Show & Tell

Elementary Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Teaching in High-Poverty Schools

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Introduction

Elizabeth is a White teacher candidate enrolled in a clinical practice experience in a high-poverty elementary school, where she worked with students from racially and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds. Her reflection (see Figure 1) describes what she believes will be a challenge if she were to teach in a high-poverty school.

She shared apprehensions regarding teaching in a high-poverty school based on deficit assumptions regarding race and class and positions herself differently from the students both racially and socioeconomically, questioning her ability to work in such a school. While Elizabeth's assumptions regarding students in high-poverty schools are problematic, her comments and insecurities draw attention to a need for these topics to be addressed in teacher preparation programs.

Moreover, as former educators in high-poverty schools and current teacher educators, we argue that Elizabeth's comments and her insecurities regarding teaching students in high-poverty schools cannot be understood by treating race and social class as separate from one another. In short, Elizabeth's comments highlight the need to consider intersectionality between race and social class (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Milner & Laughter, 2015).

A comprehensive body of literature has focused on White teachers working in high-poverty schools (Emdin, 2016; Ullucci,

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2011) as well as White teachers working with students of color (Brown-Buchanan, 2015; Emdin, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, 2010). However, limited studies have focused on how teacher candidates connect race and social class with respect to teaching in high-poverty schools and what support they need from teacher preparation programs to successfully teach in schools with both students who are living in poverty and students of color.

In this article, we share findings from a study exploring how six elementary teacher candidates who completed clinical experiences in high-poverty elementary schools perceive students who attend these schools (Bertrand, 2017). Using semistructured interviews, visual data using *photovoice*, and group *photovoice* discussion sessions, we examined the following research questions:

How do elementary education teacher candidates perceive students who attend high-poverty schools?

What do teacher candidates believe they will need from their teacher preparation program to feel prepared to teach in high-poverty elementary schools?

Drawing on critical race theory (CRT; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), and specifically the concept of intersectionality, we attempt to disrupt deficit discourses of students living in poverty. Based on our findings, we discuss approaches within teacher education coursework and clinical practice for supporting teacher candidates in feeling prepared to teach in high-poverty schools.

This work is imperative given demographic trends: The number of students from racially diverse backgrounds who live in poverty or attend high-poverty schools persists (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018), while the number of racially diverse teacher candidates enrolling in teacher education programs is declining,

thus contributing to an increasingly White, middle-class teaching workforce (Hodgkinson, 2002).

This is compounded by the fact that in the first 5 years of teaching in high-poverty schools, 40%–50% of the teachers transfer to schools in higher socioeconomic communities or to other professions (Holt & Garcia, 2005). With this in mind, there needs to be

Figure 1

"Handcuffed." A photograph of O-rings on the playground illustrates Elizabeth's (a teacher candidate) belief that students who attend high-poverty schools oftentimes grow up and commit crime.

"Handcuffed"

When I think of teaching in a high-poverty school, I feel like there are a lot of issues in these schools and I doubt whether or not I am prepared to teach in these schools. These schools often have a lot of students who are Black and Hispanic and they have different needs. The students are also poor. This is something that we don't talk about often in class. I chose this picture because it is the O-rings on the playground, but reminds me of handcuffs. I believe that students at these schools aren't allowed to be kids because they have a lot of issues at home. Oftentimes these students grow up and do crime. They need great teachers in these schools, but I do not know if I have what it takes to teach in this kind of school. (Elizabeth)

a focus on preparing teacher candidates to teach in high-poverty schools. In particular, it is important to understand how teacher candidates make sense of students in high-poverty schools to aid in increasing the likelihood of them being effective and retained in these communities.

Theoretical Framework

Elizabeth, the teacher candidate whose comments and *photovoice* we presented in our introduction, draws attention to one of the reasons that teacher candidates may feel unprepared to teach in high-poverty schools: Students who attend these schools often live in poverty, and the majority of these students are students of color.

The connection Elizabeth makes between students' racialized and socioeconomic identification and the likelihood of them moving into lives of crime is highly presumptive and problematic. At the same time making these connections between poverty and race also points to a tacit recognition of intersectionality, a core tenet of critical race theory (CRT). Understanding intersectionality allows us to explore, analyze, and critically address the complexities of race and class and opens up a conceptual frame for addressing teacher candidates' perceptions and challenging deficit views regarding teaching in high-poverty schools.

CRT first developed out of legal scholarship as a response to critical legal studies and civil rights scholarship (Cook & Dixson, 2013). Scholars and activists created this framework as a way to engage in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT recognizes that power structures are based on White privilege and White supremacy, which perpetuate the marginalization of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

In addition, CRT recognizes that racism interacts with other social forces (e.g., classism, homophobia, patriarchy). When Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to the field of education in 1995, they argued that race is undertheorized as a topic in education and proposed that CRT should be used to examine the role of race and racism in education. Since then, many scholars have used CRT to disrupt race and racism in educational theory and practice.

