Teacher education in practice:

Reconciling contexts, practices, and theories

by Taucia Gonzalez

Elizabeth B. Kozleski

Laura Atkinson

Cynthia Mruczek

Lisa Lacy

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Elizabeth B. Kozleski

University of Kansas

Taucia Gonzalez

Laura Atkinson

Cynthia Mruczek

Lisa Lacy

Arizona State University

Abstract

This paper reports findings from an 18-month qualitative study that followed the experiences of nine teacher residents, their site professors, site coordinators, clinical teachers, and principals in three Professional Learning Schools (PLSes). The study examined the tensions that emerged as teacher preparation theory intersected with the context-bound realities of daily life in schools and the political constraints that diminish possibilities for inclusive education. The paper addresses implications for teacher preparation programs by reporting how teacher residents negotiated their understanding of and commitment for inclusive education through three themes: (a) critical reflection required, (b) learning is happening, and (c) troubling behavior. Intepreting these themes has implications for programmatic designs in teacher preparation.

Keywords: inclusive education, teacher education, culture practices, teacher learning, teacher practice, teacher collaboration.

Teacher Education in Practice: Reconciling Contexts, Practices, and Theories

The Urban Initiative for Teacher Education (UITE) was a Master of Arts program in Special Education with a focus on teacher leadership for inclusive education in urban contexts. UITE immersed teacher residents in urban schools from the beginning of their graduate teacher education programs, offering mediated classroom teaching experiences in inclusive classrooms in urban schools that were co-constructing equity with their students, families, and practitioners. Urban schools were situated in (a) densely populated, diverse, often minority-majority[1] neighborhoods; (b) communities that struggled with access to financial resources, jobs, health care, transportation, physical safety and modernized facilities; and (c) communities where familial cultures were marginalized politically and socially by the dominant cultures within the United States (U. S.) (Anyon, 1997; Buendia, 2010; Kozleski & Smith, 2009). Urban school communities (e.g., students, families, staff, faculties, and administrators) struggled to bridge national common core standards and assessments as well as district-wide curricula and materials with the cultural capital that families and children brought with them into the education system. While many schools in the U.S strive to develop a level of coherence and standardization unprecedented in public education history, doing this work in urban schools bristles with social justice issues. These issues surface critical questions: (a) who benefits from the way things are; (b) is this the way that we want things to be; and (c) who should benefit from our collective efforts? The dominant U.S. reform initiatives have appropriated some social justice rhetoric particularly around inclusive education without nuanced policy that allows modulation in

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[1] Majority-minority refers to demographic contexts in which groups of individuals clustered by ethnicity, race, and/or language characteristics may comprise the majority of the population while in a broader geographic area, they may be in the minority.   Since minority status in the United States can also be accompanied by institutional or explicit racism and bias, population areas in which minority groups achieve majority status can be sites where various kinds of social capital may be undergoing a renegotiation.

response to local contexts. In the name of difference and diversity, the U.S. continues to press an outcomes agenda based on homogenized views of learning and teaching that curtail careful design and research in practice in favor of standard protocols. As schools grapple with these critical issues they need new generations of teachers interdisciplinarily prepared who bring a hybrid set of general and specialized education skills to the table and who can engage in critical discourse around the issues of belonging, marginalization, power, and privilege and their impact on student outcomes.

Many teacher education programs include foundational work, liberal arts and sciences classes, methods courses, and student teaching (Boyer & Batiste, 1996). Teacher preparation programs have had to adhere to rapidly evolving accreditation standards (e.g., NCATE, 2008) such as requiring faculty to (a) work collaboratively with members of professional learning communities and (b) commit to utilizing more culturally responsive practices in preparing teachers who will meet the needs of all learners. While many teacher education programs are designed to present pre-service teachers with knowledge about teaching throughout their coursework and field experience, much of what teacher residents (i.e., student teachers) learn does not prepare them to work in a pluralistic, complex, and global society (Cross, 2003). Nor, are many teachers afforded the opportunities to explore the role of culture in identity, learning, and community building, the core features of culturally responsive approaches to teaching and learning (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). The boundaries between general and special education are beginning to blur through multi-tiered interventions systems such as response to intervention and schoolwide positive behavior supports (Sailor, 2009). These approaches have profound impact on teacher roles and professional identity construction that are minimally troubled in practice or in preservice contexts. Further, general and special education teachers need opportunities to

understand the underlying narratives around culture since these are key aspects to reducing

disproportionality in special education and increasing the power of special education

interventions (Artiles, Kozleski, & Gonzalez, 2011). When UITE was designed, funded, and

implemented, we sought as a team of school and university personal to develop educators

prepared in to work in general and special education contexts who had content and role expertise

as well as the critical skills to engage these issues in practice. This paper is about that complex

journey, one that is still in progress.

