professional efficacy and an assessment of the site as a facility established to actively provide CM professional support.

For instance, Josephina's sentences about her first impressions of the school site positioned her as the sentence object; for example, she ended a sentence with "wherever I was put." She signaled that TFA and school administration determined where and what

she was slated to teach. Discursively strategic language like this interfaced with other textual tactics to signify that her preparedness to teach was nearly beyond her control. The phrase “until the last minute” illustrated this point, too.

In a similar vein, Josephina used particular words to signify how she felt in her pre-service site wherein she expected additional instruction in learning to teach. For example she used the word “situation” to describe the school setting. Microsoft Office Suite dictionary and thesaurus site lists word and phrase synonyms of situation: “state of affairs,” “location,” and “combination of difficult circumstances” (2011). The subtext of “situation” communicated an early assessment of her expectations for the tenure. In short, the school, TOR position, and professional support, discursively referenced as “situation” communicated Josephina’s early apprehension about the level of TFA and partnership support she could expect while learning to teach. In sum, two sentences of text demonstrated that Josephina forecast her TFA tenure as “a combination of difficult circumstances.” Here, Josephina recognized discontinuities between how TFA’s program was described and her experience with CM development. During Institute and pre-service time on site, these discontinuities were manifest in a gap between promised and actual professional learning options. This included mixed messages from TFA and school administration about promised and assigned CM content area placements.

In addition to these important practical content and instructional concerns, Johnson (2003) found that novice educators like Josephina needed an understanding of sociocultural theories in education. Included therein was contemporary knowledge of the social construction of racism (in her own pre-service or in-service educative experience).

Access to these theories and practical knowledge would provide a discourse whereby Josephina would be able to consider with more complexity how education inequities were reproduced. With this understanding, Josephina may have transformed how she made sense of social and economic disparities and asserted that a theory of meritocracy alone was insufficient to counteract race and social class systemic education inequities that continued to be reproduced in America's public schools. This kind of knowledge would have been useful. For example, when Josephina sought to interrupt others' commentary that generalized how the communities' students were targeted and negatively stereotyped, having access to anti-racist D/discourses about color-evasiveness or color-blind racism could have deepened Josephina's understanding of white racism. Josephina described an encounter with these dynamics while she was learning to teach:

I think it was after my first semester [teaching] ... and I remember some girl asked me what I did, she was about my age, and I told her that I was doing TFA and I was working with high school, and she said, "Oh, that must be so hard, I couldn't, those kids are, you know in gangs and horrible things" ... She just came at it from a very negative perspective ... and it made me so angry because, I knew that wasn't the reality of it. ... My students are wonderful, I, they've taught me so much, I came in thinking I'm going to be this, I'm going to change all your lives, and they've changed my life more so than I've probably changed theirs.

(Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Here Josephina was limited to countering an acquaintance's comments about her TFA CM work and specifically about the school's students. It was significant that Josephina

acknowledged she was not the “savior” that, in her early CM involvement, she imagined herself to be for students in attendance at low achieving schools. Instead, Josephina found out that it was she who was changed through the relationships she developed with students and staff during the CM tenure. This was significant for Josephina’s personal and professional growth. However, additional access to literacies about the immigrant experience in American education, color-blind and color-evasive racism, and sociocultural theory and diverse frameworks for learning to teach could have expanded the value of this critical incident. With this additional information, Josephina could have made more significant connections between systemic privilege and oppression. Optimally, had her teacher development included learning that explicitly linked theory and practice, Josephina would have had the tools to step beyond using meritocratic ideology and behaviorist strategies as the filter through which she sought to learn from and with her students.

As mentioned earlier, CMs were assigned a content area placement at Institute. But this was not guaranteed, and in actuality they were frequently expected to work in a completely unfamiliar field upon arrival at the school site placement. TFA and its program affiliates’ agreements did not confirm that CMs’ initial promised placement was definite. This inconsistency eroded CMs’ trust in TFA’s commitment to support CMs’ interests and professional growth. For example, TFA policy permitted schools to reassign CMs to another subject based on site-specific requisites. Although this often happens to traditionally prepared novice teachers, Josephina explained how her experience was

further complicated by administrative mandated adjustments to her content area assignment:

I ended up teaching a variety of things. I felt really overwhelmed and like I didn't have enough time or guidance to prepare for all of those three things, so I felt lost. Am I doing the right thing? Where do I get the information for this and that? How do I put all this together so that it's coherent and logical, I just felt really overwhelmed. I feel that falls on the placement. I don't really know how TFA places teachers or who decides to hire TFA teachers. I feel like it worked out but I feel like at first it was really overwhelming. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

This dynamic exacerbated CMs' efforts to perform effectively as TOR in public schools. In this case, the school site reassigned Josephina to teach social studies. Then the school hired a social studies teacher, and Josephina's assignment changed to teaching three different secondary subjects: Spanish, math, and composition.

Throughout the adjustments to her content area assignment, Josephina struggled to identify a starting point for teaching in those content areas. Interview conversation about her first year at school showed Josephina returned to recollections of the first several months of her CM training and TOR time. Typically, she expressed frustration that there wasn't an established curriculum; she didn't know what particular content to select or where to begin within the content areas: "I didn't feel like I had enough time to adequately prepare me for many different facets of teaching" (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012).

Josephina strove to prepare and provide high quality content and instruction for the high school students in her classes. Typically the last teacher to leave the building, often Josephina remained at school until 7 p.m., sitting at her desk, head bent over a textbook, correcting papers, or browsing the Internet for research. Most often she hunted for information about teaching composition and writing. She sought to overcome the hurdles and gaps in her preparation and her teacher assignment agreement. She wanted to provide effective instruction to high school students who were years behind peers in more affluent districts and communities. With full knowledge that the agreement, as she understood it, was not manifest in her TFA CM experience, Josephina determined to remain in her placement site and continue learning to teach.

One year into her CM training, Josephina said she was more confident about the array of instructional options to use in content exploration. She noted an increased ability to know when and how to use specific approaches to teach particular content. However, she attributed an increase in her confidence, skills, and teacher effectiveness to informal networks with other CMs, to independent research on content and pedagogy, and, to a limited extent, to elements of her graduate course work, particularly in a course that addressed psychology and classroom management.

In her second and third year, Josephina expressed more confidence in her ability to assess and find needed resources and information. In addition to Spanish and foundations of mathematics, Josephina taught a college preparation course aimed at guiding juniors and seniors through college preparation, application, and admission procedures. The course included composition to prepare students for college writing.

As a second-year CM, Josephina talked about relationship development with students as a factor in effective teaching:

I feel like relationship development is an essential component that some teachers, I'm sure a lot of teachers get it, but I'm sure a lot of teachers may miss that component, I think in order to really invest your students in their own education and get them motivated, those relationships are essential, it's about gaining their trust and letting them know that you're there to, work so hard for them but that you expect them to work so hard for their education, you know with some students I feel like (pause), like to me [names the student who is going off to college and who Josephina mentored closely through the college prep course she taught] is like a sister to me, you know some of the students feel like family to me and so like I said it's hard to put it into words, but I would do anything for some of those students to help them to get where they wanted to be, and you know, I mean I think that, because of where I am right now in my life, I don't have a family, in a way that allowed me to give more to my students. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012)

In an earlier excerpt where she talked about her first CM year, Josephina challenges an acquaintance's negative comments and derogatory assumptions about students. Josephina said the students changed her life. In this later excerpt, Josephina's relationships with students had matured. She had become a part of their lives, and she felt a familial connection to some students in particular. However, though the level of familiarity and connection had deepened and enriched the common learning experiences of teacher and

student, Josephina's meritocratic ideology continued to undergird what and how she explained and how she modeled learning: "It's about gaining their trust and letting them know that you're there to, work so hard for them but that you expect them to work so hard for their education" (Josephina, personal communication, June 14, 2014).

As Josephina explained that she "expects them to work so hard," she also extended this expectation to herself as she continued her own journey with learning to teach. Although Josephina was in her second CM year, she had yet to examine different ideological standpoints and how these ontological beliefs influenced how we imagine and engage with life. The literacies we take up and internalize frequently shape and are shaped by what and how we learn in school. The limited access to alternative secondary literacies beyond meritocracy and TFA's theory of Change indicates that Josephina's CM experience learning to teach did not optimally offer her substantive access to alternative ways of knowing. So, in Josephina's second CM year, the opportunity to expand her awareness of secondary literacies/discourses about teaching was nearly ended. As Josephina observed, she was left to fend for herself and figure out things on her own: her recognition of the importance of relationship development is one example of her quest for significant self-discoveries that further enhanced how she learned to teach.

### **In-practice: Learning as teacher of record and through university courses**

Lortie's (1975) early research on the sociology of learning to teach theorized that irrespective of a teacher candidate's preparation, once an individual entered a classroom as TOR, the novice teacher taught the same way his or her teachers performed their



professional duties. At the same time, novice teachers' expectations for their students reflected the expectations *their* teachers had for them when they were elementary or secondary students. Lortie's (1975) work on the sociology of teaching described this spectacle as the "apprenticeship of observation" (pp. 61-65). Feiman-Nemser (2012) stated this model emphasized imitative technical proficiency and did nothing to move pedagogy past "existing standards and practices" (p. 80). At the same time, Feiman-Nemser cautioned that an apprenticeship can be other than what Lortie (1975) described in his seminal work about the sociology of teaching. Feiman-Nemser (2012) concluded that an apprenticeship model can enrich and fortify an otherwise barren technique-prone approach. If an apprenticeship was coupled with explanations of the principles and concepts that support the performed teacher actions, it was an effective way for novice educators to observe and learn (p. 80). "Cognitive apprenticeship" was the term used to describe this "hybrid" model of apprenticed, in-service learning (p. 80).

Like Feiman-Nemser's study (2012), Britzman's (2003) study of novice teachers acknowledged the importance of Lortie's (1975) seminal work. However, she questioned its uniform applicability to all novices and contexts. Her study cast doubt on the seemingly undisputed inevitability of novices reverting to an "apprenticeship of observation." She looked elsewhere for other factors that likewise shaped normative perceptions of learning to teach.

In particular, Britzman (2003) concluded: "traditional theories of socialization insufficiently accounted for the ways individuals refashioned, resisted, or even took up dominant meanings as if they were their authors" (p. 70). Britzman claimed that novices

persisted in finding a semblance of agency and leveraged it to express some degree of autonomy in what and how they enacted classroom practice. This claim seemed credible in Josephina's CM case of learning to teach. Josephina "took up dominant meanings," taking authorship of the Discourse of meritocracy. This ownership of what it meant to learn teaching traversed her continuum of education and learning: Josephina's K-16 education through the second year of her CM experience learning to teach. Here Josephina showed strong resolute and determination to author her own experience with learning to teach as she also distanced herself from TFA's offered model for CM preparation.

Britzman's claim is further affirmed in Josephina's choice to resist TFA and its affiliates' Discourse of effective teaching. Remember, Josephina maintained that TFA and its affiliates did little to support her education toward learning to teach. She claimed all stakeholders appeared more concerned about revenue than CM and student success with learning.

However, as Britzman (2003) observed in her study of teacher candidates and their student teacher practicum, apprentices were conditioned to accept rather than question the status quo in learning to teach. Yet, teacher educators encouraged candidates in training to teach in ways that interrupted technique-driven norms and Eurocentric curriculum. On the other hand, prospective teachers were also expected to comply with traditional or alternative certification program normative expectations to make it through that gate-keeping system. This meant novice educators needed to acquire the ability to know what and what not to risk.

Once again, Josephina understood it was acceptable to work independently and risk loss of exemplary recognition from TFA and its affiliates. On the other hand, she knew it was necessary to conclude her tenure with tangible evidence of being a CM in good standing. To preserve her own integrity, satisfy status quo requirements, and earn merit for her CM performance, she looked to credible sources outside of the TFA program network to certify her achievement. Though Josephina's deviation from programmatic norms was unconventional, she continued to participate and fulfill all CM programmatic obligations. However, Josephina's bold step into independence from TFA's organizational approval was an example of risk-taking and a CM expression of agency. This instance aligned with Britzman's (2003) theory that some novices do not fit neatly into Lortie's (1975) predicted apprenticeship mold. Rather, some candidates possessed and exercised resistance, agency, and conformity in their early field experiences.

Stories of candidates engaged in experiments with independence in practice are precisely what TFA and its affiliates needed to inspire change. Josephina's experiment subtly prodded TFA to consider that its program model lacked cohesion and adequate CM support. TFA affiliate programs had a responsibility to support CM learning, too. Here, Kumashiro (2004) reminded teacher educators and candidates that all parties that were engaged in learning to teach had a responsibility to step outside of status quo norms, recognize the myriad ways to learn, and continue the search for innovative ways to teach:

To invite students to work toward change, educators need to teach students to address their own subconscious desires for learning only certain things and

resistances to learning other things. Furthermore, educators need to address their own desires and resistances to teaching and learning certain things, and refuse to place certainty in any one way of teaching and learning. (p. xxvi)

If educators settle for established routines and conformist ways to teach, then enthusiastic, motivated teacher candidates gradually lose confidence that they can become educators for social justice or exercise creative agency. They need teacher educators who themselves are doing work that takes them outside the safe boundaries of program or academic conventions. Josephina recognized this issue in her partner university course work.

To illustrate, in many classes educators and candidates used one way to teach lesson plan development. It is the often-used methods course assignment requirement: candidates use a program-sanctioned lesson plan template. They use the template to design and present an original content-specific lesson to the instructor and class members. In *How Teachers Learn and Develop* (Hammerness et al., 2005), problems with these expectations are acknowledged, yet few programs use other ways to represent course participants' mastery of instructional design and delivery. The literature says that pre-service educators "are often taught 'ideal' curriculum and teaching practices" (p. 364). Further, most teacher preparation programs use an assumed mainstream or middle class context in which to educate candidates to present and deliver the lesson (Haberman, 1995/1998). This does not consider that most available teacher positions are in poor urban and rural communities. Haberman (1998) states an under-resourced, urban setting is a more apt rehearsal context simulate if teacher preparation seeks to effectively prepare

candidates for available positions. Over time, one of the ways that Josephina slowly lost confidence in TFA's university partner component's relevance hones in on this phenomenon in educator preparation:

I just feel like sometimes the classes were boring for lack of a better word. I'm not saying all my classes 'cause there were a few classes that were applicable but, there were others ... for example we would have to do backwards planning where you make a unit plan or lesson plan and, or get up and give a mini lesson in front of the class, and I would see some students spending hours and hours making one lesson plan, and I just thought to myself, you know my second or third year of teaching, you don't spend hours and hours making a lesson plan, you don't have that time to spend, and so I felt like it wasn't really realistic and then some students would come up with marvelous lesson plans with this fun activity but you're not really teaching the students, you're making fun and it's like how can we impress the teacher. ... I felt like my lesson plan, half an hour into it, what I would really put into it, but it's actually teaching the objective, and so sometimes I felt it was a horse and pony show, I'm thinking, "that's not really how it is when you're actually a teacher," at least that's how I felt, and I felt like sometimes there's a disconnect from the students who weren't in the classroom and what they thought a lesson plan was supposed to be or how much time you put into it versus what I experienced on a day to day basis of how much time realistically are you going to put into one lesson plan when you're teaching five lessons a day you can't put hours and hours? (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

Josephina's frustration with course work expectations was unmistakable. Moreover, her status as a CM left her feeling silenced or marginalized in the partnership classes, so she judged it was not prudent to bring up question about the reality of teacher duties, scarcity of time, number of different courses one is expected to plan and teach, lesson plan development, and how to use time to efficiently complete school related tasks.