Along with troubling meritocracy and color-blindness, and an emphasis on the value of counternarratives, intersectionality is a core tenet of CRT (Zamudio et al., 2011). Critical race legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) introduced the concept of intersectionality when she described the experiences of Black women having interrelated experiences based on their race, gender, and socioeconomic status. According to May (2015), intersectionality "highlights how lived identities, structural systems, sites of marginalization, forms of power, and modes of resistance intersect" (p. 21).

Similarly, Collins and Bilge (2016) characterized intersectionality as an analytic tool for understanding social inequality:

> People's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. (p. 2)

As such, intersectionality is based on the notion that racism, sexism, and classism, among other concepts, do not function independently of one another but instead create a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of discrimination and prejudice (McCall, 2005). Rather than centering on individualistic ideologies that cast individual people as racist (or not), CRT and the construct of intersectionality reframe issues of inequity as systemic and endemic to social institutions in the United States.

While intersectionality is typically understood with respect to race, class, and gender, some scholars solely focus on the intersectionality of race and class (Milner & Laughter, 2015). Particularly relevant to our study, Milner and Laughter draw from principles of CRT to conceptualize the interconnections of race and poverty in the preparation of teachers. While we acknowledge gender as important, we focus on the interconnections of race and poverty in this study as a way to understand how teacher preparation can better prepare teacher candidates for high-poverty schools.

The data collected from the six teacher candidates focused primarily on race and class in their interviews and *photovoice*; therefore gender was not a focus. The intersectionality of race and class is underresearched in teacher education, and we want this study to provoke thought around this topic.

Review of Relevant Literature

Many teacher candidates have difficulty understanding students who are living in poverty and rely on deficit discourses (Valencia, 2010) and stereotypes (M. M. Bennett, 2008; Gorski, 2012). A popular misconception regarding poverty is that those living in poverty are inferior and need to be understood in order to save them (Payne, 1996). We see this deficit perspective perpetuated in Ruby Payne's deficit-based and pseudoscientific approach, which names a "culture of poverty," and which is widespread in the field of education (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008; Valencia, 2010).

Many teachers and candidates make assumptions that poor students and their families are unmotivated and have a weak work ethic, that they do not value education, and that they are substance abusers (Gorski, 2012). Gorski (2013) stated, "We tend to filter information through our existing belief system" (p. 38).

This means that teacher candidates have ingrained stereotypes, biases, or assumptions that often develop long before they enter teacher preparation programs (S. V. Bennett, 2012). This was confirmed by Kumar and Hamer (2012), who found that approximately 25% of the preservice teachers in their study held stereotypic beliefs about students living in poverty and students of color and expressed discomfort with student diversity.

Where do teacher candidates get these stereotypic beliefs about students living in poverty? Though there are multiple answers to this question, oftentimes teacher candidates' perceptions are based on what they see or hear about students in poverty, as opposed to what they have experienced. In a study conducted with 41 teacher candidates in their junior year of a teacher education program, Hampton, Peng, and Ann (2008) found that the media was a major influence on how teacher candidates perceived high-poverty schools and students living in poverty.

The negative portrayal of high-poverty schools in the news, on television, and in movies "played a dominant role in shaping the subjects' perceptions of high-poverty schools" (Hampton et al., 2008, p. 288). This can cause teacher candidates to hold deficit-based perspectives when thinking about students who attend high-poverty schools.

In addition to the media, teacher candidates' stereotypic beliefs can be based on their lack of knowledge about students who are living in poverty and/or students of color. In fact, in a study that explored preservice teachers' knowledge on issues related to poverty, Mundy and Leko (2015) found that they lacked knowledge about the relationship between poverty, schools,

and students. Mundy and Leko's (2015) study brings attention to the role of teacher preparation when preparing candidates for high-poverty schools.

However, few studies have combined examinations of teacher candidates' perceptions about high-poverty schools and the students who attend them with an exploration of what teacher candidates believe they will need to be prepared to teach in these schools. One exception is Smith, Farnan, Seeger, Wall, and Kiene (2017), who used mixed methods (focus groups and surveys) to examine differences in teacher candidates' perceptions of comfort level, their own biases, and the use of culturally responsive pedagogies after having field experiences in racially diverse high-poverty schools.

Smith et al. found that candidates who had such experiences were more likely to use pedagogies that are responsive to diversity, were more aware of students' cultural and community experiences and backgrounds, and were more aware of differences between "diverse schools" and the kinds of schools that teacher candidates themselves attended. However, their survey and focus group questions focused on cultural and experiential diversity, referencing racial diversity several times, but only referencing poverty or economic diversity once. Indeed, reviews of literature on teacher preparation programs and accreditation standards in the United States highlight a lack of emphasis on poverty (Banks, 2004; Bertrand, 2017; Hughes; 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Efforts to address poverty in teacher preparation are isolated and individual (Cho, Convertino, & Khourey-Bowers, 2015). This could be a result of what Gorski (2008) referred to as the "virtual nonexistence of class concerns in the larger educational discourse—a symptom of an increasingly conservative political climate in and out of schools" (p. 130).