About the Program

Special and general education has historically been structured in the U.S. as two separate

teacher preparation programs in colleges (Gutierrez & Sobel, 2011). The last decade has

demonstrated new conversations and restructuring of many programs to integrate general and

special education into one program that prepares teachers to work with *all* students (Pugach,

Blanton, & Correa, 2011). To do this well teacher residents need to understand how to provide

opportunities for all students to learn (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010) while also actively

challenging the status quo through reformative practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). As they

become teachers, teacher residents must be encouraged to challenge norms, values, and

assumptions that contribute to the marginalization of students within the context of schools

(Sleeter, 2012). It is with these vantage points in mind that UITE was developed.

UITE focused on helping teacher residents hone their teaching practices as well as

providing them with spaces to think critically. The intent was to help teacher residents develop

three lenses to engage social justice, equity, and opportunities to learn for all students. First, a

technical dimension of the program mediated residents' conscious choices of teaching

pedagogies and contributed to their knowledge development and how they came to know it,

grounded by their teaching practice in particular contexts. We conceptualized the technical dimension of teaching as the cultural mediation of what teachers know, as well as their know-how. A second dimension, the context, addressed the historically situated topology of teaching which occurs within the complex social and geographic networks of schools. For instance, identity is composed of topologically connected self-concepts (Kozleski, Gibson, & Hynds, 2012). We extended the contextual dimension of identity to "anyplace, anytime, any-connections" including virtual and imagined connections with social constructs such as race, gender, culture, power, and abilities. A third and final dimension, the critical, was defined as the arena in which teachers came to understand the role that cultural and justice forces played in the design of formal schooling processes. The critical dimension required an examination of whose interests are served by the design of political, social, and learning structures for curriculum, assessment, and passages from one grade to another and ultimately to graduation.

Using technical, contextual, and critical domains as a way of conceptualizing how we taught, we used a framework to foreground particular perspectives each semester: (a) identity, (b) culture, (c) learning, and (d) assessment. The program provided opportunities for teacher residents to be immersed in an urban school setting from the first day of their program, think critically about issues surrounding the four themes, and interrogate their own thinking about what it means to create learning spaces with students with a variety of backgrounds, skills, interests, and abilities (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010). By being immersed in the school setting and working closely with more experienced teachers, new teachers had access to communities of practice and were able to become what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as full participants by virtue of their daily presence, proximity and practice. Through participation, teacher residents

had opportunities to examine their identities, and, through participation with other professionals, redefine how they understood the work and practice of educators (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

This article reports some of the results of a qualitative study that followed the experiences of nine teacher residents, their site professors, site coordinators, clinical teachers, and principals in three professional learning schools. The study examined the tensions and challenges that emerged as the program design created the context in which technical, contextual, and critical aspects of practice and understanding were developed and used in daily practice. In this paper, we focus primarily on the teacher residents and how we understand their experiences. In subsequent sections, we outline the methods, interpret our data, and summarize what we learned and need to continue to learn.

Methods

Sites

The three partner schools were located in Grass Valley School District (GVSD), which served almost 12,000 students in 20 schools. There were a total of 14 elementary schools serving students from preschool through fifth grade and three middle schools serving sixth through ninth graders. Another district managed local high schools. This configuration was typical for this urban area, one of the largest metropolitan areas in the U.S. For several years GVSD did not meet its annual yearly progress goals. As a result, principals, instructional coaches and teachers felt immense pressure to meet escalating accountability demands from district headquarters and the state department of education. The three schools served different communities (see Table 1), although they were close to one another geographically. Coppermine was administered by Grass Valley although the school was located on American Indian tribal lands that were surrounded by the Grass Valley district.

