Collaborating with Urban Youth to Address Gaps in Teacher Education

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Introduction

Research shows that many of the predominantly White and middle-class teachers are unprepared to teach an urban public school population increasingly comprised of low-income children of color. Lack of cultural competencies, low expectations of and lack of caring for students, and racial/ethnic, linguistic, and class biases are all cited as barriers to the success of teachers in urban schools (Bollin, 2007; Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Howard & Milner, 2014; Rodríguez, 2012; Williams, 2013), and as this and other studies suggest, these barriers are not limited to White teachers (Conchas, 2001; Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010; Whitney, 2009). Thus, teacher education programs have been charged with helping pre-service teachers to develop the competencies they need to effectively teach, particularly, low-income children from urban communities—a difficult task for which many teacher education programs have neither adequate commitment nor expertise (Brown, Clark, & Bridges, 2012; Gorski, 2012; Paulson & Marchant, 2012; Raible & Irizarry, 2010).

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At the crux of the problem is the fact that many pre-service teachers have significant gaps in the critical knowledge they need to connect pedagogically and personally with children from backgrounds different from their own. These knowledge deficits derive from social structures, practices, and beliefs that reinforce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic privilege, stratification, and isolation, which impedes the development of valuable cultural, social, and linguistic capital (Orfield & Lee, 2005; Ryabov & Van Hook, 2007). These gaps in knowledge and experience inhibit many White and middle-class pre-service teachers' ability to engage in the critical examinations of schooling which are essential to providing quality education for low-income children of color.

Adding to these difficulties is the relative isolation of teacher education programs from the urban communities that many of their pre-service teachers will one day serve. This disconnection profoundly impedes understandings—among both university faculty and students—of the significance of the social, economic, and political contexts that profoundly impact what happens in urban schools. Rather than developing such complex and vital understandings, many teacher education programs focus almost exclusively on technical skill-building (i.e., lesson planning, instructional methods, and behavioral management) (Bartolomé, 2002; Gorski, 2012; Rodríguez, 2013). As such, they often fail to adequately address significant gaps between the skills, knowledge, and experiences that White and middle-class teachers bring to teacher preparation programs and what is actually required to successfully serve low-income youth and youth of color. The result is that many new teachers, as low-income students in urban school are often described, are "not ready to learn" (Jerretti & Bub, 2016, p. 16) what they need to be successful in today's classrooms.

In this article we highlight two initiatives that sought to address these gaps in pre-service teachers' knowledge through participatory action research (PAR) with urban youth. Specifically, we examine how, within these projects, negative perceptions about low-income Black and Latino youth among some pre-service teachers were revealed through their direct engagement with these young people and how this helped us, as teacher educators, to better understand and address our students' knowledge gaps. Included are recommendations for further implementing the direct involvement of urban youth as partners in teacher education to address some ways in which pre-service teachers are often unprepared for success in urban schools.

Study Background

The present study draws from and integrates data from two PAR research projects conducted with high school students, as described below.

Action Research into School Exclusion (ARISE)

The purpose of ARISE, a two-year participatory action research (PAR) study,

was to better understand and to improve the schooling experiences of adolescents excluded from mainstream public schools for disciplinary reasons. The research team was led by the first author and included 12 Black and Latina/o 11th and 12th-graders attending an urban, special education alternative school in the Mid-Atlantic and two doctoral, graduate assistants (GAs). Data were collected primarily through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and the youth researchers were trained in qualitative study design and data collection and analysis. The research team analyzed documents related to school disciplinary action at the local and national levels to contextualize the study. They interviewed 30 students in grades 9-12 and six teachers at the school for 15-20 minutes on topics related to school exclusion and school discipline and conducted observations of interviewees in classroom settings. A major finding of the study was that caring and supportive social and academic relationships between students and teachers are crucial to preventing behavioral and disciplinary troubles.

The ARISE research team presented study findings in a Social Foundations of Education course at a university in the Mid-Atlantic. The 31 pre-service teachers in attendance were college juniors who had not yet done their in-service training. There were 25 Whites, two Asians, three Blacks, and one Latina. According to the course instructor, few had ever had meaningful interactions with Black or Latina/o youth. The youth researchers focused on causes of conflict between teachers and students and shared their research findings and personal reflections related to various topics, including, racism, language bias, and heterosexism. The presentation concluded with dialogue on the topics, facilitated by the youth researchers.