Indeed, in most teacher preparation programs, the more generic word *diversity* is readily used, but rarely is emphasis placed on poverty or social class. This was illustrated in a study conducted by Jennings (2007) of 142 public university elementary and secondary programs in different regions of the United States. Jennings found that most programs that emphasized diversity focused on either race/ethnicity, special needs, language diversity, gender, and/or sexual orientation. Only 1.7% of the elementary programs emphasized economic (social) class, while 45.6% focused on race/ethnicity. While

neither one of these numbers is ideal, these findings illustrate the general lack of emphasis on social class.

Jennings's (2007) data also highlighted the tendency to view these topics separately rather than to consider the intersectionality of race and class. However, Milner and Laughter (2015) criticized the tendency to treat these two factors separately. Milner and Laughter stressed the importance of teacher preparation programs asking difficult questions of students, including "Does poverty manifest for White students in the same way as Black students? How are these emergent manifestations similar or different?" (p. 344). This focus on the intersections of race and poverty provides teacher candidates with a more in-depth understanding of students who attend high-poverty schools and inform their instructional practices (Milner & Laughter, 2015).

For example, a study conducted by Ullucci (2011) used the storytelling tenet of CRT to investigate how White teachers learn about race, class, and diversity in meaningful ways. Ullucci found that teachers' stories about their life experiences help them understand their racial positioning. Ullucci used this finding to highlight how teachers can build a bridge between their lives and the lives of their students.

While Ullucci showed how the identity development of race and class consciousness in White teachers can help both current and prospective teachers relate to students of color and living in poverty, this does not seem to be happening enough in education or teacher education. In fact, many teachers appear uncomfortable when addressing poverty and even more uncomfortable addressing race (Milner & Laughter, 2015).

Brown-Buchanan (2015) found in a study that examined elementary preservice teachers' beliefs about discussing race that preservice teachers found the topic too controversial and would avoid such conversations if possible. This is problematic and highlights the importance of focusing on the intersectionality of both race and class. Teacher preparation programs that do not provide teacher candidates with opportunities to interrogate poverty and race can leave teacher candidates unprepared to teach (Milner & Laughter, 2015).

The present study extends the argument that Milner and Laughter (2015) made regarding the reform of curriculum in teacher education to emphasize the intersectionality of race and poverty. While we have found some literature that has

separately focused on teacher candidates' perceptions of students living in poverty (Gorski, 2012, 2013; Smith, Farnan, Seeger, Wall, & Kiene, 2017; Ullucci, 2011) and their perceptions of students of color (Brown-Buchanan, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Warren, 2018), we have not found literature that has focused on or taken a critical view of intersectionality of race and poverty. This study fills the gap in the literature by providing insight into how teacher candidates perceive both race and class in high-poverty schools.

Methodology and Research Design

The data for this article were derived from a semester-long qualitative study. We used *photovoice* (Wang & Burris, 1997) as a visual method alongside semistructured interviews to elicit teacher candidates' voices and perspectives regarding teaching students in poverty and how teacher preparation programs can best support them in succeeding in such work.

As Wang (n.d.) noted, "what experts think is important may not match what people at the grassroots think is important" (p. 2). Photovoice provides an opportunity to cultivate "critical dialogue and knowledge about important issue(s)" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 370) that can lead to change. In what follows, we introduce photovoice as a methodology and then describe the research context, participants, and procedures for data generation and analysis.

Photovoice

Photovoice has been used in education in various ways. This visual method has been used with middle school and high school students living in poverty (Zenkov et al., 2014); as an instrument to assist adult educators in connecting their prior school experiences to their current attitudes and behaviors toward teaching adults (Taylor, 2003); with refugee youth from Bosnia (Berman, Ford-Bilboe, Moutrey, & Cekic, 2001); with preservice teachers working with English language learners (Graziano, 2011); with low-income African American families regarding children's school readiness (McAllister, Wilson, Green, & Baldwin, 2005); and as a tool for online faculty (Stadtlander, Sickel, LaCivita, & Giles, 2017), to name a few.

As a research methodology, photovoice uses photography and discussion as tools for social change (Farley, Brooks, & Pope, 2017). Influenced by the literature on grassroots empowerment education, critical feminist

theory, and documentary photography (Wang, 1999), photovoice was created to give "voice" through the use of a camera to members of communities (teacher candidates in our case) who do not often have a "voice" in decision-making processes.

Wang and Burris (1997) stated, "*Photovoice* uses the immediacy of the visual image to furnish evidence and to promote an effective, participatory means of sharing knowledge and expertise" (p. 369). This method provides people with an opportunity to record and reflect on the topic's strengths and concerns, while also promoting critical dialogue and knowledge about the topic through photographs.

In sum, the use of photovoice turns some of the power or agency with respect to data generation over to the participants (in this case, teacher candidates). In return, this provides an opportunity for teacher candidates to critically dialogue about the topics being addressed. Moreover, photovoice generates data from an active voice of the participants rather than the traditional agents of knowledge (in this case, teacher educators).

Photovoice typically involves three overall goals: (a) allow participants to photograph everyday phenomena that relate to a given question; (b) allow for group discussions about the photographs, giving special attention to issues that are of greatest concern; and (c) connect the ideas and concerns shared in the discussions with decision makers (Wang & Pies, 2004).