Participants

The participants included nine teacher residents working towards a Master of Arts in Special Education in a four semester program. The program began in summer and ended at the end of the following summer. Three site professors (one per school) mentored, coached and assisted teacher residents in developing culturally responsive, inclusive classrooms and teaching practices and also were participant-researchers. They worked with the principal, clinical teachers and site coordinator at each site to support professional learning and school transformation towards increasingly sophisticated forms of culturally responsive, inclusive teaching and learning. Three site coordinator participants were fulltime faculty members at the professional learning schools, one per site. Site coordinators collaborated with site professors, as well as mentored and coached teacher residents and clinical teachers to develop their technical expertise in designing and delivering high quality, culturally responsive, inclusive learning contexts and interactions. Further, the site coordinators were instrumental in helping clinical teachers become conscious of their mediating role in making research and practice connections for the teacher residents. The school administrator participants ensured that teacher residents were fully included in classroom teaching and school wide citizenship, provided ongoing leadership for culturally responsive learning, and shepherded the faculty through professional learning. Out of the twenty-three participants, more than half of the teacher residents, site professors, site coordinators and principals identified as White. One third of the adults involved in the program identified themselves as Latina. Also included in the group were individuals who self-identified as biracial, as citizens of India, and as Muslims.

In our professional development schools, we defined inclusive education as:

a continuous struggle toward (a) the *redistribution* of quality opportunities to learn and participate in educational programs, (b) the *recognition* and value of differences as reflected in

content, pedagogy, and assessment tools, and (c) the opportunities for marginalized groups to *represent themselves* in decision-making processes that advance and define claims of exclusion and the respective solutions that affect their children's educational futures (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013, pp. 36).

In doing so, we encouraged our professional learning school colleagues to think expansively about inclusivity rather than use it as a code to talk about students identified for special education. While this was the discourse of the professional learning school team members, many long-standing district and school practices isolated and separated students in special education.   Teachers had become accustomed to working in contexts in which distinctions among students translated into diminished expectations for student performance and predicted separate placements, at least for parts of each school day.   Thus, our work together focused on the simultaneous redesign of the teacher preparation program, school structures, and clinical teacher assumptions and everyday practices.

Data Collection

Data were collected for three semesters and included (a) principal interviews conducted three times per academic year at each school site, (b) site professors interviews conducted once each semester, (c) weekly site professor field notes, (d) site coordinators interviews once per semester, (e) video recall interviews conducted after in class observations for a total of 2 per teacher resident per semester, and (f) weekly teacher written reflections. When data collection was completed, we had over 500 separate sets of data to analyze.

Data Analysis

Data collection, writing, and analysis occurred simultaneously. Memos and reflective notes were kept on original data sources to capture the details of the process as well as note questions or conflicts that arose (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). All sources of data, including the video recall interviews, were coded soon after they were collected using NVIVO software.

Using a constant-comparative method, codes were developed, discussed, agreed to by all coders and then, used across coders (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Two coders reviewed coding of each set of transcripts to reach agreement on the coding. Weekly meetings were used to resolve coding issues that emerged. Themes were developed by the research team after reviewing the coding groups. A total of 104 codes emerged that were then collapsed through analysis and inter-researcher agreement that became the themes that we report here. Member checks on memos that emerged from initial coding and theming were conducted each semester to ensure that our codes and themes closely aligned with participant experiences.

Results: From All about Me to All about Us

Throughout the teacher residents' experiences, a research team followed their development and triangulated their stories with the perspectives of their clinical teachers, site coordinators, and site professors. We observed the teacher residents as they struggled initially with finding identities that grounded them and centered their teaching practices. As they grew into their roles and increased their own reflexivity, they began to spend more time understanding their students and remediating their own role as designers of learning. Based on our analysis three themes came into focus: (a) critical reflection as an emergent practice; (b) whose learning; and (c) troubling behavior. We explore these themes in the next sections.

Critical Reflection as an emergent practice

Critical reflection may be defined as reflecting on ethical, political and moral issues in education (Howard, 2003). In UITE the reflection that we wanted teachers to engage was reflection that required them to use a critical lens and focus on the issues of power and privilege that were rooted in the school curriculum. Teacher education programs rarely have a practice in which pre-service teachers critically analyze the roles that power and privilege play in the

curriculum (Breault & Lack, 2009). The work of Kozleski and Waitoller (2010) reminds us that

teaching is a political practice in which the dominant culture is threaded through the teacher and

the curriculum in ways that grant access to some students and deny it to others, so it is

imperative that teachers are conscious of their role in selecting what to "deconstruct, conserve

and transform" (p. 659). Critically reflexive practice requires thinking critically about personal

beliefs, values, and assumptions about the world we live in and how these ideologies impact

interpretations and interactions with others (Cunliffe, 2004). The UITE program created