Promoting Our Will through Education and Research (POWER)

POWER was a summer long, PAR study that examined critical issues facing urban schools and students in the U.S. The research team was led by the second author and included 19 Black and Latina/o 10th-graders attending an urban public high school in the Southeast that had low standardized test scores and high rates of dropout, violence, and absenteeism. Data for this study were collected primarily through interviews, observations, and document analyses. The youth researchers were exposed to educational texts (e.g., Lisa Delpit's *Culture of Power*) and trained in qualitative data methods and analysis with a particular focus on grounded theory. They were also taught about the various options for the dissemination of research findings. The youth researchers interviewed 20 other young people involved in the same summer research program and found that expectations, favoritism, and support were related teachers' race and ability to connect with youth culture.

The POWER research team also presented study findings in a Social Foundations of Education course at a university in the Southeast. The 43 pre-service teachers in attendance were largely middle-class college juniors and seniors who had conducted several observations in K-12 schools but had not yet completed their

teaching practicum. Five were White (non-Latina/o) and the others were U.S.-born Latina/os, bilingual in both English and Spanish. The youth researchers presented findings on low expectations, discrimination and favoritism by teachers, and help from teachers, particularly as these issues related to school dropout. The presentation concluded with recommendations to the school and school board and segued into a dialogue between the youth researchers and pre-service teachers.

Conceptual Context

Methodological Context

ARISE and POWER reflected PAR principles and Freireian concepts of liberatory education (Shor, 1992). That is, that education should equip people with both the imperative and the means to liberate themselves and others from social oppression. This requires developing a "critical consciousness" (Freire, 1973) through which one can analyze social processes, particularly those which result in injustice and inequality. In PAR, described as "systematic, empirical research in collaboration with representatives of the population under investigation, with the goal of action or intervention into the issues or problems being studied," (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009, p. 1), local knowledge is essential to understanding and addressing social problems (Córdova, 2004; Gaventa, 1993). Thus, local informants are not merely study "subjects" but actively engage in all stages of the research process including "action" or intervention into the problem(s) under study. PAR methodology draws on the work of critical theorists who stress the importance of socially marginalized peoples interrogating and intervening into the conditions of their own marginalization.

Consistent with PAR methodology, the youth researchers shaped the specific research foci of the ARISE and POWER projects, drawing on research literature and their own and their peers' schooling experiences. The youth engaged in study design, data collection and analysis, and the representation and use of study findings. They were trained in empirical research methods and their learning was guided and supported throughout the projects, consistent with PAR's pedagogical principles (Miskovic & Hoop, 2006; Rodríguez, 2014; Rodriguez & Brown, 2009). The research presentations discussed in this paper were part of the "action" component of the projects, aimed at educating new teachers about the schooling conditions of low-income youth and the role of teachers in creating and improving those conditions.

Pedagogical Context

Drawing on Paulo Friere's notions of critical consciousness and liberatory education, three principles guided the research presentations—education as: (1) "critical," (2) "dialogic," and (3) "activist" (Shor, 1992, p. 33-34). Critical thought and action give one the "capacity to make choices and to transform… reality"

(Freire, 1973, p. 4). We believe the dearth of urban youths' perspectives and expertise in educational research impedes authentic understandings of the conditions that limit their potential. ARISE and POWER directly addressed this by engaging youth in self-reflection and social analyses that fostered critical awareness about and interventions into conditions that impede student success. Further, the research presentations helped pre-service teachers to better understand their own capacity for transforming conditions that may limit their own effectiveness as teachers and their students' opportunities for success.

Freire (1970) describes dialogue as "the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed" (p. 88-89). In the projects, which sought to transform the worlds of both educational research and practice, dialogue was used to promote critical thought and action among all the constituents. Thus, fostering dialogue between and among university faculty, academic researchers, youth, and pre-service teachers, was essential.