Research Design

Again, our research questions were as follows: (a) How do elementary education teacher candidates perceive students who attend high-poverty schools? and (b) What do elementary education teacher candidates believe they will need from their teacher preparation program to feel prepared to teach in high-poverty elementary schools? The study was conducted entirely by Bazemore-Bertrand; Handsfield joined the project for the purposes of this analysis, offering an outsider perspective on the data.

Context. The study took place at a large university in the southeastern United States in a suburb outside of large metropolitan city. Although this university is located in a suburb of with a low poverty rate, graduates of its teacher education program teach in surrounding cities with higher poverty rates.

However, clinical experiences in high-poverty schools is an option, not a requirement, for teacher candidates at this university. More than 3,000 students are enrolled in its teacher education program, which also has a Professional Development School (PDS) Network comprising elementary schools in three surrounding districts. The elementary schools in the surrounding districts are all culturally, linguistically, racially, and economically diverse.

For this study, we focused on the elementary PDS schools in the three surrounding districts that are labeled as high poverty based on the percentage of students who receive free or reduced-price lunch. All the teacher candidates within these three schools were enrolled in an initial teacher licensure with a master's degree in education program at the university.

Participants. The teacher candidates who participated in this study were purposively selected based on the following criteria: (a) currently enrolled in the university elementary education program and (b) had completed a semester-long clinical experience at a high-poverty school. Teacher candidates from three courses not taught by Bazemore-Bertrand were invited to participate in this study.

In addition, Bazemore-Bertrand did not ask teacher candidates enrolled in her courses to participate because the content taught in these courses addressed the topics of race, poverty, and diversity. Only six participants met the criteria and agreed to participate in this study. Though the sample was small, our purpose was to elicit and understand these teacher candidates' voices and perspectives rather than to make generalizable assertions regarding all teacher candidates.

The participants were teacher candidates at different phases in their educational journeys. Two were in the beginning of the program, three candidates were in the middle of the program, and one candidate was nearing the end of the program. Table 1 shows demographic data for the participating teacher candidates; only two of the candidates identified with a race other than White.

This is reflective of the racial diversity in the program as a whole; the courses where Bazemore-Bertrand recruited participants only had two teacher candidates who self-identified as being non-White. Three of the six teacher candidates acknowledge that their clinical practice was their first time knowingly interacting with students from socioeconomically challenged backgrounds. Pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality all participants.

Data Collection

Each of the six teacher candidates participated in one individual 45-minute semistructured interview, three photovoice group discussion sessions, and one follow-up individual interview. The 45-min semistructured audiorecorded interviews were held prior to the photovoice group discussion sessions as a means to gain a more in-depth understanding of the teacher candidates' perspectives regarding how their teacher preparation program prepared them to teach in high-poverty schools.

Bazemore-Bertrand took notes after each interview, and at the end of each interview, she provided teacher candidates with a schedule for the three photovoice meetings. She took notes after the photovoice group discussion session, in which she wrote personal reactions to the sessions.

Bazemore-Bertrand met with the teacher candidates during the three group discussion sessions to discuss the photovoice methodology. In preparation for the first meeting, she asked them to read articles about photovoice (i.e., "Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment"; Wang & Burris, 1997, "Photovoice as a Critical Reflection Methodology"; Horwitz, 2012) and to view the photovoice Web site (Wang, n.d.). Bazemore-Bertrand discussed with participants what they read and viewed

Table 1
Information on Participants

Name	Age range (years)	Race	Childhood socioeconomic status	Program status
Aubrey	21–25	Biracial (Black/White; White/Black)	middle class	2nd semester
Arleen	50+	White	middle class	student teaching
Maggie	21–25	Asian	middle class	4th semester
Ron	21–25	White	middle class	3rd semester
Elizabeth	41–45	White	middle class	2nd semester
Matilda	26–30	White	low income	3rd semester

and clarified any misunderstandings about the visual method.

During the second photovoice session, Bazemore-Bertrand discussed the PHOTO protocol (Horwitz, 2012; Hussey, 2001) for written reflections for each photo:

1. Describe your **P**icture.

2. What is **H**appening in your picture?

3. Why did you take a picture **O**f this?

4. What does the picture of **T**his tell us about your life?

5. How can this picture provide **O**pportunities for us to improve life with regard to *teaching students in high-poverty schools*?

(Horwitz, 2012; Hussey, 2001; phrase in italics added by instructor to adapt specifically to this project)

The teacher candidates were asked to begin capturing between 15 and 20 photographs in response to the question, What do teacher candidates believe they will need to be successful in a high-poverty elementary school? Teacher candidates were asked to take photos in the contexts of their choice and were given 2 weeks to complete this task. The PHOTO protocol helped teacher candidates focus on their specific experiences and stories portrayed in the photographs they took (Horwitz, 2012; Hussey, 2001).

Once they had 15–20 photographs, the teacher candidates were asked to choose 10 photos that they believed best answered the research questions and to use the PHOTO protocol to explain each of the 10 photos and how they answered the research question. They were then asked to put only those 10 photos and responses/reflections based on the PHOTO protocol into PowerPoint slides. This yielded a total of 10 slides with one photo and one response/reflection for each of the six participating teacher candidates. Candidates were given 3 weeks to complete this process of the photovoice project.