reflective spaces in which teachers could engage in critically reflexive practices to explore their

identity and examine their teaching practices. In seminars, coursework, and ongoing individual

and collective conversations, the site coordinators and professors asked open-ended questions,

described practices, and shared observations that were designed to shift teacher residents'

perspectives from action to reflection. These spaces offered teacher residents the opportunity to

re-intrepret events of the day. Activities included weekly written reflections (journaling),

seminar discussions that focused on teacher identity over a sixteen-week semester followed by

semesters that foregrounding re-mediating culture, the social nature of learning and the roles of

assessment in learning and development. Throughout these themed semesters, teacher residents

reflected together on video-taped lessons, narratives from their classrooms, reflections on the

assumptions that drove their actions in classrooms, anchoring their discussions with close

analysis of classroom activity. Site professors and teacher residents became increasingly skilled

in mediating the conversations so that, over time, the teacher residents were able to deepen their

commentary and provide leadership for the discourse.

Technical and critical reflexive practice. The technical approach to reflection directs

reflection to conceptualizing "how to" teach. It is common for teachers to reflect on technical

aspects (Zeichner, 1994). For instance, they critique how their lessons succeeded or what adjustments they might make to improve a lesson next time. Novice teachers tend to be absorbed with technical aspects of their teaching. Borko, Livingston, and Shavelson (1990) confirm that there are differences between the ways that expert teachers (e.g., experienced) and novice teachers (e.g., teacher residents) think about instruction. Experienced teachers may have a more developed teaching schema than most novice teachers, so they work and process different kinds of concerns than their novice counterparts. For example, experienced teachers may have more experience and more strategies to use when addressing classroom management issues, so they can spend more time focusing on relevant and meaningful pedagogies. In contrast, novice teachers may be more worried about the technical aspects of teaching; how to implement a lesson, how to keep peace in the classroom, and how to adhere to the class schedule. Yet, Zeichner (1994) reminds us that all teachers, regardless of their experiences, have the capacity to think deeply about technique, context, as well as the critical aspects of learning that are engaged when teachers and students attend and comment on discourse and action in the classroom as well as when curriculum are selected, activities assigned, and work evaluated.

As the year began, it was not surprising that teacher residents took a technical approach when reflecting on their experience in the classroom. For instance, Kasey was focused on learning how to keep her students under control, "I still need to learn the strategies on how to help students who do act out more. That's what I would love to learn is how to get them to stay focused and stay under control" (Kasey interview, spring 2010). While Kasey spent much of her time absorbed in how to manage student behavior, Ingrid described how reviewing her journal helped her become a better teacher, "I was able to go back and review information in my journal that helped me think about how I would have handled a situation differently. I think I have

grown as a teacher just by doing this" (Ingrid written reflection, spring 2010). Both teacher

residents used their journal as a way to consider their practice but their reflexivity focused on

different levels of concern.

According to Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles and Lopez-Torres (2003), when teachers reflect

solely on technical aspects of their practice, their analysis is not sufficiently complex to support

teacher learning that can in turn offer more equitable outcomes. The authors suggest reflecting in

order to create a "political consciousness" (p. 248). In other words, teachers need to engage in

critical reflexive practices that interrogate their own thinking about equity and social justice.

Marlene, a site coordinator, believed that the program encouraged teachers to engage in

conversations about equity and inclusive education. By having these conversations the teachers

began to think about how everyone accessed the curriculum based on their own individual needs:

> That's what I mean by 'equitable' because what's equitable for me may not be equitable
>
> for you. That's what I see the teachers struggle with when we talk about—they feel like,
>
> 'Wow. We have a big job.' Making sure that everybody gets what they need from the
>
> curriculum, and it's a lot of work. (Marlene interview, spring 2010)

For the teacher residents to engage in critical reflexivity particularly around the notions

of inclusive education, they needed to have opportunities to talk about their beliefs and how

those beliefs impacted who gets access to the curriculum. In the following comment, Craig

addressed the issue of equity and power in his classroom. It was through the reflective process

that Craig recognized that he was not incorporating all his students' experiences or interests into

his lessons and decided to change his teaching practice to be more culturally responsive:

> All the talking and reflecting we did in the program allowed me to really think about who
>
> I am as a teacher. One of the most important discoveries I made about myself is realizing

that what is important to me is not necessarily important to my students. It is all about

knowing who your students are, where they are coming from and using their experiences

to make learning meaningful. I realized that I was not including a lot of my students'

experiences into my lesson. I thought I knew what was important. Once I allowed my

students to choose the learning experiences, they started learning more because they were

engaged. (Craig written reflection, spring 2010)

Craig was able to explore his teaching practice and recognized that he needed to

implement more equitable practices in his classroom. Craig exercised his power in the classroom

by constraining what he allowed to be the focus of his lessons based on his own knowledge and

experiences. In doing so, Craig realized that he may have been excluding some of his students'

experiences and interests and, in doing so, limited their ability to connect to the concepts and

skills being taught. As Craig began to expand the notion of where knowledge is generated and

who has it, he created the opportunity for learning to be a dynamic and interactive process.