Both liberatory education and PAR seek to produce knowledge that can be directly applied to the issues and contexts under investigation. This was exemplified through the presentations in which the researchers applied study findings to the preparation of teachers. In turn, the pre-services teachers co-created knowledge through dialogue with the researchers which they could apply to their classroom practice. The presentations and dialogues transformed the classrooms into "activist" spaces, aimed at transforming the consciousness of all participants. As such, liberatory classroom practices were modeled for pre-service teachers and preconceived notions that new teachers and youth held about each other were identified and challenged. We found using dialogical and problem-posing pedagogy with urban youth and pre-service educators to be extremely effective in actively engaging and repositioning all stakeholders in the learning process, redefining the nature of urban teacher development, and preparing teacher educators for the complexities associated with teaching in urban communities.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this article were collected in 2007, through the two research presentations described. Both presentations were videotaped and each research team engaged in a debriefing of their presentation. Debriefing sessions were audio-taped and field notes were taken during each presentation and written up shortly thereafter. Additionally, each pre-service teacher wrote a reflection on the presentation they attended. Video and audio tapes were reviewed and transcribed, and the transcripts were combined with the type-written reflections and the debriefing field notes from both presentations. This is the primary data set upon which this article draws.

As mentioned, the ARISE and POWER projects and presentations had common goals and methodological and pedagogical strategies and were conducted in similar contexts. This provided the rationale for combining the data from both projects, for

analysis. The data were coded primarily to capture pre-service teachers' interactions with and responses to the youth researchers. As we were specifically interested in what new knowledge the youth researchers could bring to the pre-service teachers, we focused on incongruities in understanding between the two groups. Codes were combined conceptually by grouping them into categories based on patterns that emerged among them. Thereafter, theoretical comparisons were made by examining the "properties" (the characteristics that define each category) and "dimensions" (the variation of characteristics within each category) of each category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101), which informed how we grouped categories under three the broader themes—*discrediting*, *discounting*, and *disbelieving*—explored in this article.

Findings

Across the two presentations, we found striking similarities in how some pre-service teachers attempted to diminish the significance of what the youth researchers could contribute to their learning. They did this through attempts to discredit the authority of the youth, discount their research findings, interpretations, and ultimately, disbelieve their experiences. While there were many positive responses to both research presentations, the data reveal the skepticism with which pre-service teachers can regard the intellectual capacities low-income K-12 students of color, which has significant implications for teacher education. Following, we detail examples of discrediting, discounting, and disbelieving which arose in the research presentations.

Discrediting: You Are Not Appropriate

One of the ways that some pre-service teachers tried to discredit the youth researchers was by focusing on perceived shortcomings in how the presentations were delivered, focusing on form rather than content. For example, Carrie, a White female pre-service teacher, began her reflection on the ARISE presentation by writing,

> While I was watching the presentation I could not help but pay attention to the boy with the attention problem [Mike]. He slouched in his seat, throughout the presentation, had his IPod out, and spoke incorrect English. None of the teachers or mentors present that day with the students mentioned anything to him.

To Carrie, Mike's behavior was clearly inappropriate and distracting. The fact that she opened her paper with the above quote suggests that Mike's behavior, and not his expertise, was foremost in Carrie's mind.

Indeed, for some of the presentation, Mike had an IPod earbud in one of his ears. In Mike's talk on "active students," he explained that he had "ADHD" and difficulties sitting still and staying focused for long periods of time. He also presented a video clip of another student who spoke of similar difficulties and described how listening to music, at a low volume, helped him to concentrate. Mike talked about using this strategy to keep himself focused. Although Carrie recognized Mike's

attention problem, she diminished or ignored how this was connected to his IPod use, in the context of the ninety-minute presentation. Further, regarding Carrie's comment about Mike's "incorrect English," the transcripts revealed only three instances of non-standard English grammar (e.g., "what they talking about"), scattered among dozens of sentences Mike had spoken "correctly." Carrie's preoccupation with these three utterances suggests negative perceptions of Mike's communicative style which was indicative of the inner-city community in which he lived. It also raises questions about the degree to which she was engaged with the content of what Mike was saying.