Yeah, and it was tough because I felt like there was a lot of dissent among the [names the partner university] community as to whether or not they should accept TFA students to take the classes, and that tension was obviously felt at times... because not everyone in the partner university staff was on board it was definitely challenging and I think that was frustrating because, and I'm still paying a lot of money to take these classes, and I felt like sometimes I wasn't getting ... my money's worth, I guess.... I'm a paying student just like any other student, that I should have a class that's applicable to me as well. I felt like sometimes I was kind of like pushed in there, "Oh, that's the TFA group. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

While Josephina was irritated that these cautions and practical concerns remain unaddressed during course work, she also struggled to hold onto her passion for TFA's mission to reduce education inequities, to close the achievement gap. Gee (2004) reminded the reader that frequently competing or complementary primary or secondary D/discourses are in play at the same time. This was the case in Josephina's memorable stories of her K-16 education and her long-standing desire to use her skills and abilities to reduce social inequities. Later, as Josephina talked about learning to teach through TFA's

program, she conceded when a former CM talked with her about TFA, Josephina was excited to apply and proud to be accepted as a recruit:

I really, really missed working with kids...and one of my friends had started sch[ool], TFA in the Bronx, NY, the year before, and so I started talking to her about it and talking about her experience... it was really positive...and a lot of gains with her students and she just thought that I'd be really good at it, so she really recommended that I apply and try so I applied ... and got in ... I was really excited and happy because I thought it would be a challenging experience and something that, that I had also had a lot of experience with in the past that would help me to be a good teacher. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012)

Whereas she initially thought her moral and ethical views about education closely aligned with TFA's program, her CM experience taught her otherwise. During the TFA CM tenure Josephina grew more critical of TFA, traditional teacher preparation, school leadership, and site-based staff development. She questioned whether any of the partners believed CMs' and their students' learning merited priority attention. Here Josephina talked the school leadership and what she perceived as ethical problems that placed other interests ahead of students' needs:

I decided I would not come back [to the school site] to teach after my third year, and that was the moment I decided I wanted to look into other things. I'm glad I did. I want to voice my opinions, stand up for what I believe. It's frustrating ... I could not talk to anyone at the school, no one would talk to me about it, and basically I was told to stop talking about it, I was creating too many issues, or I or

other people could lose their jobs. I want to work someplace where I can voice my opinion.... I was afraid that then I would lose my job. I was trying to fight a good fight, and it was exhausting. This is a public institution. There need to be more checks and balances, no accountabilities... with people...who do things that are unethical, and there's nothing I could do about it. It was a huge factor in why I decided not to teach.... It's not in the best interest of the students, and part of it was the students, there were students I wanted to be there for, it definitely wasn't the admin that brought me back. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

Josephina's story about learning to teach through TFA's training, university partner program, and school-based staff development described and explained how a CM lost confidence in a system and instead drew from her experience as a successful student, resorted to imitating practices modeled by her memorable teachers, and used information that had contributed to her achievement and success in school to create curriculum. Josephina pulled from her knowledge of mainstream social and cultural capital. She used content and strategies that shaped her performances as an outstanding student. Josephina incorporated these assets in combination with other independently acquired resources to shape her CM teacher identity and classroom practice.

Chapter 5 highlighted several parts of Josephina's case study. The brief profile highlighted Josephina's background. Then the chapter explained the significance of using Gee's (2005) critical discourse analysis to analyze and explain how Josephina learned to teach. Third, Josephina talked about the critical incidents and events from her education and TFA CM teacher-training program. Excerpts from different phases of Josephina's



education were interpreted to locate prevalent themes and talk about how these concepts influenced Josephina's experience learning to teach.

Next, Chapter 6 touches on the political nature of language in Josephina's account of learning teaching. It includes a concise recap of Gee's building tasks, inquiry tools, and how CDA is used to learn more from Josephina's data. Chapter 6's main section features three of Gee's seven building tasks: Significance, Activities, and Sign-systems and Knowledge. The inquiry tool, Discourses, is used to interpret and explain how Josephina uses the building tasks to explain her figured world of learning to teach through a TFA CM partnership program. The conclusion summarizes the main concepts in the chapter analysis and explains what follows in Chapter 7, Findings and Implications for Future Study.

## **Chapter 6 – Josephina: Significance, Activities, Sign-systems, and Knowledge**

### **Introduction**

*Summarizing earlier analyses.* In Chapter 5, the data excerpt analyses focused on Josephina’s K-16 education and TFA CM experiences. The intent was to see how Josephina’s prior education, pre-service, and some in-service time as a TFA recruit influenced how Josephina learned to teach. In Chapter 6, Gee’s CDA was used to further examine Josephina’s interview data.

*Section overview.* Next, Chapter 6 explores some of the political influences of prominent data codes surrounding Josephina’s teacher development. Then, coded themes from interviews aid in selecting three of Gee’s (2005) seven building tasks and in choosing the “Discourses” inquiry tool in data analysis and explanations. The three building tasks: Significance, Activities, and Sign Systems and Knowledge are used to examine what and how Josephina used Discourse to position certain events and incidents as memorably influencing how she learned to teach. In making these decisions, Josephina established credibility or justification and amplified certain things as important in her accounts of how, as a TFA CM, she learned to teach.

The chapter extends themes of meritocracy, competition, and TFA’s Theory of Change (see Appendix B). This includes excavating interview data for Discourses that interfaced or resisted what earlier analyses identified as meritocratic norms that alleviated education inequities. Next, discussion transitions to a short review of Gee’s building tasks and inquiry tools. The main section of the chapter examines “grouped and themed” data excerpts. Following each “grouped and themed” data excerpt collection or set, each of the

three building tasks is discussed in relation to each set. In each case, the Inquiry Tool Discourses (Gee, 2005) is used to analyze the themed and grouped data excerpts in relation to how Josephina learned to teach. To start, the chapter examines what is significantly political in Josephina's accounts of learning to teach.

### **The Language of Learning to Teach is Political**

Josephina had a limited view of how political factors influenced how she learned to teach during the CM tenure. She connected socioeconomic disparities with unequal access to public education. Thus, she used a Discourse of Meritocracy to explain causes for school failures and successes. Moreover, from within a meritocratic Discursive system and her position as a TOR, she reasoned that students' school success rested on the effectiveness of the educators teaching in the communities' schools:

During the first year, I felt immense pressure and a responsibility that my students were counting on me... in the position I was in so I felt that I had no choice but to stay there... I wanted to do everything I could in my power... and I was really not as prepared as I could have been. But students were counting on me and that made me stay there and try to do everything I could. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012).

In this excerpt, Josephina expressed her belief that teachers dramatically impact students' success and were duty bound to do so (e.g. "my students were counting on me," and "I wanted to do everything in my power"). Further, Josephina's statement that she "felt immense pressure," "a responsibility that my student were counting on me," "I wanted to do everything I could in my power," all are statements that align with TFA's Theory of

Change (see Appendix B) that asserted the students were in dire circumstances, and the CMs were responsible for ameliorating existing classroom inequities. Likewise, another interview excerpt emphasized Josephina viewed educators who worked hard as the basis of all students' education achievement:

I mean teaching definitely takes a lot out of you and I think it gives me so much adoration for my teachers who've been teaching for 30 years, I just wonder, how do they have the energy to stay passionate for this work for so long because it, if you really put your full into it, it can be all consuming at times, so it gave me a lot of respect for some of my favorite and best teachers. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012)

In these and other interview excerpts, teacher quality – educators willing to work as much as was needed to ensure student learning – were key to ameliorating education inequities. The additional factors and explicit Discourses that education researchers asserted factored into subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999) rarely appeared in her transcripts. For example, Josephina differentiated her social circumstances from those of her students in the following way:

I didn't think of my students as being any different because of their background, and I think that's partially ... I think definitely TFA tries to cultivate that, but that's part of the reason I joined TFA in the first place. I felt like that was just a passion I had to begin with: to really like to push these students beyond societal expectations. So, I think it was partially TFA I also think it was partially my own

personal background or personal beliefs or passions that motivated me to learn to push my students in that way. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2014).

In this excerpt, Josephina's refers to students' social class, educative and racialized identities as "their background." This was the way she coded difference, particularly about race and class. She subscribed to TFA's core values (see Appendix C) that premised people can learn irrespective of "their background," if quality educators teach in the students' schools. In this instance, Josephina's Discourse and TFA's theory of change were aligned. In combing through Josephina's transcripts, I noticed that she lacked access to an explicitly political Discourse about social class and how that Discourse interfaced with race, ethnicity, sexuality, ageism, able-ism, and limited – or privileged – peoples' education options (Bettie, 2003). However, she identified gender discrimination and invoked a Discourse of women's work and gender equality in the workplace (Harstock, 1983, pp. 300-301). For instance:

I've felt discriminated because of my gender. Male teachers get priority because they are Male ... [and] I wasn't someone they wanted on the board, I think it was for the secretary position.... That is the only place ... a woman can hold a position ... I felt like I was asked to stop doing what I'm doing. Don't you see that this is wrong? Sexist, ageist ... I didn't do anything wrong. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2014)

And, in nuanced ways, she drew from a faith and Christianity-based Discourse, signalling a faith-based Discourse influenced her work at the school. For example, in an interview she expressed how much she came to care for the students. However, at this point,

“caring” is synonymous with a view of the students as needing help or needing to be saved. This invoked a Missionary Discourse rather than a Discourse of Caring. In the latter, Caring is a reciprocal relationship, equally nurturing for the caring and the cared-for (Noddings, 1992):

I have the opportunity to work with these wonderful students and see what amazing things that they have to offer, and I feel so blessed to know that secret, I want to share that with everyone. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012)

Yet, the longer Josephina worked at Prospect High School, it became more difficult to cling to a meritocratic Discourse to explain inequities. Still, Josephina’s common sense explanations continued to support her beliefs about learning to teach. However, in her third year teaching, Josephina began to complicate the problem of education inequity in relation to social and economic differences in her and the students’ lives. She said:

I am speaking with a privileged place from my college experience my students don’t, connect with. I stop myself and ask, “How can I talk about this? How can I relate to my students? I don’t know how to explain, I don’t know how to explain...” I am conscious that students can’t have or afford what I had.... I felt guilty.... Why did I get that experience? At least [names one student at the school who earned a full scholarship to a four-year college in part from involvement in Josephina’s course] will have that, I feel good that [names a student] will have that. There are a lot of obstacles for our students. As a college prep teacher, it’s important to be real about what it takes to get there, and I see that as a socio-economic issue. (Josephina, Interview 3, February 12, 2013)

By the time Josephina learned to distinguish between her own and her students' opportunities to acquire higher education – its expense was a key factor in disparity – she knew most students in her class were not able to attend college irrespective of their work ethic. For example, Josephina mentioned her sense of “privilege,” her guilt about having options she knew were not available to the student majority. Twice, she said, “I don’t know how to explain,” and she failed to complete a sentence except to transition to a thought about the cost of education: “I am conscious that students can’t have or afford what I had.” Here, Josephina wrestled with guilt about her privilege and attributed it to “socioeconomic” assets (her family’s and her privilege) and socially constructed economic inequities. She remained within a familiar Discourse of Meritocracy though she began to ask questions about social class, “I am conscious that students can’t have or afford what I had.... I felt guilty.... Why did I get that experience?”

Yet, even when teaching students in poverty, knowing what it would take for them to attend college, and recognizing that doing well in high school was likely not enough, Josephina lacked the discursive tools to speak in a complex way about how meritocracy interacted with social class, White racism, and xenophobia. She was not able to consider how the later three factors equally or more so contributed to Josephina’s acquired capital and the students’ denied access to mainstream mobility options. As noted in Chapter 5, Josephina wanted to believe that the meritocratic formula worked for everyone (issues related to social class and contemporary racism: colorblind racism or color evasiveness). Her limited access to anti-oppressive Discourses kept her from more comprehensively critiquing the issues related to the students’ access to higher education.

The next two sections examine the implicit political significance of social class and White racism respectively in Josephina's interview excerpts.

*Socially constructed systems of oppression: Social class.* Bettie (2003) theorized that most people “cannot or will not think with the category *class*. That is, people appeared ‘discursively disabled’ from talking about class ... as it is barely textualized in their talk” (p. 48). Josephina's inability “to explain” how social class functioned to make higher education accessible (or not) indicated that she was “discursively disabled from talking about class” (p. 48) Bettie's (2003) theories about women and social class helped explain Josephina's discursively limited ability to explain schooling and higher education's inclusion and exclusion “system.” It also explained Josephina's difficulties coming to terms with the origins of her professed guilt – she knew she had worked hard, yet her students did, too. Whereas her hard work was rewarded, with a few exceptions, the students' hard work reaped few if any real rewards (Bettie, 2003). Further, Josephina's ethics impelled her to realistically talk about the requisites for college admission. She knew this left the students with knowledge of how inadequately they were positioned to access post-secondary schooling (2003). Again, Josephina was boxed into a Discourse that limited her access to alternatives for students' learning. She was at loss for a “just” explanation beyond the “come to class, apply yourself, and the opportunities are there” mentality. So she continued to rally students to work hard to achieve their higher education goals.

Earlier in Chapter 6, Josephina expressed turmoil, “I don't know how to explain,” when she talked about her access to college in relation to Prospect High School students'



barriers to higher education. Lack of exposure to socio-cultural theories further explained Josephina's naiveté about education inequities. Some of these forces included social class, race, Whiteness, gender, students' subtractive schooling, and Josephina's experience learning to teach. Equally possible, as stated in Chapter 3, Josephina could reject theories about social constructs and move on, teaching students that social and economic achievement were gained when one embraced meritocratic, class-less, color-blind beliefs about learning and acquired the sign systems and knowledge associated with opportunities in education. However, Josephina appeared to set aside the concept of race, and she more deeply focused on privilege wrought from economic and educational advantage. How Josephina addressed the politics of race in her school-based experiences learning to teach, and how she situated its significance in language, is examined in the next section.

*Positioning the politics of race in TFA's framework of learning to teach.* When Josephina talked about race and its significance within in-service learning, she concluded that race was not of primary significance in her experience learning to teach. Josephina lacked yet another theoretical construct to aid her understanding of "the ability of Whites to live with ambiguity, contradiction, and personal and collective responsibility for racial injustice" (McIntyre, 1997, p. 136). The following excerpt demonstrated that Josephina was limited in her understanding of how White supremacy and racism were embedded in the culture of power she worked to help students learn and acquire to improve their post-secondary eligibility. Moreover, when Josephina talked about race in the classroom – her in-service experiences learning to teach – she did not examine her Whiteness and its

influences on how she learned to teach. Rather, she used a Discourse of teacher preparation reform to note the dearth of teachers of color at the school. She intimated this was most significant in her race and school experience learning to teach. Further, Josephina identified an unexpected marker of difference, “religion,” and relationships with families as the significant socio-cultural challenges she encountered at school. Here is an excerpt that illustrated Josephina’s in-school perspective about race:

Race doesn’t factor into things, religion factors into how I’m able to relate to students, I came to terms with this – I need to think back to my first year – It was easier because everyone was different than me, the student body is pretty homogenous – not many Latino students now. I thought it was odd that all the teachers were White and all the students were not, and in my high school, I had some teachers who were not White, here I think it’s important to actively recruit people of color to go into the teaching profession.... Interaction and the cultural divide with parents has been difficult. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013).

At first I interpreted Josephina’s dismissal of the significance of race in the school solely as evidence of a color evasive/color-blind Discourse (Bonilla-Silva, 2006;McIntyre, 1997). While this seemed part of how Josephina addressed race in school, another part of her transcript further complicated the color-blind Discourse. Her remark, “not may Latino students now” seemed out of place in relation to making her point that she did not see Race as significant at the school. Then, I considered the majority school population

where Josephina taught in relation to Leet-Otley's (2012) research to consider Josephina's commentary in another way.

According to Leet-Otley's (2012), some East African Black students adamantly resisted racialization as Black and instead identified as Oromo, Kenyan, or as Muslim. Recalling that Leet-Otley's research (2012) uncovered this dynamic, it made some sense – though only as a partial interpretive option – that Josephina named religion as more significant than race. The students distanced themselves from being racialized as African American or Black. This may have figured into Josephina's remark that race was less an issue with drops in the school's Latino and Asian enrollment.