Observations by his site professor and site coordinator suggested that his practice shifted

significantly over the course of the year.

Teacher residents also journaled weekly about their teaching experiences. Their journals

offered a space to grapple with uncomfortable issues that teacher residents were not always ready

to discuss openly (Milner, 2003). Below a teacher resident discusses her initial discomfort with

stepping out of her comfort zone and questioning what she originally believed:

Reflecting back on this process, in the beginning I was very uncomfortable about some of

our discussions and readings that challenged my own beliefs and made me question why I

thought what I did. But through this journey it was beneficial for me to talk with my

peers about issues during the semester that enabled me to step outside my comfort zone and reconsider what I originally believed. (Tammy written reflection, fall 2010)

During the seminar course relied on their colleagues for social support (Etscheidt, Curran, & Sawyer, 2010). There were also times when teacher residents shut down or became defensive because the conversation forced them to reconsider their original beliefs. Some teacher residents resisted participating in critically reflexive practices (Johnson, 2001; Zeichner, 1990). Some teacher residents felt uncomfortable and avoided some of the seminar discussions, but eventually expressed appreciation at having the opportunity to talk about what made them uncomfortable. In the reflection below, Nicole shifted her thinking as a result of discussing inclusive education and learning how to implement inclusive practices:

The whole idea of inclusive learning was a bit of a shift for me, in that - not that I didn't think everybody deserved the same sort of instruction, and the same sort of opportunity to learn in the same way - but that maybe it wouldn't work for everybody. Going to a lot of the conferences that we've been to, and hearing other people and how they've implemented it, it changes your mind. It makes me say, yeah that really could work and there's ways to make it better for everybody, not just good for one group of people at the expense of another. (Nicole written reflection, fall 2010)

What did we learn? Cochran-Smith, Metiscue, and Shakman (2009) remind us that teaching for social justice and inclusive education requires that teachers assume responsibility for ensuring access, participation in learning, and opportunities for learn. Through opportunities to engage in critically reflexive practices, UITE teacher residents began shifting to a more critical lens. Some of the teacher residents recognized that political nature of teaching required them to assume roles of activists and advocates. In doing so, the teacher residents began to attend to

inequities in their own practices and question the structures that constrained their curriculum

(Cochran-Smith, Metiscue, & Shakman, 2009). The work was sustained and expanded through

the communities of practice at each school that began to widen from the teacher residents to their

clinical teachers to the school administrators. The next section illustrates the impact of the work

on critical reflective practice

Whose learning?

Over time, the collaborative vision of the university and school leadership intended to

rebalance the connections between the lives of the students and families and the school curricula.

Doing so, comprised one of the great struggles of the program. As UITE unrolled, the site

coordinators and professors became uneasy. The district and the schools that were part of UITE

had not met the state's bar for school performance. The teacher education faculty worried that

their teacher residents were superficially embracing the importance of getting to know their

students and involving families. They felt as if their teacher residents continued to blame on

students and families for poor performance on standardized measures of learning. While the

UITE program stressed examining the importance of culture in shaping learning and how

students'cultures can be an asset in the classroom, teacher residents and their clinical teachers

struggled to deliver the district curriculum. This struggle meant that teachers questioned how to

make meaningful connections between the curriculum and the lives of their students and their

families. Yet, the design of the teacher education experience pushed them to find ways to

embody the curriculum in the lives of their students.

Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) use the term funds of knowledge to depict the

multiple layers or ways of knowing that students bring into the classroom. These funds of

knowledge are "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and

skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" that extend beyond the

students communities and into the classroom (Gonzalez et al., 2005, pp. 73-74). These rich,

multi-layered ways of knowing that students accumulate from their communities can be used as

an innovative resource in the classroom.