What Carrie appeared to hear from Mike was distractingly "incorrect" rather than an instructive and well-articulated talk on working with active students. What she saw was unprofessional and inappropriate behavior, rather than skill and expertise. Further, her suggestion that an adult should have drawn attention to what was "wrong" about Mike in the midst of the presentation lacked basic regard for him as a human being. Is pointing out a few missing verbs worth putting a young person's self-confidence at risk? Absolutely not. And we believe that every teacher must have at least this very fundamental kind of human empathy and understanding. What Mike offered was an opportunity to better understand, to build relationships with, and to teach young people. Due to her perceptions of Mike, it is unlikely that Carrie was able to fully recognize or learn from Mike and his valuable contribution to the presentation.

During the POWER presentation, a tense discussion occurred when the youth researchers presented their analyses of power in schools and how teachers flaunt and misuse their power over students. To exemplify this, they explained how, on more than one occasion, all of them had heard from a teacher, "I got my education, so get yours" or "I get paid no matter what." The following exchange ensued:

Megan (pre-service teacher): How does this make you feel [when teachers say that]?

Lynda (youth researcher): It makes you not want to learn.

Bibi (youth researcher): It makes you want to skip that teacher's class.

Lynda (youth researcher): It makes you want to throw a dang, dong, desk at the teacher [this evokes several comments from the audience].

Suzie (pre-service teacher): That is why I don't want to teach in a school like yours.

Kelly (youth researcher): Cause she (Suzie) just said that is why she doesn't want to teach in certain schools. But the reason why we want to throw a chair at you guys is because you guys provoke us. You make us want to do that. You walk into a classroom and say that you are getting paid. That frustrates me. That makes me mad.

Suzie: Yeah, but even if you are mad, you shouldn't throw things.

Bibi (youth researcher): Do you really think we are going to throw something at you?

Lynda (youth researcher): They're not really going to do it.

The youth researchers used the image of throwing a desk to convey the depth and seriousness of the anger and frustration students feel when teachers make comments like, "I get paid no matter what"—comments that pose students' learning as inconsequential and flaunt the fact that students' have little institutional power to hold teachers accountable. The youth did not suggest that throwing a desk in response to such a comment was justifiable or even probable.

Suzie and other pre-service teachers clearly saw the researchers' use of this image as an inappropriate way to convey their point and were fixated on the perceived threat that low-income students of color pose to teachers. In doing so, they repositioned urban students as the problem and their teachers as the victims, discrediting the researchers' analyses of power in schools. As a result, they were unable to really "hear" and critically analyze how teachers can misuse their relative power over students.

The discrediting of the youth researchers in POWER project was further exemplified by Margarita, a middle class Latina pre-service teacher, who wrote,

> I understand they are sick and tired of living inequity everyday of their lives but they need to be a little wiser and understand that their reactions have great influence. For example, when they were asked if they knew what they were getting themselves into, they took it as an offense and told a teacher-to-be that if she was going to be a stuck up teacher, her students will hate her. They could have responded differently. I believe their voice would be heard if they were first given a communications class so that they learn to take criticism well, not personally. I believe these kids have potential to make a difference.

While Margarita was willing to recognize that the researchers faced discrimination, she believed that they must learn more "proper" ways to respond and communication in order to be heard. The "culture of power" (Delpit, 1994) in schools is, in part, defined by differently valued modes of communication and Margarita did not seem to see her role in challenging this hierarchy of power. In fact, she insinuated that if students do not communicate in a manner that meets her expectations, which is likely consistent with the expectations of the school system, then they are not worth listening to. If pre-service teachers like Margarita do not understand how the "culture of power" operates to marginalize low-income youth of color, they will likely be unable to effectively hear, communicate with and, ultimately, teach these students.

Discounting: Are You Sure about That?

One tactic that some pre-service teachers used to diminish the significance of the youth researchers' work was to focus on what they believed to be inadequacies in their analyses and interpretations. Specifically, some pre-service teachers pointed out what they saw as lack of knowledge and weaknesses in logic. This was evident during a discussion in the ARISE presentation when Christina, a second generation Salvadoran 11th-grader, discussed being removed from class for speaking her home language, Spanish. She said,

> [The teacher] didn't like the way I talked so she kicked me out a couple of times. I kept getting in trouble because I kept speaking in Spanish. Right now, I speak more English but at the same time you want to keep learning your own language so that you won't lose what you learned. And that's my culture. It's what I do. It's something that I can't stop from talking. Teachers don't understand the way the students are with their language. In the end, don't disrespect a student just because they're speaking their own language.