During the third meeting with participants, Bazemore-Bertrand asked teacher candidates to read over their own photovoice projects and identify issues and themes that they noticed. While teacher candidates were asked to share their responses verbally during the third meeting, they were given the option to write down their responses to help them record their thoughts.

Additionally, to help guide their thinking, Bazemore-Bertrand presented the teacher candidates with the following questions: (a) What is this picture telling teacher educators about what to teach teacher candidates about high-poverty schools? (b) How are students who attend high-poverty schools being represented? and (c) If this need were met by teacher education, do you think you would be prepared to teach in a high-poverty school? Because these questions were open ended, they helped teacher candidates with interpreting and creating themes around what they would need from teacher preparation to feel prepared to teach in high-poverty schools.

Data Analysis

Data analysis approaches included a priori coding and axial coding. When each interview was complete, Bazemore-Bertrand transcribed it and uploaded it into NVivo (qualitative data analysis software). On the first reading of the transcripts, Bazemore-Bertrand highlighted any terms or statements that referenced diversity, poverty, race, class, and culture and ran queries in NVivo to search for those terms as well.

These terms were used because Bazemore-Bertrand was specifically seeking to understand how teacher candidates feel prepared to teach in high-poverty elementary schools, and oftentimes during the group discussion with participants, these terms were used. Bazemore-Bertrand read each transcript multiple times, looking for themes and important concepts.

When Bazemore-Bertrand found an important theme or statement, she developed codes to define those themes and concepts. Coding became important because we noticed the intersections of race and poverty when teacher candidates were discussing high-poverty schools. Bazemore-Bertrand reread the transcripts, again searching for additional connections between race and class. She then met with teacher candidates after analysis was complete for member checking.

In regard to the photovoice data, Bazemore-Bertrand uploaded each participant's slides into a separate folder in NVivo. Because the participants have been part of the three-stage process of analysis embedded within the photovoice methodology (Wang & Burris, 1997), which includes selecting, conceptualizing, and codifying, the steps used provided an opportunity for the participants to engage in the analytical process, resulting in multiple voices when analyzing the photovoice data. After selecting photos that reflected their needs, teacher candidates began contextualizing their photos by describing the connection between each photo and their response to the question.

After having teacher candidates code their photovoice projects, Bazemore-Bertrand used NVivo to search through each PowerPoint slide looking for any intersections between race and class, race and poverty, perceptions of students, and needs of teacher candidates. Bazemore-Bertrand ran a query for the words *race*, *Black*, *White*, *Latino*, *Hispanic*, *poor*, *poverty*, *class*, and *need*. After all the data were coded, she began making connections based on theme generation, which became axial codes.

Bazemore-Bertrand recognizes her position as a Black woman and teacher educator who was discussing topics that may have made the participants of the study feel uncomfortable or tacitly discouraged them from openly sharing their perceptions. While this marks a limitation of the study, trustworthiness was enhanced by using both the interview and photovoice data to achieve triangulation. In addition, after the data were coded, Bazemore-Bertrand shared with each participant his or her own coded data and asked the participant to provide feedback as a form of member checking. None of the teacher candidates responded with feedback.

Unlike Bazemore-Bertrand, Handsfield is a White woman whose participation in this project occurred after the data collection and analyses were completed. Her participation was conceptual, involving an additional layer of interpretation and theorizing after data analysis.

The findings from this project highlight the visual interpretation and reflection of teacher candidates to the posed photovoice question and include interview data that provide a more in-depth understanding of the teacher candidates' perspectives. In the next section, we present our findings, organized by theme.

Findings

Based on the initial analyses of the photovoice and interview data, we identified three themes related to what elementary teacher candidates believe they will need to teach successfully in high-poverty elementary schools: (a) knowing how to build relationships with their students in high-poverty schools, (b) the ability to create connections between curriculum and students' backgrounds, and (c) more clinical experiences in high-poverty schools. Connections between poverty and race permeated all three themes, and both deficit perspectives and more critical perspectives on teaching in high-poverty schools are evident in teacher candidates' interviews and photovoice texts.

Knowing How to Build Relationships With Students in High-Poverty Schools

Maggie was one of four participants who expressed concern about not being able to relate to or build relationships with students living in poverty. Maggie is an Asian American who grew up in a middle-class home in a small, predominantly White rural town, where she was one of few minorities outside of her family. According to Maggie, teaching in a high-poverty school is going to be a different and possibly difficult experience for her because she does not believe she is going to be able to relate to her students. In her reflection, she acknowledged that she has been thinking about the racial and social class of the students who attend high-poverty schools.

During the photovoice group session, Bazemore-Bertrand asked Maggie to explain more of her thinking about the racial and social class of the students who attend high-poverty schools. Maggie stated,

> I was thinking about the racial and social class of the students who attend

Figure 2

"Will I Fit?" A photograph of a puzzle illustrates Maggie's concern about whether she will fit in with the students who attend high-poverty schools.

"Will I Fit?"