Funds of knowledge provided a stark counterpoint to the structures of classroom in the

three professional learning schools. While teachers may act as if their work as teachers is unique,

the families and communities whose children attended the UITE schools understood that many

individuals inside and outside school taught children. Expertise can be demonstrated in informal

settings whose social capital is fostered under the tutelage of inter-generational members of the

community. Students in our schools routinely engaged in both informal and formal learning

opportunities within their neighborhoods and at school. However, the teacher residents struggled

to appreciate the kind of learning opportunities that children had and with how to incorporate

students' knowledge to access different kinds of knowing in the classroom.

Learning Matters. Informal learning opportunities that emphasize non-academic

learning, while valued in the students' communities, were absent from the discourse of teacher

residents as in this comment from Norma:

> I think that in a lot of cases that I am the chance that they are going to have that impact. I
>
> hope that I can encourage them or spark an interest in something and help them feel
>
> successful. They know that they don't have really the examples. Not all of them but
>
> maybe some of them don't have those examples at home, what they could be, what they
>
> could reach and the potential they do have because maybe some of their parents didn't
>
> have the opportunity to get the education or they don't know what to do or take the
>
> opportunity. I do feel as though I'm making a difference. (Norma interview, fall 2010)

Norma's comment suggested that she and the school were the vessels of knowledge, while home, communities and families offered little in the way of rich, meaningful experiences. The notion that other forms of being in the world, that didn't rely on formalized sets of knowledge, were not understood or conceptualized. Many of the students in Norma's school lived in homes where the lavanderia, the washroom, was outside and washing clothes there took a skill set that Norma may not have had. How to bleach the whites in the sun, and use found items as washboards, these skills did not count in the world of education. Yet these practices, that were so labor intensive, created opportunities for children to apprentice with their parents and elders, tell story together, and develop an appreciation for language and interaction that was rarely achieved in Norma's classroom. It was a world that Norma had no access to. Yet, she wrote about the importance of the experiences that her students brought into the classroom. We wondered if her own uncritical acceptance of the dominant culture made it difficult for her to consider alternative perspectives and what we might do to trouble those notions to unstick her thinking. While we understand the demands of the commercial and post-industrial worlds that dominate the airways and online information worlds, the importance of being able to move meaningfully back and forth across these different constellations helps educators to create the opportunities for making meaning and acquiring new tool sets.

Cultural mismatches between teachers and students can be problematic for both students and teachers as they attempt to build a classroom culture based on mutual understanding of acceptance. The exchange of reciprocity, according to Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg (1988), is an attempt for students and teachers to establish a social relationship on an enduring basis. For a relationship to become enduring, there needs to be an element of trust between

student and teacher. This can be a tricky proposition for teachers to build trust with students

when they do not recognize students' informal learning experiences at home and in the

communities as representing social capital. Our teacher residents were not sure how to use

students' rich cultural experiences as resources in their curriculum to extend and expand

learning:

> I'll give examples, cultural examples, something that I know them, from their
>
> community, from their culture. A food, a word. I notice like, okay, they understand it and
>
> also I think that by pulling that in, I'm showing that they're important, that they're
>
> important, that where they come from is important. I do that as much as possible.
>
> (Beatriz's entry interview, fall 2010)

While we took a sociocultural stance in the design and development of teacher learning,

notions that undergird sociocultural views of learning were unfamiliar to our teacher residents

and site faculty (Gutierrez & Vossoughi, 2009). As a result, the curriculum was designed to co-

construct both what they understood about learning and culture from readings, discussion,

observation, and reflection as well as their own histories and experiences. This meant that

changes in their participation and leadership for their students' learning was uneven and at times,

contradictory. Even after the focus on personal identity and cultural histories in the first semester

developed through personal narratives and student histories, teacher residents talked about

culture as if it were something that people had rather than a fluid, socially constructed dynamic

that consisted of historical as well as contemporaneous transactions, symbols, and codes (Hall,

2003). Kevin's comment below exemplifies the conundrums we faced in re-mediating how

teacher residents and teachers approached families' contributions:

I might not have asked the families what was going on. I might've just assumed, 'Oh,

they're not helping them at home or whatever.' Now, I really, really call; I write notes

and I get the principal involved in some cases. I try to kinda understand and see what's

going on at home because I know that sometimes what's going on at home really affects

their cultures. (Kevin's video interview, spring 2011)

On the one hand, Kevin's appreciation for how learning in school is shaped through

experiences, tensions, and opportunities elsewhere demonstrates his shifting understanding, the

notion at the end of this quote suggests that his view of culture remains static. No where was this

tension more apparent than in the ways in which teacher residents viewed student behavior.