Christina's main assertion was that students should be allowed to speak their home language in the classroom. She explained that when this is forbidden or punished, students experience it as "disrespect." Further, she highlighted the vital connection between her home language and her culture, which was reiterated by José Angel, another youth researcher, who also described being removed from class for speaking Spanish.

June, an Asian American pre-service teacher, made a concerted effort to discount Christina's analyses of language bias. Following is her response to Christina during the presentation:

> Like if we all started speaking our own language, saying what we wanted, how is the teacher going to teach anything or control it? Kicking students out is a little bit extreme of a strategy but what is the teacher supposed to do in this situation? If I'm giving a lesson and, you know, and everybody needs to know what's being taught, like, speaking another language is just a very big distraction.

June had not yet had in-service training and had no K-12 teaching experience whereas Christina was engaged daily in processes of teaching and learning in K-12 classrooms. However, June assumed she knew more than Christina about the role of home languages in the classroom and she negated Christina's experience and expertise, suggesting that Christina had inadequate knowledge of the realities of the classroom.

The ARISE presentation offered pre-service teachers a vital opportunity to learn about a pressing educational issue—working with English language learners. June rejected this opportunity. In her response to Christina, she demonstrated neither empathy nor concern with how her own actions, as a teacher, might impact students. These basic social competencies are fundamental to building the caring and trusting relationships needed to work effectively with, particularly, low-income youth. June's inability and unwillingness to learn from the youth researchers was evident in her reflection paper, in which she wrote,

> I feel like Christina did not want to be there and that the teacher made her shut down in school because she was not able to speak her language. The problem is that a student is disrupting the class lesson. I would not allow any student to speak their language when others are trying to learn because it's a huge distraction.

In her paper, June personally attacked Christina. She characterized Christina as disinterested and wrote, "…she completely shied away from talking," when, in

fact, Christina spoke a great deal during the presentation. In this way, she minimized the importance of Christina's contribution. Furthermore, she discounted the significance of students' (non-English) home languages by characterizing them as distracting and disruptive. She showed no interest in or understanding of how it might make a student feel to have their home language depicted as antithetical to learning. It was further apparent that June had discounted most or all of what the youth researchers presented when she wrote,

> …all I kept hearing was respect, respect, respect. What about respecting teachers first? The students seemed very idealistic in what they want out of their teachers. How long do they expect teachers to spend at school and with their students, if many have to work second jobs as SAT prep teachers or coaches just to make ends meet? They, as students, did not seem to understand the politics of education that exist today. How and why is it expected for teachers to know every little detail about every single student?

As stated by Bruce, another ARISE youth researcher, the essential point across all of the topics presented was not that teachers should know everything about every student but that, "It's all about respect." The youth researchers appealed for respect for students' knowledge, experiences, feelings, and cultural practices, as human beings. June discounted this appeal, posing it as naïve and based on inadequate knowledge, and she suggested that the difficulties teachers face exempt from them the responsibility of respecting students.

When students feel disrespected, they often disengage from academic processes. In disregarding their knowledge, teachers miss opportunities to connect with students, pedagogically and personally. Because June discounted the youth researchers' expertise, she was unable to gain the important knowledge they had to offer. Pre-service teachers like June, who hold young people and their knowledge in such low regard, are clearly unprepared to work effectively with all students.

Pre-service teachers also discounted study findings during the POWER presentation. During the discussion, a Latina pre-service teacher asked the panelists for advice about what teachers could do to discourage students from skipping class. Sabrina, a Black female youth researcher, responded, "…just help out in anyway. If I need help, just help me out, explain the work, and do fun things in the class, like hands on activities." In some instances, students spoke about teachers' lack of help as being racially motivated. For example, some Black students reported examples of discrimination by Latina/o teachers and favoritism among Black teachers (e.g., for athletes). April, a middle-class White pre-service teacher responded by saying, "But in your interviews, you guys, every person said that their teachers helped them enough. So you guys are contradicting yourself right there."