On the other hand, Josephina was critical of the partner university's course content on race and whiteness. She was frustrated with the design and delivery of course material. She was critical of the conversations about race, whiteness, and working in communities of color and course assignments in general:

You know we sat in a class, of predominantly white students, I think one non-white student, two non-white students out of a class of 30, you know we spent all this time talking about the power of the majority, and whiteness, and all this stuff... I felt like a lot of stereotypes thrown around, and again it was mostly white people talking about these groups ... I didn't really feel like that class was preparing them to tackle the issues that they're gonna face, I mean granted each school community classroom's gonna be different? But I just felt like they could've done a lot more with that class in terms of actually getting an authentic

experience. So that's just kind of an example that comes to mind. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012, p. 7)

Here Josephina doubts there is an ability to talk about whiteness in the absence of an "other" racialized people or community. Frankenberg (1997) observed that White women frequently were unable to focus on their racialized identities without having such a discussion nested in a broader topic focused on groups of people racialized as not-White: Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, or Mexican communities for example. Further, conversations meant to interrogate whiteness (hooks, 1990) frequently reverted to White people talking about wanting to understand "the other." These effects happened because studying whiteness was difficult for many European Americans to imagine. Here, when Josephina talked about "preparing [the pre-service teachers in the class] to tackle the issues that they're gonna face," I thought about how it was equally if not more urgent that White educators faced themselves and talked about race. I also considered the challenge of working with a group of 30 pre-service, White educators, in an effort to move into that Discourse. In short, Josephina's critique of the graduate diversity course's whiteness curriculum and discussion indicated that the discussion moved from interrogating whiteness to studying the experiences of White people working within communities of color. While not mutually exclusive, these are different ways to think about White racism.

Interrogating whiteness was likewise distanced from Josephina's personal examination of Discourse about race in school. However, Josephina considered race a significant factor in conversation about the education system's failure to attract teachers

of color into the profession (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). In this interview excerpt, Josephina's views about education inequities and race aligned with the TFA organization's core diversity value statement cited here (*Teach For America*, 2012c):

We act on our belief that the movement to ensure educational equity will succeed only if it is diverse in every respect. In particular, we value the perspective and credibility that individuals who share the racial and economic backgrounds of the students with whom we work can bring to our organization, classrooms, and the long-term effort for change. (p. 1)

TFA's diversity statement remained oblique in connecting racism to societal problems and the reproduction of race, social class, and economic inequities. The phrase "we value the perspective and credibility that individuals who share the racial and economic backgrounds of the students" (p. 1) lacked a strong, strident, claim of solidarity. The claim, as stated, was a weak commitment to specifically target issues of race, social class as ways that society reproduced under-resourced schools' problems and made teachers' work and retention persistently difficult in communities of poverty.

Despite the overarching hegemony that created barriers to how Josephina was able to engage with oppressive influences in schools, the effects of social class, White racism, gender, ageism, ethnicity and other socio-cultural influences all created dissonance and troubling, in-articulable realizations that, at times, paralyzed and inspired Josephina's practice-based experiences learning to teach. Josephina talked about living with a confluence of thoughts and feelings about learning to teach:

I don't know, each day presents a new challenge.... Sometimes I feel like I'm a good teacher and then I feel like I'm a horrible teacher, and I'm in my third year.... Sometimes I feel like I have to present this façade that I know exactly what I'm doing and I don't and there's this pressure to appear that way, and yeah, sometimes I get overwhelmed, and I feel guilty, my students deserve better, though I have to take care of myself.... I don't know how I made it through my first year... I have dreams about certain students, I would worry about students at home over the weekend. It's hard to leave that work over the weekend... it's hard to go home and not think about the students. There are so many young lives you have an impact on, and I feel a responsibility that I'm doing the best I can to support them, they deserve better... it's tough, I've gotten better but it's still a challenge. I get affirmation and reassurance in school, related to teaching.... it comes from within other colleagues, if I hear students say good things about colleagues, it's important to pass on that information to the colleague, and I know that makes me feel good when students say some thing about my teaching.

(Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013).

Albeit, Josephina's primary Discourse of Meritocracy continued to guide her own theorizing about systems of inequity. However, she also talked about the importance of working together, giving and accepting the support and reassurance of educators and students. This signalled her receptivity to a more collaborative approach to teaching and being in relationship in her work. This shift signified an emergent Discourse of Caring and education opportunity (Noddings, 1992).

In conclusion, Josephina did not explicitly describe teaching as political work. Yet, the socio-political nature of Josephina's work examined through social class (Beattie, 2003), White racism (McIntyre, 1997), Caring (Noddings, 1992), and other Discursive inclinations demonstrated the political nature of language and its influence on how Josephina learned to teach.

Because she understood some of what contributed to education inequities, Josephina wanted to teach students to successfully navigate the culture of power (Delpit, 1995). Josephina thought, with this knowledge, poor students could "stake claim" to the benefits of mainstream membership. Earlier in the chapter, she talked about TFA, learning to teach, and a desire to participate in a movement to close the achievement gap between affluent and poor students. This correlated with what Gee (2005) said about how people communicate: "we use the grammar of our language to take a particular perspective" in situations or about social issues or concerns (p. 2). Ways of fashioning language communicate what people acknowledge as "real," "normal," "possible or how realities 'should' be," and how they do it; these are examples of how language signified one's identities or relationship(s) in and around certain social systems and worlds (Gee, 2005). In relation to Gee's (2005) ideas, Josephina wanted to prove that education equity was achievable irrespective of race, social class, and ethnic discrimination and subsequent socioeconomic and learning disparities.

In large part, she did not learn to teach from TFA or its affiliates. For the most part she relied on her own assets, abilities, and resourcefulness to become a recognized effective educator. To communicate her experience to interested stakeholders, Josephina

highlighted certain aspects of her professional learning and practice. CDA's seven building tasks and inquiry tools were used to identify the elements that appeared most important in Josephina's accounts of learning to teach. Next, the chapter includes a brief review of Gee's (2005) approach to CDA before a transition a CDA analysis using building tasks and one inquiry tool to examine Josephina's interview data.

### **A Brief Explanation of Gee's CDA, Building Tasks, and Inquiry Tools**

Gee's sociolinguistic approach to CDA posited people used seven building tasks to construct realities, leading them to interact and respond to circumstances in particular ways (p. 11).<sup>48</sup> In any figured world, all of the seven building tasks were represented and used to develop social systems. This was seen in the social norms people acquired to engage "language-in-action": for instance, the way people communicated, made transactions, and generally interacted in a mainstream or "chain" grocery store. These norms were not fixed. Instead, through shifts and transformations in D/discourse (e.g. the phrases, "paper or plastic" or "cash, credit, or debit"), the social norms of shopping for food or goods in supermarkets evolved how people interacted and thought about purchasing groceries. The key was an understanding that some D/discursive shifts and transformations occurred more rapidly than others, and all seven of the building tasks interfaced in the creation of social worlds. A personal or group's perspective made one or more of the seven building tasks seem more important in a particular context. People used one or more of Gee's (2005) inquiry tools to fashion and to recognize building tasks in formation.

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<sup>48</sup> Building Tasks: Significance, Activities, Identities, Relationships, Politics, Connections, and Sign systems and knowledge (Gee, 2005, pp. 98-102)



So that people had something with which to build the tasks into a significant construct, Gee identified four types of inquiry tools: Discourses, Conversations, Social Languages, and Intertextuality. Again, people used inquiry tools to amplify the importance of certain building tasks and make more or most central certain aspects of event or incident (p. 20). It was also important to realize that the seven building tasks and the tools of inquiry interrelated or were “caught up” with one another in any and all social transactions (p. 20).

As is always the case with CDA, the data interpretation and explanation was a partial account of Josephina’s experience learning to teach. At another time, a different perspective or area of interest imposed on the same data would produce a different representation of prominent building tasks positioned by another or other inquiry tools to accomplish a different purpose or construction of an instance of reality.

Josephina claimed partnership affiliates’ (university partners and school placement sites) involvement with TFA was forced upon the partnership education department. Josephina said she was aware that the university’s faculty was not united in supporting the TFA partnership program:

I felt there was a lot of dissent among the [names the partner university] community as to whether or not they should accept TFA students to take the classes. That tension was obviously felt at times. I felt like some of the teachers wouldn’t want to work with TFA CMs because not everyone in the partner university staff was on board, it was definitely challenging. I think that was

frustrating because ... I felt like sometimes I was kind of like pushed in there, Oh, that's the TFA group. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Furthermore, Josephina observed that partnership involvement was revenue driven:

A part of me saw the relationship between the partner university and TFA as, "Oh, this is a way for us to make additional money," I remember when we first got back from Institute, and we had our first meeting at the partner university, and they were talking about what courses we would be taking. They said, "Oh, you're going to be getting credit for the time you spent this summer at Institute, but you're going to be paying the partner university \$1200.00. Everybody was livid because that was the first communication we had gotten of that expense. And I asked, "What service did [names the partner university] provide to me during the summer that I owe them this \$1200.00? And there was no answer. They weren't providing any service, they were just giving credits for the time I'd spent doing TFA, and so that made me [angry] because I just felt like, "Oh, they're just taking, you know, \$50,000.00. And so I just couldn't believe it. I just kept asking the question, "What service did you provide that merits you to charge us \$1200.00? I understand that you're giving us credits but you didn't provide us with any service. I would rather not have the credits and not pay that money. What did you provide? It was a TFA Institute, and I owe [names the partnership university] money? And so I think that left a sour taste in my mouth from the beginning. And I really didn't get an answer that justified why we owed [the partner university] money. That upset me. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Josephina described affiliates' support as a fragmented learning experience. She said she was enrolled in graduate courses that were tangentially related to the subjects she taught. TFA did not have curriculum to support her in her assigned content areas, and the school-based mentorship support was sparse:

I was taking these linguistics courses and history of English, and all these classes about English as a Second or other Language (ESL) but then my reality day to day in the classroom I was teaching [names a class] and [names a class], and [names a class] and so ... especially my first year and a half [at the PS University] was a lot of linguistics classes. I didn't feel like it related to what I was teaching on a day-to-day basis. I feel that it was very theoretical, I know some of it was interesting, you know writing papers on code switching and bilingualism, but it wasn't really teaching me how to become a better teacher. I felt like I kind of had to just, figure that out on my own, or, observe other people, and for a while I co-planned with [names another TFA teacher] on composition and I was able to get help from [names a lead teacher] on composition, but I didn't really feel like my PS University classes were really adequately supporting me.... I felt like, TFA could've done a better job of providing a support network ... I didn't really feel that I had any support from TFA. It was kind of just like "here you go, we have this resource, compilation, this Web site ... I had some help from [names another corps member and a lead teacher at the school who wasn't a corps member] but I did feel really overwhelmed like, "Why isn't TFA providing, like," you know there's "Create your long-term plan," and I'm like, "Well, how do I do that?"

TFA says it's "there to help," but the organization's not really providing me with what I need. So I really struggled with that. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Josephina described partner affiliates' contributions to how she learned to teach. She claimed TFA and its partners lacked a "relentless pursuit" to adequately fund and staff CM preparation, mentorship:

You know I think about how I teach writing, I don't just tell my students, "Here, write this research paper, Go! Here's the expectations." I show them examples, I show them exemplars, non-examples. I show them what good examples look like, you know we practice, we read through it, and I felt like I didn't have that when I was learning how to teach. I just feel that's so essential because how can you get to be an excellent teacher when you don't know that the expectations or the end product looks like? I felt like you're just, wandering, hoping that what you're doing is right, not to say that [TFA] didn't give us any information about what a good teacher is, but I just didn't feel super connected to that in my learning.... My MTLTD my first year did not really know what was going on in my classroom on a day-to-day basis. [The MTLTD] would pop in three times the whole year. And I understand that once you're working, you know you may just get observed two or three times, but, I think that TFA is an anomaly and that it should be more consistent because you don't have a student teaching experience and a six week summer program, I felt like there wasn't enough guided practice, you're expected

to use your experiences to figure out how it works. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Equally prevalent were discursive representations of Josephina's multiple identities throughout the interview data. Josephina's identification with TFA's vision to promote education equity clashed with her frustration about aspects of TFA and learning to teach. Over time, she adopted a stance that TFA's model was "incomplete, not fully formed" (Kamler, p. 85):

I just, I really wish that I would have someone in there to write [with me] my lesson plans, to actually model teaching, a unit or a couple weeks of lessons. I could watch it, and observe it, and see what it was like, to be a teacher, what her lesson plans or his lesson plans looked like or what his unit plan looked like. Then, I would feel more confident, "Okay, this is what (names the TFA program director with whom she worked) expected of me, this is what I need, to do, and I guess that probably isn't realistic or possible because it would take a lot of time and a lot more manpower, you know to be able to do that for every corps member. But I think that would have made my experience more complete, I would have felt a lot more confident in what I was doing. I think it ultimately it would've produced better results for the students, because I feel it would have produced more confident teachers. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

At the same time, Josephina recalled curricular experiences working collaboratively with another TFA CM to develop learning resources that was memorable for her and students' learning:

I felt like whenever we created units together they were better than either of us could have done by ourselves, because you've got two heads working together and then we were able to take some of your ideas and incorporate those and being able to do something, some group projects together so that was really neat to be able to take some of her ideas, and my ideas and I felt that that made our lessons a lot better and a lot stronger and it's just neat having that [peer] partnership that first year, and feeling like, "Hey, someone is there with me, and I'm not having to do this all alone, and if I ever had any questions or concerns I could always go and talk things out." (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012).

Josephina expressed gratitude for being able to develop the select trusting CM relationships she had with site staff. In Chapter 5, Josephina acknowledged sometimes the TFA CM culture was competitive not collaborative. When CMs worked in competition with one another, it made it difficult for Josephina to acknowledge difficulties or express vulnerability to other CMs. Instead she felt compelled to present herself as confident, knowledgeable, and in control. So, the collaborative, trusting relationships she slowly developed with CMs and some staff greatly supported how Josephina learned to teach.

In sum, diverse facets of how she learned to teach as a CM figured into her expressed distrust and disappointment in how TFA's organization represented itself and enacted its purported purpose through her and other CMs' work in the field.

## **Josephina’s Data: A Portrait of CM Learning through Significance, Activities, and Sign Systems & Knowledge**

In Josephina’s situated CM experience learning to teach, several building tasks bore out more prevalently in the themed codes from interview transcripts. As Josephina explained her interpretation of the TFA preparation program, it was evident she relied on the “Discourse” inquiry tool to create a credible teacher persona. Through her self-representation as a confident, competent educator she described critical incidents and events and the important discursive elements that influenced her TFA experience of learning to teach: significance, activities, and sign-systems and knowledge. Next is an explanation of how three building tasks were prominently positioned in Josephina’s accounts of learning to teach. In each section, excerpts from Josephina’s interviews supported by artifact data (see Appendices) were used to interpret and explain how Josephina drew from these building tasks and used TFA and other “sanctioned” social Discourses to lend credibility to her claims:

**Significance:** In her experience learning to teach, Josephina felt it was necessary to present certain building tasks as more important than others to maintain the image of the TFA CM profile: exemplary student, recognized leader at her alma mater, someone who is reliable, responsible, wants to distinguish him or herself, and is competitive. For example:

I think it’s TFA mentality; you know everyone’s been very successful, and you don’t want to be the one whose not doing well. It’s the type of person TFA attracts, the perfectionist mindset ... I still feel like I have to appear that I have it

all together, because it I don't it makes me vulnerable. And being a female, I don't want to appear to be this vulnerable, emotional female. Especially when I'm working with males, I want to be professional; I want to be taken seriously, too. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

This excerpt explained that a primary Discourse of meritocracy, competition, gender roles, and TFA's discursive descriptions of CMs meant Josephina needed to be careful when she represented herself. On the other hand, she said appearing "successful" came at a cost: she was wary about whom she could confide in about worries, emotional angst, and vulnerabilities related to learning to teach. The need for Josephina to feel all right being vulnerable became important when she talked even more deeply about herself:

I have never been very confident in myself, so this is a huge area of growth that I attribute to my experience in TFA and at [names the school]. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

Yet Britzman (2003) noted how important it was for novices to be at ease expressing such uncertainties. Clearly, for Josephina, the advantage of "doing well" meant added stress, professional isolation, and uncertainty about who to ask for help and how colleagues or advisors might judge such a request. Certainly, Josephina's self-description of showing up as a CM learner and feeling like a CM learner complicated the claim that CMs responded to their work from a singular standpoint. Rather, Josephina made it clear that she exercised agency in how and with whom she talked about learning to teach. The next excerpt represented another way Josephina thought about her enactment of learning to teach:



I don't always do things the way TFA would want them ... I'm not doing it the TFA way, the right way ... Sometimes I feel like I have to present this façade that I know exactly what I'm doing and I don't and there's this pressure to appear that way, and yeah, sometimes I get overwhelmed. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013).