One of the challenges that I believe I may face if I were to teach in a high-poverty elementary school is fitting in with the students. The racial backgrounds and social class of students is something that I have been thinking about a lot so, I don't feel like I have enough experience in these areas to teach in this kind of school. I want to be able to relate to my students and fit in with them. I want to know their backgrounds and help them put their lives together. I need my teacher education program to provide me with ways to make connections with students that are attending these high-poverty schools and times where we can go to these schools and observe students and meet students. (Maggie)

high-poverty schools, because I know that high-poverty schools are usually predominantly Black schools with students who are poor. This is the main reason why I do not think I am going to fit and why I chose the puzzle picture.

While the focus is on high-poverty schools, Maggie discusses both race and class in her statement, which illustrates her recognition of the intersections of race and class the authors are discussing in this article.

In her reflection (see Figure 2), her focus is on *herself* (use of *I*), not on the students, and she positioned herself as the one who she thinks won't fit, as she did not share. However, her photovoice also illustrates an othering of these students. Maggie mentioned that she wanted to learn more about the students' backgrounds and "help them put their lives back together."

She photographed a puzzle to use as a visual to represent students' lives being put together. Based on the image, the lives of the students are constructed as scattered and chaotic, and it's her job to "fix" them—to put them back together. While Maggie's intentions are to help students in high-poverty schools, the idea that she wants to "put their lives back together" is based on a deficit perspective that assumes students who attend high-poverty schools do not have stable lives or that their lives need to be fixed. Unfortunately, this is often how students living in poverty are perceived (Gorski, 2008, 2016).

In a conversation during our photovoice group meeting, Maggie shared how using photovoice to explore what she believes she will need to be successful in a high-poverty school was eye-opening for her because she was able to reflect on her own biases and begin brainstorming ways she can connect with students at high-poverty schools. Maggie mentioned,

> I have really limited ideas about teaching students in poverty. I know that many of the students are Black or Latino and I know that is another difference that I have to learn to adjust to. I just feel that I lack in the areas of coursework and experience in regards to teaching in these particular schools.

After Maggie expressed her limited ideas about teaching students at high-poverty schools, Elizabeth shared,

> I honestly do not have any idea how to teach students at high-poverty schools or who are living in poverty. I think it's different for me because not only are these students poor, but many of them are minorities meaning Black and Hispanic. I

do not have much experience with these particular groups of people.

Just as Maggie identifies students who attend high-poverty schools as poor and either Black or Latino, Elizabeth identifies students who attend high-poverty schools as poor and minorities, specifically Black and Hispanic. While they both acknowledged having limited ideas about teaching students in poverty, they also made connections between students experiencing poverty and race. Their perceptions indicate a need for opportunities to critically examine issues of race and class as they intersect.

Like Maggie and Elizabeth, Arleen also shared concerns regarding not being able to connect with students in high-poverty schools (see Figure 3).

Arleen attended predominantly White private schools throughout her K–12 schooling and attended a predominantly White university for undergrad. In her teacher education program, she completed clinical hours on a weekly basis for a semester at a high-poverty elementary school, and this was her first time interacting with students from socioeconomically challenged backgrounds. Arleen mentions wanting to move students to a higher level in her photovoice reflection.

This could be a problematic ideology of "leveling," as Arleen assumes that students who attend high-poverty schools are not on the right "level." This likely reflects dominant ideologies in schools of individualism and linear understandings regarding achievement, contributing to the perpetuation of inequity and deficit perspectives of students in poverty who are assumed not to be on a higher academic "level."

In her interview, when asked to describe how she feels about high-poverty schools. Arleen responded,

> I do not feel comfortable teaching in a high-poverty school; I am scared that students will be so different that I won't be able to relate. Also, I know that they are on a lower level academically so I am going to have to work really hard to get them to a higher level.

In other words, not only is Arleen scared of not being able to connect with students who attend high-poverty schools but also she does not know if she is going to be able to bring them up to the right academic "level."

Again, this reveals a deficit perspective toward students who attend high-poverty schools. Also, Arleen discusses students being very different from herself, which is how both Maggie and Elizabeth

discussed the students in their interviews and during group photovoice discussions. This emphasis on difference is centered around race and class, essentializing these identity categories while glossing over areas of potential connection (e.g., interests, family relationships, personality).

In sum, teacher candidates engaged in "othering" when discussing students who attend high-poverty schools. The photovoice and interview data show that teacher candidates are scared of or believe they cannot relate to students who attend high-poverty schools. The data also show that despite having had clinical experiences in high-poverty schools, teacher candidates do not believe that they are receiving the necessary instruction or experiences to help them create connections between curriculum and students' backgrounds.

Figure 3

"Getting Them to Go Higher." A photograph of vents and a ceiling fan illustrates the desire for Arleen to move her students to a higher academic level.