Indeed, as shown in the presentation of data, many of the interviewees mentioned some degree of help from teachers. What the data showed and what the youth researchers were trying to convey was that students, as a group and as individuals, can have varied and inconsistent experiences with teachers and that virtually all of

the students interviewed had experienced unhelpful teachers. However, April focused on what she perceived to be a "flaw" in the youth researchers' argument. In doing so, she undermined their assertions by casting doubt on their logic. This provided a rationale for dismissing the researchers' claims about the lack of help from teachers and its connection to the salience of racism and discrimination in students' everyday schooling experiences. Further, while April later noted in her reflection that the youth researchers were "awesome," "outgoing," and "courageous," she also pointed out that they "could have researched students outside of their school, teachers, [and] parents, to make the research better." While she congratulated the researchers, April did not fully validate their work and was not alone in discounting the research.

Maria, a middle-class Latina pre-service teacher also questioned the validity of the research presentation, writing in her reflection, saying,

> I think they could have done more research on their presentations. They could have had more facts about their issue. I also think they did it more or less based on how they feel and their opinions. If they wanted to change something, I feel they should have had more statistics.

In suggesting that the youth researchers' work was more emotional than factual, Maria suggested that their findings lacked legitimate evidence and were, therefore, neither rigorous nor valid. She discounted the researchers' careful documentation of numerous instances of discrimination and favoritism, collected through interviews. Without statistical data, Maria was not willing to fully accept and learn from the research findings. Carrie clearly did not understand that within qualitative social science research, participants' perceptions are essential to understanding their experiences and her comments are indicative of something very worrisome—a future teacher who diminishes the significance of students' feelings and opinions.

Disbelieving: You Must Be Different

The youth researchers in ARISE and POWER engaged in rigorous intellectual work, including analyzing research literature, developing data collection instruments, conducting interviews, analyzing data, and presenting findings. In both presentations, pre-service teachers expressed disbelief that, in general, young people like them—urban, low-income Black and Latina/o (and, in the case of the ARISE team, "special needs") adolescents—were capable of such work and they speculated that the youth researchers must be different from their peers.

As stated earlier, the ARISE research team continually stressed that teachers must treat students with respect. Like June, other pre-service teachers responded to their demands for respect with defensiveness. For example, Steve, a White pre-service teacher said to the youth researchers in the presentation,

> You talk about respect and it's easy to put it on the teacher but it also has to come back to the students. They have to want to learn. They have to be open to showing

> respect to the teacher. From your point of view it's the teachers that don't understand you but from the teacher's point of view it's the kids that don't want to learn. It's the kids that are trouble-makers. It's the kids that are loud and disruptive... So all of you seem intelligent enough and you seem like great students but it's the other kids. Like how can you get the other kids to be really willing to listen to the teacher and to follow their instruction?

The first troubling aspect of this quote is Steve's suggestion that teachers and students have equal responsibility for K-12 classroom relations. Fortunately, this was skillfully addressed by youth researcher, Juan Angel, who pointed out that teachers, as paid adult professionals, must respect and invest in the success of their students regardless of the troubles they may have or may have caused. Steve, however, insinuated that students who are disruptive, loud, resistant and disobedient are not deserving of respect. He proposed that first, students must demonstrate that they are open to and want to learn and they must show respect to the teacher (presumably, as defined by the teacher). This contradicted what the researchers reported—that students want, need, and deserve unconditional, basic human respect.

Steve further suggested that he might be willing to concede respect to the youth researchers because they "seem[ed] intelligent enough" and "seem[ed] like great students" but not to "the other kids" he described. Through this specious compliment to the youth researchers, Steve introduced the idea that these youth, engaged in high-level intellectual work, were fundamentally different from others in their peer group. Thereafter, other pre-service teachers likewise posed the youth researchers as different from their peers, focusing on imagined, troublesome "other kids." For example, two White women asked the youth researchers,

> Do you guys think you can go into some of those public schools and maybe do talks with some of them to help motivate those students?

> Is there anything that you can do to help influence those students, students that might not want to graduate, students in your own school?