The Trouble with Behavior

The teacher residents not only struggled with student behavior, they found it troubling.

Student behaviors were often interpreted as being disruptive or inappropriate, rather than

culturally different. As teachers named and sorted behavior, they participated in constructing

narratives that children internalized about themselves (Hall, 2003). Teacher residents seemed to

view behavior through narrow lenses, unconscious of the deep connections that bind behavior

and culture. Here, we explore these relationships and connect them to the ways in which teacher

residents seemed to conceptualize and respond to the behaviors they encountered in the

classroom. We faced twin dilemmas: (a) teacher residents did not understand the culture-laden

nature of behavior, and (b) the schools' focus on instructionism (Sawyer, 2006) heavily

influenced teacher residents with its emphasis on *teaching* rather than *learning*.

Culture-laden behaviors. While behavior is culture-laden, our teacher residents

seemed to think that behaviors were universal; one representation had one correct

interpretation. The nuanced view that people use behavior as a means of communication; "it

is through the flow of behavior—or, more precisely, social action—that cultural forms find

articulation" (Geertz, 1973, p. 17), seemed unavailable to them as they recounted student

interactions. In the following excerpt a teacher resident offered a window into her

understanding of behavior:

> I think that they know that because when I said I was gonna do it, I do it, so they know
>
> what to expect and they know – and what I say to them is, "You know how to behave.
>
> You know what's expected of you," which they do. (Tina interview, spring 2011)
>
> This teacher' comment represented a reoccurring theme in the data: behavior is a

dichotomous variable. The teacher's role is to categorize it as either right and wrong, to

understand it as having singular meaning and interpretation. This was true, even when the

teacher residents became familiar with the functional analysis of behavior which they used when

behavioral patterns in a given student became problematic over time. Yet, in the quote, Tina's

working hunch is that once the teacher has set a rule, the expectation is that students are able to

perform it as needed, regardless of the context, immediate history, and the length of time

between rule setting and rule breaking. This assumption may be a result of inexperience with

teaching and supporting behavioral repetoires. It does, however, point to one of many plausible

explanations for the struggles of novice teachers around behavior.

Although behavioral representations and interpretations can be concerning because of the

danger of miscommunication and misinterpretation, more troubling are the ways in which power

is accrued and dispersed through judgments and interpretations (Mehan, 1993).   Tina's

comment to the students, "you know how to behave" is concerning since she seemed unaware

that knowing how to perform according to the teacher's norms may have very different

implications for students. Students who do not follow their teachers' rules may be juggling a

number of risks that may not be apparent to the teacher. Failure to follow rules has consequences

for the student/teacher relationship but may have other consequences for peer and home-school

relationships. All of these consequences are played out simultaneously and risks are measured by

the students as well as their teachers. Without deep understanding of what behavior may mean,

teachers may resort to the use of power plays to maintain control without developing strong

relationships and understanding with their students.

Behavior is the *being* part of human; what we do and how we represent ourselves as

humans. According to Mehan, being is represented in subjective ways (1993). We do know that

being, or behavior, is culture-laden; shaped by cultural practices (Rogoff, 2003). Different

behaviors can have similar meanings and/or the same behavior can have different meanings. For

example, a wink, a whistle, and a smile can all represent flirtation, or different behaviors having

the same meaning. That wink, however, a single action, can also have different meanings

(Ferguson, 2003); flirtation, eye irritation, or a simple, "Nice to see you." Humans use behavior

to represent meaning; however different cultural or lived experiences inform how others interpret

behaviors. Behaviors are cultural practices, as are their meanings and interpretations. When

representations impose "correct" ways of being, power and privilege enter the conversation.

Critical interrogations require us to question whose behavior is socially viewed as the "correct"

or "idealized" way of being. Our teacher residents showed us how vital it was to explore identity

and culture in the context of their interpretations of behavior.

Many of the teacher residents interpreted behavior narrowly. This excerpt is a good

example:

Yeah. (Laughter) Jonathan, he doesn't like to talk. He doesn't really, he can't really

express himself or he's maybe too shy to talk. I pick on him just because I—most of the

time I know he's following along. I can see that he's following along. Just so that he

knows that I'm monitoring him too and that I'm not just picking on everyone else.