Here, Josephina struggled to let go of her attachment to Meritocratic norms, responsibilities, and admitted at times she was not able to maintain her CM image while she learned to teach.

Of interest is Josephina's reliance on familiar Discourses (for instance, a primary Discourse of competition that was also a tenet of a meritocratic allegiance). In her explanations, her perceived need to represent herself as a successful CM clashed with her self-depiction as a vulnerable, uncertain, new teacher.

The dichotomies inherent in maintaining these identities led her to use language about learning to teach in a contrastive manner that both showcased the accomplishments she knew would help her maintain the CM image and at the same time find trusted CM colleagues or resident staff confidants with whom she could frankly speak about the "overwhelming" challenges of learning to teach.

Thus, in her interviews, it was common to hear Josephina present elements of learning to teach filtered through a Discourse of dichotomy. For instance, to render significant her and her students' learning, stories were sifted through themes that highlighted symbolic representations of her and her students' learning accomplishments.

For example:

I am really proud of Suzie getting accepted to [names a college] and improving so much on her ACT score. I am also proud of giving the rest of my college prep students a better understanding of the college application process and college life, including financial aid, careers, etc. Equally, I am proud of three of my students giving graduation speeches in front of over 200 people! Some students that really stood out to me in Speech: Sandy Cloud: At the beginning of the year, she begged her dad and [names an administrator] to take her out of the speech because she was so afraid of speaking in public. Her confidence grew tremendously throughout the year, She went from speaking very softly and quickly and covering her face with her hands to speaking loudly and clearly with good pacing and posture. She wrote me a note toward the end of the year thanking me for giving her the confidence to speak in front of large crowds. I will never forget that. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013).

The stories rendered significant what she accomplished with the students and for herself as a CM TOR. The dichotomy that rendered these accomplishments most significant were Josephina's juxtaposition of how little benefit she derived from TFA training, on-site support, and university partnership courses. To illustrate:

I spent the most time or wasted the most time trying to figure out how to organize the year, how to organize my units 'cause I was like, "What is a writing class supposed to look like?" Then I would second-guess myself, "Am I teaching the right things? Am I doing what they really need?" And not having a clear standards or clear roadmap for those classes really made me doubt I was teaching and I felt

incompetent, I just really didn't know where to get that support. You know and I think, my second year, my leader – my MTL D – tried to provide that support a little bit more you know with public speaking ... So I think, you know I definitely came into it with a clear idea of “these are the units I want to cover. Still teaching a new class it took me a while to figure out the units and stuff, I think I still had a hard time you know last year with college prep being my first year of teaching it was hard ... it's not like there was any template on TFA Net of “how this is how you teach college prep...I feel like there was a lot of flexibility and creativity to that class because you kind of make it what those kids need and what you feel is most important and obviously core things you want to make sure they have, so I think, it was kind of hard because I wanted to focus on ACT and I also wanted to focus on other parts of the application process, but [my MTL D] couldn't provide me with a roadmap for that. I kind of had to figure that out for myself, and I kind of found that challenging. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Over time, Josephina moved away from reliance on TFA or the site administration and further claimed responsibility for her own professional growth. For example:

I felt like you're just, wandering, hoping that what you're doing is right, I mean not to say that [TFA] didn't give us any information about what a good teacher is but I just didn't feel super connected to that in my learning. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Finally, in Josephina's self-assessment of effective teaching, there is no room for ambiguity: her use of words makes clear that she is or is not an effective CM teacher. To illustrate:

I think holding my students to high expectations and pushing some students to reaching heights they never thought possible. This along with the communication skills I gained helped me ... with people from all different backgrounds.

(Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

In-depth interview excerpts included more about the dynamics of "significance" in now Josephina described her CM social world and explained how she "acquired, generated, and learned to use knowledge in teaching" (Feiman-Nemser, 2008, p. 697). What became increasingly clear was that Josephina knew how to garner and brandish discursive capital when she recognized this was necessary if she wanted to garner others' respect. On the other hand, Josephina shared what she personally found significant and meaningful in how she learned to teach. For example, Josephina talked about what she learned from one of her students:

Suzanne taught me patience. She sat down with people who struggled in class to help. I would see that and think I need to be more patient. In interactions with students, she didn't care what language or religion they practiced, she reminded me to slow down, get to know their stories, to get to really know who they are beyond being the person who comes to school everyday. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

In instances like this later illustration, Josephina's interests in learning to teach began to show that more than hard work – meritocratic norms – significantly factored into learning to teach. Yet these were not points of information shared with TFA. Perhaps this was because to talk about these experiences in an official capacity could be interpreted as moving away from a technological or academic orientation in learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Josephina talked about Suzanne very differently – using a Discourse of accomplishment – when Josephina described Suzanne's accomplishments from a TFA CM standpoint:

I would say that Suzie [Suzanne] had path-changing and enduring academic growth. She grew 4 cumulative points on the ACT and got accepted into [Names a College] with nearly a full financial aid package. For the rest of my college prep students, they averaged 4 points improvement on the English ACT section, and almost all students filed the FAFSA and completed at least one scholarship. I would say that this falls into the more than typical academic growth area.

(Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013).

This later example shows how Josephina made certain elements significant, and she noted that these successes were due to her near self-taught efforts to create the college preparation course and learn teaching. It is evident that Josephina positioned TFA and its partners as insignificant influencers in Josephina's experience learning to teach. Next, there is a short explanation of "Activities," and then a transition into examining how Josephina described learning to teach through activities that importantly represented what she achieved as she learned to teach.

**Activities:** Josephina self-identified as a “doer.” Josephina emphasized that her experience learning to teach was most effectively formed through self-resourcefulness: networks with other CMs, independent research, and reliance on prior knowledge as a student with the guidance of effective teachers. For example, Josephina’s self-described “enacted activities” positioned her as personally and professionally committed to learning to teach and becoming an educator whose students demonstrated their learning through performance and class achievement. At the same time, Josephina experienced difficulties in teaching, She talked about one of them here. To illustrate:

I think we have talked about this before – I think it is difficult to base the growth in speech solely off of numbers on a rubric. I think that my grading probably became more strict throughout the year. But I also think that you do not get the whole picture of a students’ improvement in speech just from numbers on a rubric. For me, seeing Mary’s speech at graduation gave me a clear picture of just how far my students had come in their public speaking abilities. When I did assign homework, there was not very good follow through by many students. There were a few students who I felt like I was never able to fully invest in speech. I think some of them came around toward the end, but I struggled with a couple boys in particular. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

In described activities and learning to teach, Josephina represented herself as entirely invested and dedicated to learning to teach. She understood her role and responsibilities in support of student achievement. Here is an example:

I have been fortunate to have taught David for the past 2 years –

in Composition last year. It has been so amazing to see his growth on an academic and personal level. He flourished in his motivational speech where his passion shone fully, and he showed great leadership during his group's non-profit project on domestic violence. On a personal level, I noticed huge growth in his willingness to step up in my class and he was so willing to help when I asked him to assist other students. He is so invested in his own education and that makes me so happy and proud. Earlier in the semester he did his career essay on becoming a police officer, and this summer he has a paid internship doing something in criminal justice. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

In Josephina's description of her teaching and student's success, she talked about the student's progress over time and emphasizes that she's been David's teacher for two years. During that time, with her teaching support, David has excelled, become a class leader, and found academic success in public speaking. Here, Josephina used TFA's Discourse that emphasized student learning and achievement. Moreover, she mentioned David is "invested" in his learning. That is part of TFA's Discourse signifying a student has developed self-motivation. Josephina made the activities of learning in her classroom – an effect of her teacher ability – a significant, valued activity.

At the same time, Josephina described TFA's program and affiliates' "enacted activities" as organizationally and professionally falling short of the establishment of a comparably strong commitment to her effective educator preparation (Gee, 2005, p. 16), and, more important, Josephina's accounts asserted that on-site activities often were not

in the better interests of students. To illustrate, here is an excerpt where Josephina expressed concern about school leadership support:

I think my greatest concerns relate to the leadership at my school. I feel like there is a lack of leadership at my school and that often times things are not done in the best interests of students. I worry that I'll lose my job if I'm too real. There's some censorship with that... We had two lay-offs last week, and that was tough. I felt like it was the admin's fault and they made bad decisions where we then had to lay off two people, and so at the staff meeting the admin asked if there were any questions and no one was speaking up, and I said I have questions, not that my questions are going to change anything ... We knew that [there were financial concerns] those kinds of things don't pop up ... I said in the short run it doesn't matter if we're not here in the long run ... Now we are working .8 and they're taking away a prep, and I'm teaching the same amount of classes so I don't know where they got the .8. – I think that's really disrespectful. I'm creating all my curriculum, it's not appreciated by the administration, I teach 4 classes plus advisory (5 preps), they cut down the day with the recreational time, still teaching all the classes and one prep.... It's frustrating that now we're laying off teachers ... and we are vulnerable to the administration's decisions. One of the teachers laid off is openly gay and a lot of us felt like that went into the decision and there is tension and frustration about that and we weren't given answers about why that happened. I think being gay had something to do with it, it wasn't okay that he was fired. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)



Here, Josephina made these events significant in contrast with one another. First, she expressed frustration with the school leadership. Then, she referenced a staff meeting event where she no one else spoke up, and she did, to talk about issues that Josephina said many staff were concerned about. Here, Josephina used the activity to position herself as a “doer,” and someone who was willing to stand up for teachers – and students – better interests. In contrast, the administration looked like it was not communicating with teachers, made imprudent fiscal decisions, and more. Further, Josephina used a Discourse of accountability to validate her perspective about the administration and the school culture tensions.

Likewise, Josephina talked about the university partner support in learning to teach:

I think there are a lot of issues of the current traditional education system ... I think what I mentioned earlier, the traditional teaching path I don't think has been as innovative as it should be, I just think they're kind of archaic in terms of “this is the way it's always worked, this is the way it will continue to work,”.... but, clearly something isn't being done effectively in the classroom ... maybe the way students are learning is changing because of the technology and maybe we need to put more research into looking at you know how do we need to change the teaching practices to adjust the way that technology is impacting students' learning and adjust the teaching appropriately to that, I just feel like there's not a lot of innovation in my experience and I'm just taking my experience. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Here, Josephina critiqued the teacher education program as outdated and resistant to innovation. She mentioned “something isn’t being done effectively in the classroom,” and that students today learn differently, and our current education system is outdated. Again, Josephina positioned traditional education – and likely is referencing her graduate experience with the partner university – as failing to support students’ needs. The Discourse Josephina invoked ebbed on a TFA or generally deregulatory Discourse to legitimate her standpoint. When she makes graduate course work sound “archaic,” she is likewise juxtaposing that system – one that she said did not meet her learning needs – in relation to her own work at Prospect High, where she positioned her activities building new curriculum without a model – as innovative and creative. This is an interpretation and explanation of how Josephina used the building task, Activities, and the inquiry tool, Discourses, to maintain she has been successful in her efforts to become a self-taught educator.

In contrast to the critiques of school and university partner support, Josephina commended collegial on-site support from CMs and resident staff:

My TFA advisor had taught writing so she gave me some resources my first year and then I also collaborated with [names another TFA corps member from the same year working in the same school] in composition my first year which was extremely helpful. I felt like whenever we created units together they were better ... and ... being able to do something, some group projects together so that was really neat ... It’s just neat having that partnership that first year, and feeling like, “Hey, someone is there with me, and I’m not having to do this all alone, and if I

ever had any questions or concerns I could always go and talk things out.” Yeah, that, that was *huge* um, yeah that, that collaboration was huge. (Josephina, Interview 1, July 14, 2012)

In this excerpt, Josephina made the activity of collaboration significant. This was a consistent critique of TFA and its affiliate partners – the lack of cohesiveness, absence of collaboration. In this conversation about how Josephina is learning to teach, she makes the point that teachers – CM practitioners – were teaching and learning from each other. She invokes a Discourse of community to endorse the value and meaning of this kind of learning activity (Wenger, 1989). Josephina compared her own and another CM or staff member’s collaboration learning to teach together. She made these kinds of school and teacher centered learning activities significant and valuable using the Discourse of community.

Thus far, Josephina used a language of contrast or dichotomy to establish program content or process value or “significance,” and she likewise positioned certain “activities” as more effective and prominent in her and students’ evidenced success. However, Josephina needed some kind of credentialed assessment or corroboration of her account of learning to teach. Particularly because she chose to ever more gradually and intentionally distance herself from TFA, its affiliates, and the school’s administration. In doing this, she was working to certify herself as having learned to teach in a manner where she need not credit TFA or its affiliates to her own satisfaction.

In the next and last section, Josephina used “sign systems and knowledge,” and the education system’s credential protocol to endorse her assessment and success as a CM

learning to teach sans the approval of TFA or the school site administration. The information in the subsequent section illustrates, interprets, and explains this point.

**Sign systems and Knowledge:** Josephina emphasized particular belief-systems, knowledge, and accomplishments throughout her own education. To illustrate:

I remember reading over a hundred books in first grade and I, that's when I really remember taking off and just loving to learn.... When I was in high school. I was on a mission trip to Tijuana with my church and it was my spring break and we went to Tijuana to rebuild some houses that had been lost to flooding.... And I graduated Valedictorian so school's always a very positive place for me.... I would go to small group study sessions or extra help, tutoring sections, um, so yeah, I guess it was just that extra time and being exposed to ways to solve problems that kind of helped me find my own way, I guess, you know feel okay and if I tried something different, I was okay, and if I tried something else I did not get so frustrated the first time. And it's about gaining their trust and letting them know that you're there to, work so hard for them but that you expect them to work so hard for their education. (Josephina, Interviews, 2012-2013)

In this collection of smaller interview excerpts, it was possible to piece together a composite of Josephina's belief system, knowledge, and accomplishments that were important to her in her own education. First, it is evident that hard work, eternal rewards or incentives, persistence, recognition of accomplishment and camaraderie were all important to Josephina. The sign systems and knowledge Josephina sought to privilege was the acquisition of credentials, accommodations, leadership recognition, and service

work. Josephina placed value on these kinds of social and cultural capital as necessary to attain socioeconomic goals and security.