Posing the youth researchers as different from their peers allowed pre-service teachers to preserve low expectations of urban, Black, Latina/o and special education students when confronted with clear evidence to the contrary. What some failed to accept was that the ARISE youth researchers *were* those "other kids." As was explained at the outset of the presentation, they had all had significant troubles at school, including multiple suspensions and expulsions. Reinforced throughout the presentation were not differences between the researchers and their peers, but differences in how students are treated by school adults. At no time did any ARISE youth researcher disparage other young people or claim to be exceptional. Rather, they explained their own relative school success as largely attributable to the respect, caring, and support they received from adults in school. This was a vital lesson for the pre-service teachers; how teachers interact with students can determine their success or failure in school. However, in focusing on imagined "problem students"

and avoiding critical examinations of teachers' beliefs and behaviors, some of the pre-service teacher missed the real value of this lesson.

In the POWER presentation, some pre-service teachers likewise imagined the youth researchers as somehow exceptional by questioning the terms of their participation in the project. For example, Heather, a White middle class pre-service teacher asked, "Were the students just randomly selected or did people volunteer, was there some sort of…" The youth researchers explained that they "were selected by the principal," but that they "had to volunteer." Heather followed up by asking, "Did they explain to you what you would do this summer?"

This exchange between Heather and the youth researchers points to the significance of stereotypes and expectations. Heather, a future teacher, seemed doubtful that low-income students of color from a low-performing, troubled high school would volunteer for such a rigorous academic experience. Coincidentally, in recruiting for POWER and ARISE, a significant amount of time was spent describing the work to prospective youth researchers. While Heather may not have had malicious intent, she, like Steve and other pre-service teachers, revealed doubts about the intellectual desires and capacities of this population of students. This reflects the low-expectations of low-income youth and youth of color that have been found to be so prevalent in K-12 public schools and so detrimental to student success.

Discussion

In the ARISE and POWER presentations, some pre-service teachers attempted to undermine the authority of the youth researchers and minimize the significance of their work. By focusing on imagined shortcomings, they diverted the focus away from how teachers are implicated in the legitimate grievances of low-income Black and Latina/o youth. Undue attention to what is "wrong" with these youth, which we see consistently among pre-service teachers, is extremely worrisome, especially given the significance of teachers' care and validation for school success among low-income youth of color (Cooper & Miness, 2014; Dance, 2002; Irizarry & Antrop-González, 2007; Nieto, 1999; Watson, Sealey-Ruiz, & Jackson, 2016). The insecurities of these teachers-to-be, particularly as they were confronted with K-12 students' critiques of teachers, may have intensified negative responses. However, this does not make the responses any less evident of real, underlying, and problematic beliefs and perceptions that must be addressed in the theoretical, pedagogical, and practical aspects of our work as teacher educators.

Interestingly, although the demographics of the two groups of pre-service teachers were notably different, we saw no significant overall differences in how they responded to the youth researchers. Despite the sizeable number of "minority" (Latina/o) bilingual pre-service teachers in the POWER presentation, there appeared to be no less skepticism. We attribute this, in part, to the local cultural context in which White middle-class Latina/os are the dominant social group and

poor and non-White people are socially and politically subordinated. This is an important reminder that the marginalization of low-income students of color cannot be explained simply as racial/ethnic or cultural "mismatches" between teachers and students.

The pre-service teachers who discredited, discounted, and disbelieved the youth researchers and the research they presented came from a variety of social backgrounds. What they had in common was that, whether based on race/ethnicity, culture, class, language, education, and/or age, they all occupied positions of privilege relative to the youth researchers and to low-income Black and Latina/o adolescents, more generally. Privilege, which can shelter one from forms of systemic bias, likely made it difficult for some pre-service teachers to connect with and validate the youths' experiences and analyses of schooling. Further, privilege can give the privileged the sense that "their lives [are] morally neutral, normative, and average" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 1) and, that they are, therefore, they are entitled to denigrate or dismiss "linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self" (Delpit, 1998, p. 25) that are different from their own.

According to Branscombe, Schmitt, and Schiffhauer's (2007) work on White privilege, "if intergroup relations become more just" (p. 204), privileged groups are more likely to "challenge the deservingness of the disadvantaged group" (p. 204) in an attempt to maintain their relative dominance. The ARISE and POWER presentations intentionally disrupted hierarchies of privilege based on racial/ethnic, language, class, and age privilege. Low-income youth of color were repositioned as experts and teachers and pre-service teachers' presumptions were scrutinized and actively challenged by the youth, with the support of university researchers. This shift in power created an uncomfortable disequilibrium among some pre-service teachers and revealed assumptions that may likely have gone undetected in a more traditional teacher education classroom setting. For us, as teacher educators, this provided a unique opportunity to better assess and address gaps in knowledge and understanding among our teacher education students related to the cultures, experiences, and perspectives of the youth they will one day serve. In doing so, we are able to better prepare teachers committed to social justice and educational equity—teacher qualities that are sorely needed in urban public schools.