"Getting Them to Go Higher"

I took a photograph of a ceiling with a ventilation system and ceiling fan because it reminds me of elevation and wanting to move students to a higher place in life. After taking this picture, I started to think about how I want to be the teacher that connects with my students and get them to reach higher. I want them to be successful. I often question if I am going to be able to move my students to the top and get them where they need to be. I am really scared that I won't be able to relate to my students, because I have really no experience working with poor students or students of color. . . . I am not scared of the kids, I just don't know if I have anything in common with them. One thing that I know I need is more information and experience working with students who attend poor schools. (Arleen)

Creating Connections Between Curriculum and Students' Backgrounds

In addition to building relationships, all six teacher candidates expressed a fear of not knowing how to create connections between curriculum and students' backgrounds. They were concerned that they could not engage students from socioeconomically challenged backgrounds because they do not have the experience or knowledge to do so, largely because their own communities growing up were not diverse. Aubrey, for example, expressed how she does not know how to discuss other cultures or make connections with students living in poverty because she lacks that knowledge and personal experience (see Figure 4)

Aubrey's reflection highlights the importance of teachers locating diverse materials to educate students. Teacher candidates need to know how to locate diverse texts as well as make community and neighborhood connections that can engage their students and link to the curriculum. Additionally, this will provide students with knowledge about individuals who reflect who they are. However, for Aubrey, this means focusing on students' racial identities. In her interview, Aubrey expressed,

> I think that I did not get to learn a lot about other races or cultures in school. I believe that in order for students to be engaged and learn in the classroom they must see themselves. The curriculum must meet them. I don't think teacher preparation touches on this at all. It is important for candidates to know how to connect materials to students who are Black, Latino, Asian, and also students who are poor.

Aubrey also recognized structural inequities. This is indicated in Aubrey's photograph, which illustrates how the educational system is complicit in racial and economic disparities. Aubrey's point that teacher preparation programs need to teach candidates how to connect the curriculum to students from racially and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds is important and corroborates scholarship on the topic (Zygmunt et al., 2018).

Importantly, however, Aubrey seems to reduce students' communities and experiences to race. And yet, reducing the issue of successful pedagogies for students in high-poverty schools to students' racial identification, without attention to student interests and their wide array of experiences, risks reifying students living in poverty as identified purely by their racial group and reinscribing shallow understandings of stu-

dents and their lives. Like Aubrey, Ron also conflates race and socioeconomic status.

Ron's belief that teacher preparation programs need to provide information regarding different strategies to teach the curriculum in ways that are responsive to student population is notable. That said, his statement (see Figure 5), and those of Maggie and Matilda, also reflects what Gorski (2008) referred to as "savior syndrome." This is illustrated during the second photovoice group discussion, when participants were asked, "If their need were met by teacher education, do you think you would be prepared to teach in a high-poverty school?"

Maggie responded, "Yes . . . I am so

Figure 4
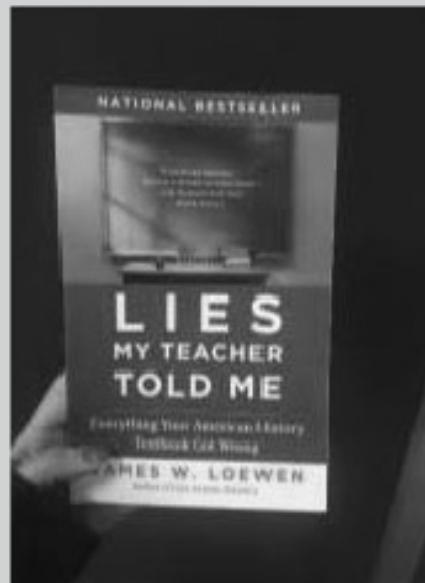
"One-Sided Education." A photograph of a book that Aubrey read in one of her undergraduate courses that makes her think of the importance of students being able to see themselves in the curriculum they are learning.

"One-Sided Education"

I believe one of the challenges teacher candidates will face while teaching in a high-poverty school is making curriculum multicultural and relatable to students. There is a need for teacher candidates to know how to make curriculum relate to their students and this is something I hope to learn. I believe that a lot of American curriculum is one-sided. This means that White males/majorities are pictured in a positive light, while minorities are presented in a servitude position. It is paramount that teachers locate outside material in order to educate students in a more robust way. Having students see themselves within the curriculum will not only build their self-esteem, but also intrinsically motivate them to care about the curriculum. (Aubrey)

happy that I am participating in this research so that I can help the kids in these schools that do not have the resources or knowledge of how to help themselves." After Maggie commented, Matilda stated, "I really am excited about helping the students in high-poverty schools now that I have an understanding of how to meet their needs. These students need someone to help them become successful." In other words, these candidates expressed a belief that students who attend high-poverty schools need them to succeed.

Ron's photovoice reflection also illustrates his lack of confidence in helping his future students succeed. His emphasis on engagement and searching the channels for what will be meaningful for students or work with them communicates the im-

"Flip the Channel." Ron used a photograph of a television remote control to describe how he needs to learn how to flip the curriculum until he finds the right way to teach kids in high-poverty schools.

"Flip the Channel"

I think that one of the challenges teacher candidates will face while teaching in a high-poverty school is making sure that the curriculum is engaging to the students that they are teaching. These students are a different race and come from a low SES background compared to them. I think of flipping the channels on a TV. We have to learn how to flip the curriculum until we find the right way to teach the students in these schools. I want to make a difference and want my students to be successful, therefore it is important that I teach them in a way they will understand. I think this is something that our college has to work on.... I need to know different ways to make this happen. (Ron)

portance of supporting teacher candidates in knowing how to engage with their students' neighborhoods and communities in order to help them connect the curriculum to their students.