Moreover, Gee (2004) would say that, for young adults such as Josephina, academic credentials were less important (albeit middle and upper middle class youth realized these distinctions remained absolutely necessary to be on a success trajectory) than the kinds of activities and experiences – professional, social, and leadership – a person acquired and displayed in what Gee termed a “portfolio.” That said, Josephina’s primary Discourse of Meritocracy supported the common sense view that anyone who acquired education and other similar credentials was more likely to attend college and had more life options. Her work to help Prospect High School students acquire education and credentials showed how convinced she was of education’s promise for the students she taught. In large part, as an educator, she viewed it as her responsibility to share what she knew about how the education system worked: ACT, SAT, and college entrance protocols. Josephina wanted Prospect High School students to be able to prove themselves by passing mainstream milestones and acquiring associated social and cultural capital. To illustrate, Josephina proudly assessed a students’ progress in these areas:

I would say that Suzie had path-changing and enduring academic growth. She grew 4 cumulative points on the ACT and got accepted into [Names a College] with nearly a full financial aid package. For the rest of my college prep students, they averaged 4 points improvement on the English ACT section, and almost all students filed the FAFSA and completed at least one scholarship. I would say that

this falls into the more than typical academic growth area. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

Josephina's used measurable growth – evidenced here with metrics – and demonstrated her ability as a teacher through this kind of verifiable data. She established that students in her college preparation course learned to navigate the college preparation system, received scholarships, filed for financial aid support, and earned admission into two- and four-year colleges and universities. This was a mainstream, post-secondary admissions Discourse. Its significance in terms of signs, symbols and knowledge was self-evident in considerations of reducing education inequities (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). However, Josephina created the curriculum for this course, noting that TFA, the university partner, and the school site had nothing like this program before Josephina developed it from the ground up. The TFA Web-based resource site had no information or resources on building college preparation courses for high school. Thus, it was evident that Josephina was already on course to make a case that teaching students to navigate through college admission was significant, and TFA and its affiliates were not part of this element of how Josephina learned to teach.

Yet, Josephina established that young adults needed these skills to be academically successful. This was particularly true for students who had been denied access to the benefits of what Josephina described as effective education and quality teachers. Here, Josephina's beliefs about teaching and education supported a D/discourse of Meritocracy and interacted with Josephina's work ethic beliefs. For example, Josephina believed effective educators utilized properties associated with meritocracy to

fortify and distinguish their work and taught students to ascribe to similar belief systems.

For instance:

I've really realized how challenging [names her alma mater] was in terms of its [names a subject] courses, in terms of its rigor ... that [kind of assessment of learning], it was... short answer ... you could just read your notes, it was very in-depth, it was all about application and so that was a challenge for me at first because I wasn't used to that higher level of thinking in the [names a subject] sense, but that was something that I, was able to learn.... I'm really thankful for that experience because now I look at a problem and I don't just get frustrated if I don't know the answer right away but I'm able to work through it, and...figure out a way to solve it. (Josephina, Interview 1, June 14, 2012)

In this account, Josephina further validated her ability to persevere in academia, and she intimated she attended a prestigious or rigorous post-secondary school. She acknowledged that a less-than-rigorous high school course placed her at a disadvantage in some of the freshman year college classes. Here she made a point that she worked hard and was “able to learn.... [and doesn't] get frustrated” if she missed the answer the first time. Again, Josephina used the Discourse of Meritocracy to amplify the significance of overcoming obstacles through hard work and continued effort. In her experience learning to teach, the irony was that this was the kind of candidate TFA sought to recruit.

Josephina suited the CM profile criteria. At the same time, when Josephina decided TFA's program insufficiently guided her learning to teach, she harnessed the same skills and abilities TFA sought: perseverance and resourcefulness and pursued alternative ways

to learn how to teach. As noted above, Josephina believed effective educators went to great lengths to ensure students' optimal learning experiences. As noted in earlier parts of this chapter, she doubted if TFA and its partners prioritized student learning above revenue. Her Discourse of Meritocracy resonated common sense and her hard work was symbolically convincing.

Engaged in teaching from this stance, Josephina sought to represent herself as a CM equipped with the mindset for how to best to provide students with educative social/cultural capital and academic opportunities.

Further, Josephina's own education demanded she become a critical thinker, a persistent problem solver, and demonstrate perseverance when faced with educational difficulties. In her classroom, the lessons, objectives, and goals she set for student learning reflected this stance about education. To explicate this point, she talked about planning lessons for her students:

I think about how I teach writing, I don't just tell my students, "Here, write this research paper, Here's the expectations," I show them examples, I show them exemplars, non-examples. I show them what good examples look like, you know we practice, we read through it, and I felt like I didn't have that when I was learning how to teach and I just feel that's so essential because how can you get to be an excellent teacher when you don't know that the expectations or the end product looks like? (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

In this explanation of teaching writing, Josephina used knowledge of expository writing and the Discourse of teaching composition to establish her credibility and attention to



planning effective and student-centered lessons using real-world applicable assignments like college admission essay writing. At the same time, she sought to make her knowledge of college preparation, course development, and student success in that class significant in any assessment of her ability to teach. For example, Josephina emphasized that she developed the college preparation course without assistance from TFA or its partnership affiliates:

Writing classes and obviously college prep, that's a class where I had to mesh a lot of different things together. But I felt like there was information on writing. Usually it was integrated into other classes so it was hard, it felt like there was information on how to teach writing, or writing projects or assignments but it was a lot harder because I had to pull from so many different areas, and I couldn't just take a long term plan and apply that. I had to be more creative in a way. And I think that was just challenging for me. (Josephina, Interview 2, July 30, 2012)

Herein, she used TFA's Discourse for Planning (e.g. long-term plan) to signify that she was knowledgeable about curriculum design. Further, in the commentary she emphasized she "had to pull from so many areas." This validated that she constructed the course independent of TFA and its affiliates. Thus, she credibly distinguished herself as a teacher who achieved professional success unaided by TFA, the university partner, or the school administration. In tandem with showing she capably designed curriculum, Josephina showed that she taught in ways that produced student success with classroom learning. For instance:

For speech, I would say that most students would fall into the more than typical academic growth area- looking at their growth across the speech rubrics. There was significant growth in the non-verbal section, especially in students showing more eye contact to the audience and standing up straight and confident.

Additionally, students grew a tremendous amount in the content of their speeches- by their last speech they were adding much more substantive content and giving longer, more organized and cohesive speeches. Overall, students also greatly improved on their pacing, volume and enunciation and clarity. I believe that some students experienced dramatic growth. Some students were extremely difficult to comprehend at the beginning of the year, and by the end of the year gave very competent, cohesive and clear presentations. Three of my students gave speeches at graduation (I have all of these on video) – Sally, Mary, and John, and I thought that was a huge testament to the growth of my speech students throughout the year. (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013)

In this example, Josephina used detailed descriptions of students' learning in a Public Speaking course for students who were English learners. The Discourse she used to establish credibility was a Discourse of Public Speaking/Teaching. She effectively established she knew the mainstream criteria for effective public speech-making, and her students were so successful that several of them gave speeches at the high school's graduation ceremony. Next, Josephina wanted to demonstrate that she created student-relevant curriculum and classroom learning experiences:

In composition class, Azu took it upon herself to go above and beyond in the issue/non-profit project and did a case-study interview with a woman in the [names a ethnic group] community. She took an in-depth look at how domestic violence affects the [names the group] community. This showed great initiative on her part. Also, I am so proud of Azu giving a speech at graduation. She told an administrator she could not give a speech a few days before graduation, but after another student and I talked to her, she decided she would give it a try.

Josephina encouraged a student in her composition class to take-up a project about domestic violence and write about it. The project involved interviews in the community.

This is an example of an educator who created student-relevant learning options.

Similarly, Josephina's college preparation course was added evidence of a student-relevant coursework offering. To lend credibility to Josephina's claim to be learning to integrate culturally responsive learning options, she encouraged case study and ethnographic methods in the course and explained Azu's assignment using a Discourse of critical-social orientation in learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

Josephina's plan to establish her own effectiveness stemmed from her understanding of the teacher as mediator of student learning and school-based success. Josephina felt a moral and ethical responsibility about her role as an educator in relation to her students' futures. To illustrate:

I'll never forget going to [names a cultural event students invited her to attend].

They want to share their culture, they want to know you know them, want to know who they are, that you care about them as people, too. Knowing people's

stories, that's part of being human, connecting with people who are similar and different than you and it's gives you different perspectives because not everyone experiences life the way you do. It makes you well rounded, thoughtful, and insightful, and it's important to think about others' perspectives instead of a selfish point of view. How does this affect someone? (Josephina, Interview 4, February 12, 2013).

Here, Josephina used cultural symbols – being part of an important holiday celebration – to establish significance and demonstrate the growing relationships with students and her interest in their lives and futures. Here she invokes a Discourse of Caring (Noddings, 1992) where there is a reciprocal caring relationship between the caring and the cared for.

Equally important, Josephina needed to distinguish her teacher performance: Josephina wanted to credibly self-establish and represent that she was a quality educator. Symbolically, Josephina acquired this capital when one of her students was accepted and earned a full scholarship to a prestigious four-year university: a) the student acknowledged Josephina's key role and support, and b) Josephina received a letter written on the college's letterhead that officially acknowledged Josephina's role as an effective teacher (see Appendix F). Student achievement and professional recognition were the forces behind Josephina's dual-purposed determination to enact what it meant to be an effective teacher.

The drive for achievement and recognition represents Josephina's affinity with past and present experiences with learning; it is a pathway to attain goals and acquire

social capital: achievement, recognition, distinction, compliance, conformity, normativity, acceptance, and finally, reproduction of the status quo.

The previous section used CDA (Gee, 2005) and three building tasks: Significance, Activities, and Sign-symbols and Knowledge and an Inquiry tool (Discourses) to expand on an analysis of how Josephina, as a TFA CM, learned to teach.

These influences showed areas where the CM held deep attachments to common sense Discourses like Meritocracy. Likewise, there were instances where the data showed personal and professional growth<sup>49</sup> toward good sense transformation (See Britzman, 2005) over the two- to three-year period learning to teach. Thus, the urge to critique Josephina's preparedness to teach was complicated when considered through a CDA analysis and in light of the many factors at work while Josephina's was learning to teach. Overall, Josephina's transcript analyses showed she was moving away from reliance on TFA or its affiliates for real support for her teacher development. Instead, Josephina sought out resources and found support among CM peers and resident colleges as she learned to teach.

### **Using CDA to “tease-out” the Complexities of how CMs Learn to Teach**

As mentioned earlier in the text, Gee (2005) entreats those interested in CDA to remember that fundamentally discourse analysis is a way to think deeply and deliberately about other people's words, phrases, and ideas. Through attentiveness to the meanings we impose upon one another's words and texts, CDA can lead one to become a humane critic

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<sup>49</sup> Josephina showed some slight movement from a technological/academic to a critical/social justice orientation in curriculum development (Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

while concurrently he or she remains open to persuasive ideas that include possibilities and perhaps change. Gee states:

The partiality and inconsistency of Discourse models reflects the fact that we have all had a great many diverse and conflicting experiences; we all belong to different, sometimes conflicting groups; and we are all influenced by a wide array of groups, texts, institutions, and media that may, in reality, reflect our “best interests” more or less poorly. (p. 85)

This is an important point. Consideration of Josephina’s age, life experience, and continuing education are nested within Gee’s statement. Josephina’s work to be an effective CM educator was partially sustained by her own experience, belief, and under-theorized effort to embody through her daily practice that a meritocracy was a plausible solution to education inequities. At the same time, she recognized ill-preparedness to teach meant students’ options for advancement were limited; it also meant her ability to fulfill the CM tenure with distinction was at risk. Without access to alternative literacies, Josephina sustained her passion by finding direction and hope in an antiquated model for learning, for her students and for herself.

An analysis of her interview transcripts indicated Josephina had no *conscious* access to other literacies of learning to teach: critical pedagogy; social constructivism, culturally responsive teaching, funds of knowledge, etc. Thus, Josephina drew from what she knew; she used meritocratic hallmark Discourse in learning to teach and to address race, social class, and poverty driven education inequities.

Thus far, using CDA uncovered some important information about Josephina's CM experience learning to teach. For example, there was evidence of the knowledge communities that informed how she thought about teaching and learning. In addition, there were indications that Josephina's TFA training, course work, and professional development did not provide enough guidance or varied professional support. Evidence of the literacies about learning to teach that could benefit Josephina's efforts emerged, and this provided ideas and direction for her – and perhaps other CMs' continued growth as educators. Recognitions like this represented a place to begin a constructive, productive critique of Josephina's CM experience learning to teach.

For example, an analysis of Josephina's interview transcripts showed that she wanted her practice to represent effective teaching. However, she stressed that she did not know where to begin. She was shocked that curriculum or a framework to aid her learning was unavailable when she arrived at the school site. Moreover, Josephina's descriptions of instruction at TFA Institute, partner university courses, and on-site professional development showed there were no "traces and cues" of sociocultural theories or action research methodologies applied to her teaching or her professional instruction through TFA or its program affiliates. Thus, it was clear Josephina did not have access to praxis models (e.g. Funds of Knowledge, critical pedagogy, cognitive apprenticeship, action research, reflective practicum) for learning to teach.

Without knowledge of theories and methods of learning that include in-practice frameworks such as "cognitive apprenticeship" or "reflective practicum" (Feiman-Nemser, 2012), and absent access to multiple D/discourses for learning to teach,

Josephina was not positioned to move beyond what she had accessed from her personal and professional observation and experience: mainstream Eurocentric curriculum and behaviorist instruction.

In the end, Josephina used a modified version of the “banking method” of learning and teaching to represent the best of what she knew, thought, felt, and thought embodied “effective teacher” performance. Her approach to teaching was drawn from remembrances of schooling that had positively influenced her own learning. She used these exemplars to find a starting point from which to begin to teach. A discursive analysis of Josephina’s learning shows primarily that she saw herself as a self-developed novice teacher. She used the “Discourse” tool (associated with literacies that signified her status and agency in certain Discourse communities) to establish her qualification, credibility, and history of credentials and to demonstrate her record of professional integrity and reliability.

On the other hand, Josephina used “Discourse” as a tool to represent herself as TFA’s “ideal” candidate, so that her critique of TFA’s program of learning to teach would be taken seriously by TFA leadership and education stakeholders. Likewise, Josephina applied her membership in elite sign-systems’ literacy communities to support select students in outstanding academic achievement under her academic guidance. In this way, Josephina accessed acquired literacies of social and cultural capital, applied these assets to support student learning during her CM tenure, and earned documented acknowledgement of her role as an effective educator outside of the endorsement of TFA or its university partner. Thus, Josephina acknowledged that her TFA experience learning



to teach left her unprepared to educate students in under-resourced communities while at the same time she maintained the integrity of her work as a CM and acquired other expert evidence of her achieved ability as an educator.

## **Conclusion**

Josephina's effort to accomplish becoming an effective educator using meritocratic norms was an application of a primary Discourse that through self-experience was "proven" to be consistent. As a TFA profiled, self-reliant problem-solver, Josephina represented in action one approach to the teacher preparation reform debate "solution" in evidence: Josephina went about teaching for educational equity using strategies that she herself used to reduce academic gaps in her own education experiences in her K-16 educative experience.

In her story of learning to teach through TFA's program, Josephina used all seven of Gee's building tasks to construct her world of learning to teach through TFA's program, university partnership, and school-based staff development. Although it was possible to analyze Josephina's experience through the lens of any of Gee's inquiry tools, the Discourse tool amplified how deeply she drew from her past educative experience: academic success, social, and cultural capital, achievements, and memorable teachers. She also made these elements most significant as she described and explained how she learned to teach. Josephina talked about how she was positioned in activities, another building task, and once more Discourses was used to analyze how Josephina dichotomously positioned how she enacts her role as an educator in ways that signified professionalism and a serious commitment to student learning. This was in contrast to

how the TFA *organization* and some of its affiliates provided inadequate preparation or fell short of fulfilling professional responsibilities to sufficiently support CMs and subsequently the students in classrooms with a CM TOR.