(Tamara interview, fall 2010)

The teacher interpreted Jonathan's silence to represent shyness. It was only through

prompts that she began to expand her ideas about Jonathan might be representing through his

silence? Her response repertoire was stretched when she began to explore how indignation,

anger, mockery, and or respect could be equally viable explanations. Understanding that

behavior is a cultural representation helped the teacher residents begin to trouble how they

understood and responded to their students' behaviors. Many behaviors that were described

negatively focused on representations and interpretations of manners. In the following example

the teacher assumed the expert role in determining what counted as appropriate manners:

Whenever it happens. "I need a drink" Okay. How can you ask me the right way for a

drink? You don't just tell me, "I need a drink." Whenever the teachful moment happens,

kind of use it—Bathroom. "Can I go to the bathroom?" Can you ask me a different way?

Just little things. Now they've evolved. They all know. I don't even have to say anything.

If they don't ask me the right way, I can just look at them and they know, "Oh, I need to

say it this way." (Nancy interview, spring 2010)

In the preceding quote, not only was student behavior interpreted through cultural bias,

but the teacher took it upon herself to fix what she perceived as incorrect behaviors by teaching

what she believed were correct ways of displaying manners. She used a look to represent *say it*

correctly, however while a certain look may be understood by many students, some will likely

interpret it with meanings different from the teacher's intention. The trouble with behavior

begins with how it is represented and how it is interpreted. Although representation and

interpretation seem like a one-to-one relationship, they are complex not only because they are culture-laden but also because they are power-laden.

A not so troubling lens. When behavior is understood to be culture free - one representation and one interpretation - we foster inequity toward different, cultural ways of being. Culture needs to be considered in order to understand both that behavioral representations have different meanings and interpretations and that schools are actively reinforcing their own cultures on students. Equitable learning spaces imbue cultures of learning rather than cultures of instructionism, which sometimes requires a difficult shift in the way we think about behavior. A shift toward a culture of learning would require teachers to trouble their own behaviors, as influenced by school cultures, so that students could engage in learning behaviors. Therefore, students could behave, or be, and through a lens of cultural understanding their behavior may be interpreted as not so troubling.

What We Learned and Want to Learn

The design of our program and its intents encountered a variety of realities during implementation. Here we focused on some of our struggles around deeply re-mediating how teacher residents experienced some of the affordances that we intentionally built into the program and how their lived experiences and those of their students conspired in a variety of ways to create new opportunities for learning. We learned that the power of designing learning spaces requires obsessive attention to collaboration with the clinical faculty in classrooms and the school leaders to create a discourse about the development of the program. Living in the day to day demands of school environments affords little time for the deep reflection that allows people to act and resolve their actions with what research shows may be better. Every day, the constraints of pragmatic decision making afford little space for exploration and personalization.

Yet, these are the spaces in which children and teachers learn together about themselves and each other. Without time for reflexivity built into the design of teacher education and development, classrooms can become places where historically grounded cultural patterns are reified rather than spaces in hybridized cultures are built that draw from from the strengths of both teachers and students.

Thus, understanding *how* to create time for surfacing how classroom interactions are being interpreted and mediating those intepretations with alternative explanations and searching questions, teacher residents do not develop the language for surfacing assumptions, questioning practices, and examining the critical aspects of their interactions with students. When teachers daily experiences were interrogated skillfully, they began to search for alternative explanations, check their own assumptions, and build the language for deep reflection. Initial discussion and interpretation of a classroom lesson would surface questions. A later conversation in which those questions were explored provided the space to disengage emotionally and yet keep a clear outline of the interaction fresh. Persistent questioning by a mediator, connections to readings and previous interactions offered anchors for reassessing and reconsidering what students engaged and learned. It was also apparent that site coordinators and site professors had to build their own skills in asking probing questions that supported the teacher residents in questioning their own practices. We needed mediators for the mediators. Future analyses of our data will permit us to look more closely at learning over time and how individual teacher residents responded to a program that encouraged them to examine and re-examine their responsivity in the classroom as well as the ways in which they learned to design and mediate their students learning.

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Table 1

Partner School Demographics

	Coppermine Elementary	Ocotillo Elementary	Zuni Elementary
Total # Students	751	352	853
% American Indian	22	3	3
% Asian/Pacific Islander	1	3	2
% Black	9	12	17
% Latino	60	28	74
% White	8	54	4
% English Language Learners	46	8	59
Free and Reduced Lunch	84	42	89
% Students on IEPs	11	15	7