Recommendations: Addressing the Gaps

The understandings gained through the ARISE and POWER projects reinforce the need to directly connect pre-service teachers with the everyday lived experiences of low-income youth of color. Situating urban students in the university context, as partners in the teacher preparation process, can be a transformative experience for pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and urban youth and has important implications for research, policy, and practice related to teacher preparation.

According to research, teachers who are effective with low-income student

populations exercise critical consciousness. They validate experiences of injustice, recognize inequities inherent in structures of opportunity, question the ideology of meritocracy, acknowledge and respect different perspectives, and commit to justice at the expense of their own privilege (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001; Irizarry & Antrop-González, 2007; Irizarry & Raible, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Rodriguez & Brown, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). At present, traditional state licensure exams for teachers do not account for these vital competencies, which have serious implications for teacher effectiveness. To begin to redress this fundamental shortcoming, in addition to in-service training, teacher preparation programs might require an exit project that directly engages pre-service teachers with students like those they will one day teach. Ideally, this project would be intellectually rigorous and inquiry- and problem-based and compel pre-service teachers to document and reflect upon their own learning processes. Unlike in a traditional classroom setting, success would depend upon the pre-service teacher's ability to collaborate and co-construct knowledge with young people and to validate and draw upon their experiences and expertise. Such an experience would help pre-service teachers scrutinize their privilege and better understand the vital role of meaningful student-adult relationships in students' school success.

In the ARISE and POWER presentations, some pre-service teachers denigrated both the content and the youth researchers themselves. This reflects the normalizing of failure for low-income students of color and the pervasive belief they do not possess "legitimate" knowledge about schooling like that found in textbooks, pre-approved curriculum, and statistical data. When teacher educators legitimize and draw upon low-income students' experiences of and knowledge about schooling, this can send a powerful message to pre-service teachers that these youth are not to be dismissed. Further, direct interaction and dialogue with youth enhances pre-service teacher learning. Rather than developing and theorizing about instructional and pedagogical techniques in the abstract, pre-service teachers have a "live" audience which helps them to better understand how their instructional strategies will play out in real classroom settings. This provides insight into the needs, perspectives, and experiences of their future students, beyond what teacher educators alone can offer.

It is imperative that teacher educators model intellectual engagement with K-12 students (and their families and communities) in ways that do not reduce them to experimental or observational objects. In the presentations described, we, as teacher educators and group facilitators, were vigilant in insuring that the youth researchers were active participants whose intellectual contributions were taken seriously. For the youth researchers, the opportunity to fully participate in a college class and to have a real impact on the preparation of teachers was validating and empowering. As José Angel exclaimed during the ARISE presentation, "We're young kids. We're sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, teaching grown-ups so you can't tell me I don't know anything!" For us, as teacher educators, the student research presentations provided valuable insights into the beliefs and assumptions of pre-

service teachers, how they might be enacted in the classroom, and to what effect on students. This has helped us to more fully understand the nature and depth of the gap between the competencies that many pre-service teachers possess and what they will need to be successful classroom teachers. This enables us to design educational experiences that better address the learning needs of our students and to help them acquire the competencies they will need to be successful teachers, particularly, in urban schools.

Conclusion

When it comes to gaps in knowledge and experiences that impede school success, poor children and children of color are not the only individuals in urban schools who might be characterized as "not ready to learn." Many pre-service teachers, like some we have described and many others we have encountered, are not being adequately prepared to connect pedagogically and interpersonally with all of their students, regardless of background. This significantly diminishes their chances for success as educators, while simultaneously diminishing their students' chances for school success. Whereas lack of preparation among K-12 students has prompted massive school reform, this particular lack of preparedness among teacher education students has generated more rhetoric than action. Capitalizing on the resourcefulness, expertise, and insights of urban youth can help us to train teachers who are better prepared to address the educational and social challenges facing urban schools and communities.

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