This was the way that Josephina unknowingly used Gee's (2005) Discourse tool to represent and explain how she responded to activities related to learning to teach. Concurrently, she engaged in activities that supported her goal to teach students mainstream norms and expectations for school success. The college preparation course Josephina developed, her student's acceptance to a prestigious college, and a letter from the college president that acknowledged Josephina's significant role in the student's achievement preserved Josephina's professional integrity. This was an example of how sign symbols and knowledge, in the form of a commendation from an institution other than TFA or the partner university recognition of her teacher ability, gave Josephina undisputed evidence and documentation of her dedication and teacher proficiency.

Josephina's interviews consistently indicated she lacked access to the knowledge of sociocultural theories of learning or anti-oppressive that could have augmented her instructional repertoire. Moreover, with few exceptions instructors and staff development specialists responsible for CM learning failed to model alternative learning frameworks in how they taught during CM training, courses, and staff development. Josephina also experienced university faculty resistance to fully integrate TFA's classroom component into course learning for TFA and non-TFA teacher candidates. The combined resources and collaborative potential of TFA, university partners, and school districts were not optimally utilized to support CM and traditional teacher candidates in learning to teach.

Josephina's transcripts described how she learned to teach, her observations of underserved students, and her approach to overcoming impediments in an effort to become an effective educator. This study found that she returned to her familiar primary Discourse and acquired secondary Discourses as the main resources used to help her learn to teach. During the two-year TFA tenure and her third and final year as a classroom teacher, Josephina focused on supporting student learning and complying with TFA requirements. She sought alternative sources for getting validation of her professional growth. She did not seek affirmation for her work from the TFA program, university partner, or the school administration. With the exception of two courses, minor support from MTLDS/TFA resources, and limited school-based staff development, Josephina attributed her professional growth to the following resources: informal CM networks, independent research, and prior student experiences under the tutelage of exemplary teachers. Each of these resources is represented in the discourse analysis of Gee's building tasks: significance, events, and sign-symbols and knowledge in relation to how Josephina describes, interprets, and explains her experience learning to teach in TFA's preparation program.

This chapter also used CDA to examine how political and socio-cultural influences such as race, social class, and gender were represented in Josephina's interview excerpt descriptions of learning to teach. Next, Chapter 7 includes an overview of the study findings and concludes with the how the research provided ideas and implications for further study.

## **Chapter 7 – Findings and Implications for Future Study**

Before discussing the study findings and implications, this chapter summarizes the research purpose and rationale, and it restates the guiding research questions. An overview follows highlighting three key research findings and five areas about AC/TFA’s in-service framework for learning to teach suggested for further research. From here, the chapter explains of each research finding and each implication for future study, respectively. The chapter concludes with a statement about Josephina’s account of learning to teach and her thoughts about her participation in the research study.

### **Restatement of the Purpose and Description of Case Study Participant**

Grossman and Loeb (2008) stated that “a focus on a particular setting for early-entry programs – and the candidates in specific programs – illuminated some of the questions and challenges surrounding the qualifications of teachers in these programs” (p. 32). Within the category of AC programs, TFA is a high profile model. Thus, this study’s purpose was to interpret and explain some features of one CM’s experience learning to teach through TFA’s training model.<sup>50</sup> The context was a small charter high school.<sup>51</sup> The research examined the CM’s account of the key factors that influenced her early teacher development. CDA (Gee, 2005) theory and methodology<sup>52</sup> were used to interpret and explain the data. Josephina’s case was highlighted because, of the six CMs interviewed to gather study data, her profile most closely aligned with media and research claims about

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<sup>50</sup> TFA pre- and in-service training (this includes learning to teach in practice as TOR) coupled with MTLT and monthly staff support; partner university education courses and assignments; and school or site-based professional development.

<sup>51</sup> Researchers Humphrey, Weschler, & Hough (2008) and Grossman and Loeb (2008) emphasized that TFA CMs’ programs for learning to teach were region-specific, subject to local, state, and federal requirements. A view that TFA training programs were universally delivered was deemed erroneous.

<sup>52</sup> Ethnomethodologies such as grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) and ethnography (Heath & Street, 2008) were used to supplement and support the use of critical discourse studies to interpret and explain data.

TFA's CM recruitment selection. This addressed how research and media depicted CM identity characteristics, classroom performance, and undergraduates' motivation to join TFA. Josephina's interview transcripts and site-based observations yielded evidence about how CMs were profiled in academic, media, and TFA information. Conversely, Josephina's interview transcripts and site-based observations complicated media and academic versions of TFA CMs' experiences of learning to teach. The study endeavoured to consider the possibility that a CM's TFA tenure lacked attention to the complexities of early teacher development. At least that was a theme in existing research and media characterizations. Six CMs were interviewed in the data collection phase of the study. These other study participants' interview data was used to corroborate Josephina's interview and supplemental data findings.

### **Brief Restatement of the Study Rationale**

The dearth of longitudinal, deep description of TFA's structural and conceptual substantive specifics made it difficult to find research that constructively critiqued TFA's program and how therein CMs learned to teach (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). A review of literatures about TFA indicated that representations of CMs in mainstream media and academic research included vague, generalized descriptions of CMs as people and either disparaged or glorified the CM performances and participation in TFA's in-service model learning to teach. Thus, there was an implicit tendency to view the CM experience from binary stances that represented recruits as either "good" or "bad" TOR and either saviours or dismantlers of public education. This tendency to represent CMs in static, simplistic ways ignored the complexities that teacher educators and researchers claimed were

common to both AC and TC in-service novice teacher learning (Britzman, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Grossman & Loeb, 2008). This study endeavoured to examine how CMs learned to teach with an interest in excavating, interpreting, and explaining the complexities of some facets of one CM's TOR tenure in a TFA program. The study sought to contribute some evidentiary insight beyond the generalized accounts that mostly characterized CMs' training and in-service learning in literatures about how TFA CMs learn to teach.

### **Responding to the Research Questions**

The central research question of this study was: how do Teach For America (TFA) corps members (CMs) talk about TFA training, professional development, university course work, and learning in practice as TOR, and the influence of these four areas on how TFA CMs learn to teach? Within this overarching question, subtopic questions were used to guide interview conversation, classroom observations, and field note data collection.<sup>53</sup>

- 1) In what ways are TFA corps members' teacher preparation programs represented in conversations about content, pedagogy, and professionalism? What D/discourses are represented? (Think/Know)<sup>54</sup>
- 2) In what ways do TFA corps members' teacher preparation programs influence their everyday classroom teaching/practice? What D/discourses are represented?

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<sup>53</sup> Interview transcripts were the primary data source. Other information resources included ethnographic data artifacts: daily field notes, classroom observations, teacher evaluations, TFA resource handbooks and Institute curriculum, and partner university syllabi.

<sup>54</sup> The "Thematic Framework for Learning To Teach" includes: (a) learning to think like a teacher, (b) learning to know like a teacher, (c) learning to act like a teacher, and (d) learning to feel like a teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2008, pp. 698-699).

(Think/Know/Act/Feel)

3) In what ways do TFA corps members' teacher preparation programs influence how they talk about the teachers they see themselves becoming? What D/discourses are represented? (Act/Feel)

*Learning to know like a teacher.* In some interviews, Josephina directly addressed sub-question one: questions about how content, pedagogy, and professionalism were represented in TFA's preparation program. For example, in Chapter 5, she asserted that she had little or no content or pedagogic curricular guidance at her school site. Further, she said she was misled by TFA and the school administration about her content area placement and was unprepared to teach the subject areas she was assigned. Early into Josephina's in-service tenure, she used the word "situation" when she described her circumstances at school, her TFA placement. In short, Josephina said she had little professional support from TFA or resident site-based staff. Thus, Josephina represented TFA's program as inadequately supporting teacher preparation in content, pedagogy, and professionalism.

Yet, as she described her elementary education and disposition toward school, it is clear that Josephina was predisposed to achieve. At her TFA school site, she realized that she would have to be resourceful to establish a curricular starting point, scope, and sequence for three classes. She was uncertain how to ask for help. Thus, Josephina reverted to her own prior knowledge, experience, and resources to construct subject-specific student curriculum and learning plans. In conversations about content, pedagogy,

and professionalism, Josephina's experience of learning to teach was bolstered by a discourse of meritocracy: self-reliance, hard work, perseverance, and independence.

Here it is interesting to look at Josephina's experience alongside Feiman-Nemser's (2008) framework for learning to know like an educator (pp. 698-699). Josephina's response showed the first weeks at her school placement dislodged her confidence in solely relying on content knowledge and Institute background in order to teach. She was jostled into the realm of considering what it meant to "know like a teacher" (p. 698). She began to recognize she needed to re-examine her ideas about what it meant to teach, develop an awareness of what students needed to learn, and engage in critical thinking to get past "naïve beliefs ... that teaching [was] easy and learning involv[ed] the simple transfer of information from teacher to student, ... It mea[nt] learning to place the activities of teaching and learning in a ... framework that link[ed] ends and means" (p.698). Certainly there were frameworks that used teaming, modeling, and guided release to teach novices the complexities of learning to teach. Josephina's story indicated she quickly surmised her TFA tenure was a challenging "situation," one that unfortunately lacked time "to examine existing beliefs ... possibilities ... and understandings" (p. 698). Instead, Josephina's "situation" lessened the likelihood that she would have time in-practice to recognize mistakes, misconceptions, and salvage from that realization the possibilities to experiment with new practices and concepts while learning to teach.

As stated in Chapter 5, Josephina realized there were large gaps in what she knew and needed to learn before the school year started. Later, she reasoned her under-



preparedness stemmed from TFA's university partnership program. TFA's training, the school's staff development, and the university's requisite courses were conceived and executed without knowledge of the other partner agendas for CM content, observations, and other planned learning. Therefore, there was no team approach to the TFA program at large. It lacked cohesiveness and this resulted in redundancies and gaps in the CMs' education program.

In Chapter 4, Josephina was critical of a university instructor's professionalism in an "exceptionalities in education" class. This incident happened midway into Josephina's first CM year. In a post-event research interview, when she made this TFA program critique, Josephina's voice was laced with an increased sense of authority. Perhaps having taught for several months bolstered her confidence to speak out. On the other hand, she said she would never offer up ideas in class, having earlier said her TFA status weakened her in-class graduate student credibility. Josephina felt unsafe voicing aloud questions about curricular planning methods in relation to her in-service teacher training needs. While she spoke with uncertain authority with a trusted colleague, she preferred to suppress her viewpoint where it could have resulted in some constructive benefit to herself, the instructor, or perhaps the entire class.

*Learning to think like a teacher.* In this instance, Josephina intimated the instructor was not seriously invested in the CMs' learning. Moreover, in Chapter 6, Josephina was concerned that the graduate school was more invested in TFA to generate university revenue than prepare candidates to teach. Likewise, Josephina described graduate courses wherein methods of lesson designs seemed to her incongruent with

school-determined time restrictions for developing lessons. Again, Josephina concluded the university courses lacked cohesiveness with other aspects of TFA's training. She viewed this inconsistency as TFA's failure to ensure curricular continuity and relevance while helping CMs learn to teach. Unlike interviews about her first days at school, when Josephina talked about university courses in Chapter 6, she evoked a practitioner's Discourse. She was learning to use her in-service experience to establish practitioner credibility and authority for her critique of the graduate instructor's lesson on pedagogy and curriculum design (Gee, 2005).

Another area wherein Josephina evoked a practitioner Discourse during a university class was when she questioned the university's motives for accepting a TFA partnership role. She was already concerned about institutional politics: the possibility that the university saw CMs as a revenue source. Concerns like this showed Josephina's emerging awareness of "the broad purposes of schooling and how those purposes affect [her and the graduate instructor's work]" (p. 699). This is an example of the learning to know like a teacher component of Feiman-Nemser's (2008) framework for learning to teach.

*Learning to feel like a teacher.* In time, Josephina's initiation into learning to think and know like a teacher expanded, and she found ways to create rather than copy curriculum. She ordered examination copies of Spanish textbooks and drew ideas from the texts to develop her own curriculum. In composition, she relied on CMs in the building for curriculum ideas and support. During her second CM year, Josephina decided to offer another class, *College Preparation*. In Chapter 6, she talked about

pulling from a variety of sources to build a college preparation course for the school's eleventh and twelfth grade students: She saw a need for the course from her "everyday practice" and set about creating and course to support the student need. Here is an example of how Josephina's work pointedly addressed the second research question: In what ways do TFA corps members' teacher preparation programs influence their everyday classroom teaching/practice? What D/discourses are represented?

In Chapter 4, Josephina talked about building relationships with the students in this class, and she stated that they transformed her sense of self. Josephina responded to them like family. In this instance, Josephina talked about learning to teach in a way that matched Feiman-Nemser's (2008) framework: feeling like a teacher confirmed Josephina experienced learning to teach as "deeply personal work, engaging teachers' emotions and identity as well as their intellect" (p. 699). In this portion of her CM tenure, Josephina used a Discourse of caring (Noddings, 2005) when she described the course and her relationships with students. She was learning to feel like a teacher. In Chapter 5, Josephina's interview excerpt about teaching college preparation expressed how the TFA corps members' teacher preparation program influenced the teacher she saw herself becoming. Josephina recognized the invaluable role of relationship development to facilitate learning. In Chapter 6, the importance of relationship development emerged again. Josephina talked about Suzanne's impact, helping Josephina remember the value of patience, getting to know peoples' stories, and seeing one another as people and students. These accounts were significant given that the relational and collaborative approach to learning conflicted with Josephina's primary Discursive propensity toward

competitiveness in learning. This was something Josephina expressed as early as elementary school. In the dissonance between her emergent view of learning as relational and collaborative *and* her home or primary Discourse of learning as individual and competitive, Josephina expressed a transformation toward feeling like a teacher.

*Learning to act like a teacher.* In addressing each of the research study subtopic questions, Josephina's CM interview responses and observations showed evidence of growth in three of four areas in Feiman-Nemser's framework for learning to teach (2008): thinking, knowing, and feeling like a teacher (pp. 698-700). Yet, Josephina's primary Discourse of meritocracy and competition continued to leave a gap in how she showed growth in Feiman-Nemser's (2008) framework area, "learning to act like a teacher" (pp. 699-700). Teachers who "act" like a teacher had "a repertoire of skills, strategies, and routines, and the judgement to figure out what to do, when" (pp. 699-700). Acting like a teacher required a developed sense of ease with expected uncertainty; such an educator constantly absorbed information. Josephina's relationships with students were flourishing; however, she continued to grapple with insecurities about seeming uncertain, incompetent, or just not "right" as a teacher. She talked about this in Chapters 5 and 6. This need, likely parsed a primary, competitive need to be perceived as capable and independent, meant coming to terms with fallibility and developing a working knowledge of the role of humility in teaching and learning.

According to the textbook definition, the pinnacle of acting like a teacher was learning how to enact a sensibility termed, "Adaptive Expertise"<sup>55</sup>(p. 700). At this early

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<sup>55</sup> Here it is important to note that not all researchers and teacher educators have adopted the concept of "adaptive expertise." Some researchers (Britzman, 2003; Felman, 1989) were apt to observe that "expert"

stage of Josephina's CM experience learning to teach, it makes sense that this fourth framework attribute was less evident in Josephina's work. Perhaps this was, in part, due to her early education and encouragement to be the best student, read the most books, and her concerns about "doing things the right way." Here, Josephina's work in Feiman-Nemser's (2008) theme of "learning to act like a teacher" (p. 699) proved to be difficult for Josephina. That said, Britzman's (2003) study of novice teachers recommended teacher educators and researchers recognize all people begin to deconstruct their circumstances from a common sense framework. Josephina's common sense framework for learning to teach was meritocracy. Yet, at the end of her TFA and third year teaching, Josephina's data indicated she was finding meritocracy's recipe for education success inadequate and even reproductive because it failed to consider the complexities that hindered poor students and marginalized communities' access to higher education. In Chapter 6, Josephina expressed difficulties making sense of her own privileged access to college in relation to her students' efforts that nevertheless reaped lesser or no comparable rewards (e.g. relatively few students were able to progress on into higher education despite their and Josephina's "hard work" and fidelity to the meritocratic recipe). After these daily experiences and by building close relationships with her students, Josephina began to think beyond meritocracy, though as was earlier stated, she lacked the Discursive capability to speak specifically to sociocultural theories that reproduce education inequities despite the relentless efforts of idealistic, hard-working,

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teachers are those who more often identified themselves as less knowledgeable with continued learning, a growing recognition of learning and teaching's unpredictability and uncertainty. Thus, the literature indicated that there were disagreements about the motives for the establishment of the phrase, "adaptive expertise."

highly educated CMS (Miner, 2010). In short, in this last element of Feiman-Nemser's framework for learning to teach, Josephina's growth trajectory, while less developed than the other three, seemed "on track" toward transformational learning and an interest in moving toward thinking through common sense in order to be able to act using good sense in future social, political, and professional endeavors.

*Sociocultural factors, Josephina, and learning to teach.* Feiman-Nemser (2008) observed that teacher learning was further "influenced by the social and cultural context where [teacher] knowledge is acquired and used, including the particulars of subject matter and students" (p. 700). In Chapter 6, Josephina described personally and mutually transformative relationships with several students in her writing, Public Speaking, and composition/college preparation class. The stories corroborated Feiman-Nemser's (2008) assertion that "subject matter" can further a new teacher's learning. To illustrate, Irizarry and Johnson (2012) studied the influences of TFA CMs who were Latina/o. One finding was the CMs were able to provide students in poor communities with access to social and cultural capital needed to successfully apply to college. Prior to the Latina/o high school students' work with Latina/o TFA CMs, school counsellors had not advised the high school students in ways that placed the students on course to attend college upon graduation – if they wished to do so. This correlated with Josephina's decision to develop a college preparation course as subject matter in the small urban high school where immigrant students were unable to access the social and cultural capital that Josephina had learned and acquired as primary Discourse. Thus, as Feiman-Nemser (2008) asserted, Josephina was motivated by the cultural and social context, the students' specific

circumstances, and her strengths in areas such as college admission and scholarship applications, college admission exams, and expository writing. Josephina's commitment to learn teaching was further accelerated by her knowledge that her academic and social assets were in high demand and her ability to teach students at the school could have a profound and lasting impact on the student she taught.

*Research question closing.* Josephina's interview transcripts, field notes, and observations yielded discursive and ethnographic evidence that, during her CM tenure, relatively little from TFA and partnership affiliates contributed to her gradual growth learning to teach. For example, Josephina's stories of learning to teach corroborated extant research findings. She relied on her own resources – education background, social and cultural capital, and support from other CMs – to learn to teach.

### **Overview of the Research Findings and Implications for Future Study**

*Overview of the research findings.* The research study chapters produced several broad findings for how CMs learned to teach. These findings closely aligned with recent research findings about AC in-service teacher preparation (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). According to research, preparation programs were “one factor contributing to the new teacher's sense of preparedness” (p. 108). Equally important were the CM's education, skills, experience-derived abilities, and knowledge that preceded any AC program involvement.

This study showed the following factors influenced how CMs learned to teach. First, program affiliates' (TFA, university partner, school-based staff development specialists, etc.) responsiveness to the needs of teachers learning in-service strongly

factored into the CM's teacher confidence and effectiveness learning to teach. Next, when structural and conceptual components of the TFA teacher-learning framework inadequately supported teacher learning, Josephina drew upon resident teachers' mentorship, TFA Alum, prior education experience, recollections of exemplary teachers' practices, and Internet research. Third, Josephina found ways to support and bolster her effectiveness as TOR outside of TFA or affiliated networks. For instance, she relied on her knowledge of exemplary teaching and her own preK-16 education experience. Mostly, Josephina relied on pre-TFA social and cultural capital and other resources to learn to teach during the TFA tenure. Nuanced factors that were not explored in prior research about TFA CMs as TOR included Josephina's understanding of the importance of her role as a TOR and her genuine concern with supporting student learning. Equally, Josephina recognized this responsibility had practical, educational implications for her students' lives. Further, once Josephina lost confidence in TFA and affiliate support for her teacher learning, not only did she look elsewhere for teacher development support, she found sources to confirm her teacher effectiveness outside of TFA or affiliate endorsement. At the same time, she considered how important it was that she established her credibility as an effective teacher as an ethical and professional imperative, so she complied with TFA's requirements while she rejected the value of TFA's organizational approval.

*Overview of the implications for future study.* A central limitation of TFA's model for teacher training in this study was an absence of cohesiveness and a prevalence of curricular fragmentation between TFA and its CM education partners (Zeichner &



Conklin, 2008). In part, Josephina experienced TFA's model as inadequate because TFA, its university partner, and the site staff development team were operating independently of one another. Predictably, this led to curricular overlap, gaps in areas where Josephina lacked much needed support, and an inability to effectively support the novice's learning needs. To specifically target this concern, research findings pointed to five areas for continued or future research. First, there is a need for additional studies that examine how CMs embed TFA's conceptual framework for teacher learning into curriculum in-service and enact TFA's principles for learning in everyday classroom practice. Second, there is a need to consider a TFA training model that includes socio-cultural theories of learning and critical language awareness (CLA) in its university- or school-based learning. Such a project could expand the secondary Discourse options accessible to CMs as they progressively adapt and construct a personal vision for teaching during TFA's tenure. Third, there is a need to conduct studies examining the influence on CM in-service learning when site-based staff development and university partners collaborate with CMs on the foci and processes for site-specific delivery of programmatic support. Fourth, there is a need to study the influences on CMs' in-service learning when site-based and university partners co-construct CM graduate and professional development expectations to include varied learning theories and how these theories can be integrated in CMs' teaching to meet the site-specific needs of the CM's placement community. Fifth, studies are needed that address the influence of partner university TC and CM graduate student collaboration in common course assignments (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). For example, parties from different educative backgrounds work together on action research or

ethnographic studies on aspects of in-service experiences learning to teach. These are five areas for further study that I propose after an examination of a CM's account of learning to teach.

*Additional thoughts for literacy research.* Experts<sup>56</sup> stated that critical language awareness (CLA), a branch of critical discourse studies was underutilized as a means to examine discursive norms in education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2002; Pennycook, 2001). For instance, Josephina was unaware of the concept of neoliberalism and its impact on public education. Likewise, she was unfamiliar with a Discourse of anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2004). CLA could lead educators to recognize the importance of expanding beyond technological and academic teacher learning orientations (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). CMs predisposed to compete instead of collaborate and value acquired fixed knowledge could learn to deconstruct and critique the limitations of its effectiveness in the promotion of education equity. In its stead, educators could build solidarity and collaboration through a practice of collegial and community-centered “compassion and concern for others” (Giroux, 2013, 2014).

The cascading outcomes of “new capitalism” (Gee, 2004) and its effects on education are grim. Yet, the crisis it brings likewise stimulates a vortex of hope. Most people in contemporary society experience some discomfort, if only residual, directly borne of neoliberal master narrative influence and effect. However those families and individuals, particularly young people whose mainstream life experience is rooted in neoliberal ideology as “common sense,” have had little else to consider or contrast it with

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<sup>56</sup> This includes study findings and connections to critical pedagogy information from Kincheloe (2004), pp. 108-137 & Cochran, Smith, & Fries (2001) article, Sticks stones, and ideology: The discourse of reform in teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, 30(8), 3-15.

as an alternative Discourse (Gee, 2004). Perhaps some CMs intuit something else is there. Perhaps they seek a way to “renovate common sense with ‘the philosophy of praxis,’ a dialogue between theory and practice, thought and activity, knowledge and experience” (Britzman, 2003, p. 69). This is another way CMs could benefit from information about the underlying Discursive forces that appear to “naturally” propel the country into brain-numbing excess (Giroux, 2013). That said, CLA studies would be a valued literacy topic for any educator’s professional learning.

### **Conclusion**

Josephina eventually coped and found a way to verify she was a successful teacher (see Appendix F) despite an absence of sufficient TFA CM support for learning to teach. After a third year teaching at her TFA placement school, she ended her learning tenure thinking the field of education had little else to offer. This holds a message for teacher educators and staff development professionals about the need to explicitly teach and model diverse ways of teaching in any learning context.

Collectively, teacher educators and researcher can benefit from recognizing that novice educators and in this study, particularly CMs, come to the profession incomplete, partially formed, as educators, and an educator may decide to adopt different conceptual orientations (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Any teacher candidate who persistently articulates even a trace of yearning to work serving others’ learning deserves mentorship, support, and a colleague’s respect. Yet, amidst the tensions and disagreements within education reform, patience and compassion are necessary if educators believe that collaboration is key to the dismantlement of teacher isolation and working responsively in the realm of the 21st century (Gee, 2004). It is an inconvenient and dangerous decision to continue

closing our classroom or office doors when one determines another person's viewpoint runs counter to what is "right." In the spirit of learning to teach, it is within encounters with tension and dissonance that learning is apt to occur (Alsup, 2006).

Besides, Hill-Collins (cited in Martínéz, 2002) is quick to observe that in specific contexts we all collude to different degrees in shaping and being shaped by the "assets" of membership in hierarchically and geographically privileged categories. Some examples of these categories are race, class, heterosexuality, age, and able-ism. Meanwhile, we all sincerely assert we want "world peace," "equity for all," and a peace-seeking, anti-oppressive world.

Unfortunately, for most of us, at some crossroad, these desires become inconvenient or problematic, and our commitment likely falters. For example, often attachments to particular social experiences, ways of life, and privileges (for ourselves, our families, our children) are dearer than what it could take to shift the waves of equity toward even a partial reprieve from the majority world's suffering. It would mean that the "sacrifices" on the part of the privileged would necessarily need to be carefully and subjectively scrutinized.

For many of us, there are limits to the privilege with which we would be willing to part. As an educator, the "limits," metaphorically speaking, are the times I opt to close the classroom or office door instead of engage in collaborative inquiry with people whose viewpoints differ from my own.

Likewise, many people willingly face uncertainties, look into the unknown, or learn to live with education's abundant discord. They maintain openness to that which

causes them ire or angst. They engage with others who mean them no harm yet still are the source of suffering. They patiently believe that, in solidarity, eventually the defenses of bigotry and ignorance may fade and diminish. They think time spent purposefully fostering the dismantlement of xenophobia alleviates suffering and curbs the corrupt effects of ignorance, grandiosity, and general attachment to excess. However, they need to know they are not alone. When they feel isolated, ostracized for speaking out, this is what occurs:

I didn't feel supported by anyone [at the school] and this was the darkest time in my teaching. I felt like I was asked to stop doing what I'm doing. *Don't you see that this is wrong? Sexist, Ageist...* I could not talk to anyone at the school, no one would talk to me about it, and basically I was told to stop talking about it, I was creating too many issues, or I or other people could lose their jobs. I want to work someplace where I can voice my opinion. And ... no one would talk to me, talk about being vulnerable.... I was afraid that then I would lose my job. I was trying to fight a good fight, and it was exhausting. This is a public institution. There need to be more checks and balances, no accountabilities.... There's nothing I could do about it. It was a huge factor in why I decided not to teach. So many unethical things were happening. It's not in the best interest of the students, and part of it was the students, there were students I wanted to be there for, it definitely wasn't \_\_\_\_\_ that brought me back.

It is unknown if Josephina would have remained in teaching even if she had experienced the school culture differently than she described above. At the same time, it is likely that

novice educators who work in similar settings leave the profession for such reasons. In either case, the cultivation of effective school leaders and responsive school settings is equally important to develop staff that stay and find career-long purpose in teaching. There are educators who work to alleviate social injustice. They are spurred on by a yearning to experience living in a generous, benevolent world (Martínez, 2002). Many such teachers enter to profession for this reason. Josephina entered TFA as a CM who believed in the organization's core values (see Appendix C). Further, she believed university and school partners were equally invested in ferreting out education inequities and working in families' and students' interests. When Josephina left teaching, she remained in contact with several student recipients of full scholarships to four-year colleges. The students thanked Josephina for sharing what she knew about college applications, the ACT and the SAT tests.

In her current employ, Josephina works in a different professional role helping people who live in poverty.<sup>57</sup> Recently, she agreed to a final interview and e-mail exchange. Josephina was asked if she took away anything of value from her participation in this research study. It is fitting to end the study with a verbatim sharing of Josephina's reflection on this question:

At first, talking about my teaching experience was a little scary – I was afraid of being judged, for not doing things the “right” way. As the interviews progressed, however, it became a sort of cathartic experience, and I enjoyed reflecting on some of my teaching memories, the good, the bad, and the ugly. I certainly don't think I took enough time to reflect on

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<sup>57</sup> The specific kind of work is not further described to ensure participant confidentiality.

my experiences during the actual time that I was teaching. Talking with you during our interview sessions allowed me this time to reflect, and think critically about some of the students and issues, as well as about the process of learning to teach and the effects my teaching may have produced. (Josephina, Interview 5, July 16, 2014)

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## Appendix A – Table One

Table I: Literature Review Search Sources, Dates, and Strategies - Seminal research and TFA specific commentary and research is historically situated as far back as the early 1980s. Otherwise, with some exceptions the search materials used in the study are within the 2000 – 2014 date range.

Reference Key Words and Dates:	Databases: Journals, Books, Reports, Handbooks and Notes.	Mainstream Media and Web sites
Alternative Certification	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online
New Teacher Education	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage	New Teacher Center
Teach For America	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online/Online newspapers and media
Teacher Learning	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage; JSTOR	New Teacher Center
Curriculum & Instruction	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage	TFA online and Web-based Institute curriculum resources.
Education Policy	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online
Education Practice	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online
Teacher Evaluation	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online Minnesota Department of Education
Teacher Education Programs	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online Minnesota Department of Education
Teacher Identity/Attitudes	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; Sage; JSTOR	Google Scholar

Table I: Literature Review Search Sources, Dates, and Strategies - Seminal research and TFA specific commentary and research is historically situated as far back as the early 1980s. Otherwise, with some exceptions the search materials used in the study are within the 2000 – 2014 date range.

Reference Key Words and Dates:	Databases: Journals, Books, Reports, Handbooks and Notes.	Mainstream Media and Web sites
Unions and Teacher Preparation	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA	Minnesota Department of Education
Mentorship and Induction	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA	New Teacher Center
Professional Development	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA	National Staff Development Council
Teacher Attrition	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; JSTOR	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online Google Scholar
Social Justice	ERIC; Academic Search Premier;	Center for Anti-Oppressive Education; Google Books
Neoliberal	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA	Google Scholar
Reform Agendas	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage	Google Scholar
Critical Pedagogy	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage	Google Scholar
TFA and University Partnerships	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage	Google Scholar
Teacher Dispositions	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage	Google Scholar



Table I: Literature Review Search Sources, Dates, and Strategies - Seminal research and TFA specific commentary and research is historically situated as far back as the early 1980s. Otherwise, with some exceptions the search materials used in the study are within the 2000 – 2014 date range.

Reference Key Words and Dates:	Databases: Journals, Books, Reports, Handbooks and Notes.	Mainstream Media and Web sites
Teacher Accountability	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage JSTOR	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online Minnesota Department of Education/ Google Scholar
Instructional Leadership	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; JSTOR	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online Minnesota Department of Education
Teacher Quality	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; JSTOR	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online Minnesota Department of Education
Teacher Effectiveness	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA;	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online Minnesota Department of Education
Multicultural Education	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage; JSTOR	U.S Depart. Of Ed./TFA online Minnesota Department of Education; Nat'l Black Education Agenda.
Student Teaching	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage; JSTOR	New Teacher Center
Sociology of Teaching	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage; JSTOR	National Staff Development Council; ASCD; TFA online; Google Books
School Culture	ERIC; Academic Search Premier; EBSCO; Proquest; AERA; Sage; JSTOR	National Staff Development Council; ASCD; TFA online; Google Books
Table notes	<p>Note: In all instances, different editions of volumes such as <i>The Handbook of Research on Teacher Education</i> and similar reference resources were used in the search for direct reference and to locate research using chapter references to locate relevant journal articles, major studies, books, prominent scholars in the field of study, and multiple perspectives on the research subject.</p>	

## Appendix B – TFA Change Theory

### About Us

TEACHFORAMERICA

#### Overview

Teach For America is the national corps of top recent college graduates of all academic majors who commit to teach for two years in urban and rural public schools and become lifelong leaders in the effort to expand educational opportunity.

Teach For America teachers (corps members) go above and beyond to help their students achieve dramatic academic gains. Teach For America alumni are a growing force of leaders with the insight and added commitment to effect the systemic changes required to put children in low-income communities on a level playing field with children from more affluent areas.

Teach For America is building the movement to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting our nation's most promising future leaders in the effort. Our vision is that one day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

#### Facts at a Glance

<b>1990</b>	Year that Teach For America placed its first corps, which had 500 members	<b>2.5 million</b>	Approximate number of students reached by corps members since 1990
<b>17,000</b>	Approximate number of people who have joined the Teach For America corps since 1990	<b>\$10,000</b>	Annual cost of recruitment, selection, training, and support for each Teach For America corps member
<b>4,400</b>	Total number of Teach For America corps members for the 2006-07 school year	<b>72%</b>	Percentage of Teach For America corps members who stay in education after completing their two-year commitment—28% as teachers*
<b>1,000+</b>	Number of schools nationwide where Teach For America corps members are placed	<b>89%</b>	Percentage of Teach For America alumni who report that their work directly impacts schools or low-income communities*
<b>25</b>	Number of regions in which Teach For America places corps members	<b>\$70 million</b>	Teach For America operating budget, 2006 fiscal year

\*Source: Teach For America Alumni Survey, 2005

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why Teach For America?

Today in the United States, 9-year-olds growing up in low-income communities are already three grade levels behind their peers in high-income communities. Half of them won't graduate from high school. Those who do graduate will, on average, read and do math at the level of eighth graders in high-income communities.

This academic achievement gap is our nation's most pressing problem—and it can be solved. Teach For America corps members are providing students growing up in low-income communities today with the educational opportunities they deserve, while Teach For America alumni are working from every sector for fundamental change to help close the achievement gap for good.

### Who Are Teach For America Corps Members?

Teach For America recruits top college graduates of all academic majors, career interests, and backgrounds. Admission to Teach For America is highly selective, with approximately 12% of the nearly 19,000 applicants entering the 2006 corps. We select corps members who demonstrate achievement, leadership, and a commitment to expanding opportunity for children in low-income areas.

### Teach For America 2006 Admissions Statistics

Total applications	18,968
Corps size	2,400
Percentage with leadership experience	96%
Average undergraduate GPA	3.5
People of color	28%

Among the 2006 applicants were 11% of the senior classes at Notre Dame and Amherst; 10% of those at Dartmouth, Spelman, and Yale; and 8% of graduating seniors at the California Institute of Technology. Nearly 20% of the 2006 applicants were math, science, or engineering majors.

### How Are Corps Members Trained?

Teach For America corps members attend an intensive summer institute to gain a solid foundation in the skills and knowledge necessary to lead students to significant achievement. They learn the overarching approach utilized by successful teachers as well as specific skills such as instructional planning and classroom management. These courses are combined with extensive hours of student teaching, giving corps members firsthand experience in goal-oriented instruction. We continue to support corps members once they enter the classroom, clustering them in schools with fellow corps members to encourage peer collaboration and providing access to professional-development resources.

### How Are Corps Members Paid?

Teach For America corps members are paid directly by the school districts for which they work and generally receive the same salaries and benefits as other entry-level teachers. Teach For America is a member of AmeriCorps, the national service network, so corps members are eligible to receive loan forbearance and interest payment on qualified student loans, as well as an education award of \$4,725 at the end of each year of service, which can be applied toward future educational expenses or to repay qualified student loans.

### What Effect Do Corps Members Have on Students?

According to a 2004 independent study by leading research firm Mathematica Policy Research, students of Teach For America corps members make 10% more progress in a year in math than is typically expected and slightly exceed the normal expectation for annual progress in reading.

### **How Does Teach For America Decide Where to Place Corps Members?**

When considering whether to open a new site, Teach For America weighs the need for our corps members and their potential impact, not only as teachers, but also as alumni working to effect the broader changes necessary to increase academic achievement in public schools in the region.

### **What Do Principals Think of Teach For America Corps Members?**

For 10 years an independent research firm has asked principals to evaluate the performance of Teach For America teachers in their schools. Its most recent survey, completed in June 2005, found the following:

- Nearly all principals (95%) would hire more Teach For America corps members if given the opportunity.
- Nearly three out of four principals (72%) considered Teach For America teachers more effective than other beginning teachers, with respect to their impact on student achievement.

### **How Does Teach For America Approach Diversity?**

Teach For America strives to enlist individuals who have the characteristics and skills necessary to advance our mission. These leaders will be diverse in ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic background. Their places on the political spectrum and their religious beliefs will be similarly varied, and we seek individuals of all genders, sexual orientations, and physical abilities. Maximizing the diversity of our corps and organization is important in engaging all those who can contribute to our effort and in ensuring our access to and participation in the circles of influence in our tremendously diverse society. Moreover, we seek to be diverse because we aspire to serve as a model of the fairness and equality of opportunity we envision for our nation.

### **How Is Teach For America Funded?**

Teach For America secures local and regional gifts and grants from businesses, foundations, government organizations, and individuals in communities where corps members are teaching. In addition, it receives national funding from corporations and foundations, individuals, and the federal government.

### **Our Theory of Change**

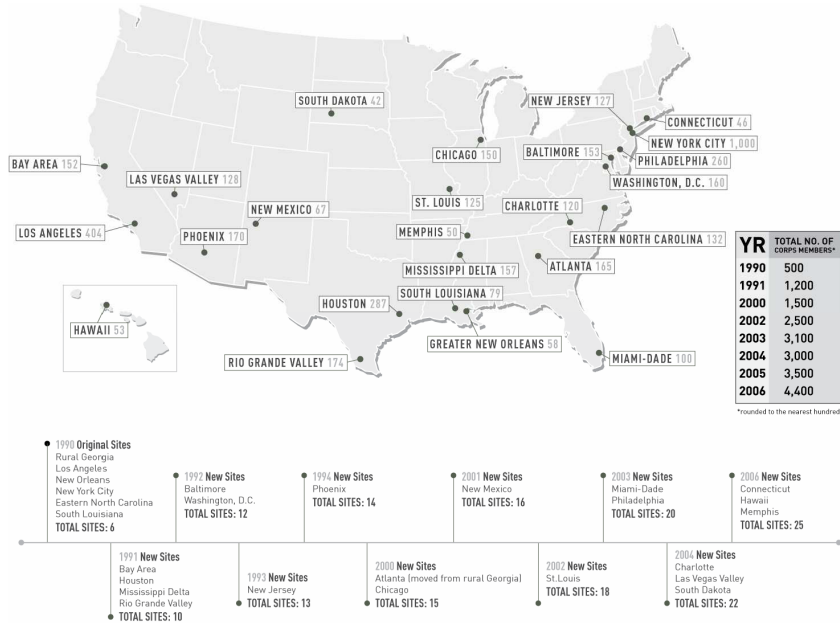
Socioeconomic challenges in low-income communities—such as inadequate housing, healthcare, and preschool opportunities—put added pressure on schools that generally don't have the systems, capacity, and resources to compensate. This does not mean schools in low-income communities are worse than schools elsewhere; it means they need to do more given the additional challenges their students face. Unfortunately, these schools weren't built that way. For example, there are not enough hours in a standard school day to catch up students, and schools may not have access to the social services their students need.

To overcome these underlying challenges in the short term, we need as many teachers as possible willing to go above and beyond the constraints of the system to ensure that their students excel. But thousands of hardworking teachers cannot solve the problem on their own. Rather, we must build the capacity of the system to compensate for the broader forces at work. Our alumni address these issues in the classroom and take on the underlying challenges from other sectors like medicine, law, and policy.

It is through the combined efforts of our corps members and alumni, and by working alongside others in the communities that we serve, that we will achieve our vision: One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

Year	Our Story
1989	Princeton University senior Wendy Kopp comes up with the idea of Teach For America. She is troubled by the educational inequities facing children in low-income communities and convinced that many in her generation are searching for a way to make a real difference. She develops the idea in her senior thesis and secures a seed grant from Mobil Corporation.
1990	During Teach For America's first year, 2,500 graduates from more than 100 colleges respond to a grassroots recruitment campaign. Of these applicants, 500 are selected and trained before being placed in teaching positions in six regions across the country.
1993	The federal government establishes AmeriCorps, with Teach For America as one of several charter programs.
1997	The first annual Teach For America Week inspires 150 leaders from business, politics, entertainment, and athletics to teach in corps members' classrooms across the country.
2000	Teach For America launches a successful expansion campaign to double the number of corps members teaching each year and expand to more than 20 sites by 2005.
2001	Teach For America secures more than \$20 million in investments toward its five-year growth plan and is named by First Lady Laura Bush as one of five organizations she will actively support.
2002	Applications to Teach For America triple from the previous year's number as 14,000 young leaders seek to join.  Teach For America enters its first national corporate partnership with Wachovia Corporation, gaining financial support and management expertise for its capacity-building efforts and becoming the primary beneficiary of proceeds from the Wachovia Championship, a premier event on the PGA Tour.
2005	Teach For America receives 17,000 applications, becoming the no. 1 employer of graduates on several college campuses.  Teach For America formulates an ambitious growth plan to expand the corps to 7,500 members in more than 30 sites nationwide by 2010.  Teach For America creates Katrina Relief Corps to serve students and communities impacted by Hurricane Katrina.
2006	The Amgen Foundation becomes Teach For America's National Math and Science Partner, establishing the Amgen Fellows program for incoming corps members with math, science, and engineering degrees.  Lehman Brothers partners with Teach For America in support of its teacher training and ongoing professional development efforts.  Teach For America launches an early childhood initiative with a pilot program in which 18 corps members teach in pre-K and Head Start classes in Washington, D.C.
Today	With a solid foundation in place, Teach For America is building an even more effective force of our nation's most promising future leaders to expand opportunities for children in low-income communities.

# Current Corps Numbers & Expansion



\*Corps members refers to the number of active corps members in the midst of their two-year commitment.

## Appendix C – TFA Core Values

### Story of Self, Us, and Now

#### Teach For America's Core Values

##### *Transformational change*

We seek to expand educational opportunity in ways that are life-changing for children and transforming for our country. Given our deep belief in children and communities, the magnitude of educational inequity and its consequences, and our optimism about the solvability of the problem, we act with high standards, urgency, and a long-term view.

##### *Leadership*

We strive to develop and become the leaders necessary to realize educational excellence and equity. We establish bold visions and invest others in working towards them. We work in purposeful, strategic, and resourceful ways, define broadly what is within our control to solve, and learn and improve constantly. We operate with a sense of possibility, persevere in the face of challenges, ensure alignment between our actions and beliefs, and assume personal responsibility for results.

##### *Team*

We value and care about each other, operate with a generosity of spirit, and have fun in the process of working together. To maximize our collective impact, we inspire, challenge, and support each other to be our best and sustain our effort.

##### *Diversity*

We act on our belief that the movement to ensure educational equity will succeed only if it is diverse in every respect. In particular, we value the perspective and credibility that individuals who share the racial and economic backgrounds of the students with whom we work can bring to our organization, classrooms, and the long-term effort for change.

##### *Respect & Humility*

We value the strengths, experiences, and perspectives of others, and we recognize our own limitations. We are committed to partnering effectively with families, schools, and communities to ensure that our work advances the broader good for all children.

**Appendix D – Table of Participant Yearly Positions**

Name	Bernie	Gabby	Josephina	Kawanda	Nora	Phil	Yolanda
2010 - 2011	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM
2011 - 2012	CM	CM	CM	CT	CM	CM	CM
2012 - 2013	Left education to work in private sector.	CT - remained at CM site placement.	CT - - remained at CM site placement .	CT - left CM site placement. Continued teaching at another urban, high needs charter school in the same area.	CT - left first placement to teach in another state (job migration reasons) .	Left education (LE) to work in private sector.	CT: left CM site placement. Continued teaching at another urban, high needs charter school in the same area.
2013 - 2014	CT - Returned to education (RTT) to teach full time in a private International school.	Left classroom (LCnotE) Continued working in education & staff development (non-profit position).	Left education (LE) to continue professional education and graduate school.	CT	CT - returned to "home" state and accepted FT CT position	LE: Remained in private sector position.	CT



## Appendix E – TFA Corps Member Profile Information

# 2012 Corps Profile

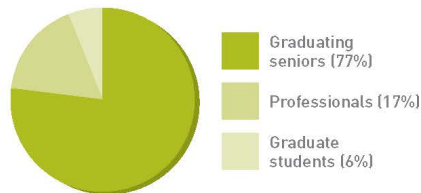
TEACHFORAMERICA

A historic **5,800** individuals joined Teach For America's 2012 corps. As a result, in the 2012-13 school year **more than 10,000** first- and second-year corps members will teach in high-need classrooms in **46 regions** that span **36 states** and the District of Columbia.



### 2012 FIRST-YEAR CORPS MEMBERS

#### CORPS MAKE-UP



#### GRADUATING SENIORS



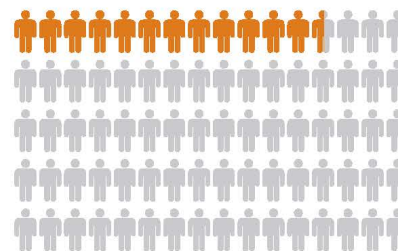
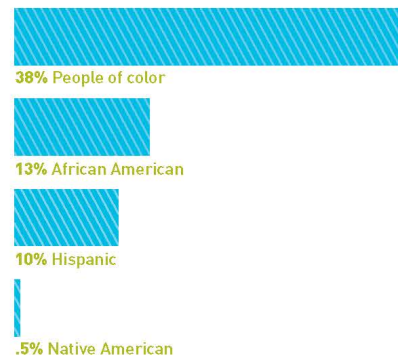
#### PROFESSIONALS

##### Top career sectors

- » Education
- » Nonprofit, Social Services & Community Service
- » Marketing, Communications & Media
- » Sales & Business Development
- » Finance & Accounting

### DEMOGRAPHICS

**35%** Pell Grant recipients | **23%** first in family to attend college



## Appendix F – Letter of Acknowledgement from College

[REDACTED] College  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Office of Admissions

October 2012

[REDACTED]  
FAX [REDACTED]

Ms. [REDACTED]  
Teacher of College Prep  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. [REDACTED]:

For several decades now, we have asked each member of our new entering class to name the one secondary school teacher who has done the most to influence his or her development. I am delighted to be able to tell you that this year [REDACTED] [REDACTED] named you as this very special teacher. Clearly, this student is only one of many who benefit greatly from your efforts in the classroom.

We thought you might like to know that [REDACTED] joined one of the most able classes in [REDACTED] history. The 531 members of the Class of 2016 were selected from an applicant pool of 5,856. Seventy-nine of them are National Merit Scholars. As the enclosed profile suggests, these first-year students were not only outstanding scholars, but were quite involved in school and community activities as well. They are students who are willing to take risks and who are interested in and concerned about others.

May I express [REDACTED]'s sincere thanks for your dedicated efforts to inspire the creativity and independent thinking that we so enjoy in our students. As always, our faculty will do its best to continue the very fine work which you and your colleagues have begun.

Best wishes for continued success in your teaching.

Sincerely yours,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Vice President and Dean of  
Admissions and Financial Aid

PT [REDACTED]  
cc: Principal  
Enc: Class of 2016 Profile