Ron shared how he believes his background will differ from students he could possibly teach in a high-poverty school. Ron attended a predominantly White K–8 public school, and during high school, he began to have contact with people who identified as non-White and people from different social classes. However, while he has had interactions with people from diverse backgrounds, he has not gained enough experience through these interactions to feel comfortable teaching in a high-poverty school.

These teacher candidates have shared the importance of acknowledging that students have different backgrounds. Each of these candidates agreed that they need more knowledge of how to interact with students who attend high-poverty schools and coursework that will provide them with opportunities to learn how to connect the students' backgrounds and curriculum. But while what teacher candidates learn in the classroom is important, having an opportunity to apply what they have learned is even more important. This is evident in teacher candidates' desire for more clinical experiences in high-poverty schools.

More Clinical Experiences in High-Poverty Schools

Matilda's photovoice description (see Figure 6) of her image, "Do Not Touch," evokes a sense of distance that she and other teacher candidates experience between themselves and students in high-poverty schools. The notion of setting students in high-poverty schools apart, and only observing or talking about them from a distance, without getting involved, brings the need for more clinical placements in high-poverty schools to the fore.

In the third *photovoice* session, Matilda stated, "If future teachers had required clinical experiences or student teaching in these schools they would realize that these schools are not that bad." Other teacher candidates expressed the same concern. For example, Ron stated,

I really think it all comes down to teacher candidates having the chance to work in high-poverty schools during their time in college. Right now, I don't have required clinical experiences in these schools; it just fit my schedule to go to the high-poverty school.

Elizabeth agreed: "Teacher preparation needs to focus on adding more experiences for us to go to high-poverty schools; I think this will get us more comfortable with these students." Matilda's statement that these schools are "not that bad" is a response to the common assumption that teacher candidates do not view these schools as positive places to teach.

It is important to note Matilda's socioeconomic positionality relative to the other five participants. Specifically, she came from a low-income background and attended high-poverty schools throughout her K–12 schooling. Unlike the other teacher candidates, Matilda was not apprehensive of teaching in a high-poverty school; rather, she wanted more experiences in these schools to help her become an effective teacher.

Moreover, her photovoice reflection was more critical than the others in that she engaged in systemic and ideological critique of teacher preparation programs.

"Do Not Touch." According to Matilda, the topic of teaching in high-poverty schools is one that nobody wants to touch in course discussions.

"Do Not Touch"

Over the past couple of semesters as a student, I am realizing that education has a lot of topics that nobody wants to talk about. These topics are kind of like those antiques that are old, but still nobody can touch. One of the most important topics is why there aren't enough effective teachers in high-poverty schools. In my classes, we don't have conversations about these schools and nobody wants to teach there. Professors don't want to touch topics on high-poverty schools. I think professors need to talk about these school and give students the opportunity to attend these schools so they can see it is not that bad. (Matilda)

While Aubrey also indicated that teacher education programs need to do more ("I don't think teacher preparation touches on this at all"), Matilda's critique was more explicit and pointed:

> I do not think that most teachers know how to talk about poverty or race in their teaching. I think a lot of teachers just won't say anything. I don't want to be that teacher because I grew up attending a high-poverty school. Teacher preparation has to do a better job making sure teachers are having these conversations; right now they aren't doing anything at all.

In short, Matilda argues not only for more opportunities for teacher candidates to go to high-poverty schools; she also argues that teacher educators need to *go there* with respect to critical conversations. In doing so, she not only disrupts deficit discourses of students in high-poverty schools but also highlights the complicity of teacher preparation programs in not engaging teacher candidates in disrupting the scornful gaze (Gorski, 2008).

Aubrey, Matilda, and Ron shared how their clinical experience helped them to become more reflective about teaching. Maggie, Arleen, and Elizabeth stated how this experience challenged some of their biases and stereotypes toward students who attend these schools. However, they still made deficit-based assumptions about students who attend high-poverty schools, conflating race and class in a critical ways.

In other words, although Maggie, Arleen, and Elizabeth illustrated in their photovoice projects and discussed intersectionality between race and class during their interviews, they did not examine histories of oppression and structural reasons for economic disparities among racialized groups. Matilda and Aubrey are the only teacher candidates to have offered structural analyses regarding inequities in high-poverty schools. Nevertheless, Matilda, like Ron and Elizabeth, still took on a savior discourse, while Aubrey's conflation of race and class left room for a more sophisticated understanding of intersectionality.

In sum, while the themes above accentuate what teacher candidates believe they need from their teacher preparation program to be effective and successful in high-poverty elementary schools, their photovoice reflections and interviews expose problematic assumptions regarding students in high-poverty schools and teachers' roles in those schools. These assumptions include a surface-level conflation of race and class and how teacher candidates position themselves as saviors of their future students.

Discussion

In this study, the teacher candidates shared what they will need to be successful teaching in high-poverty schools. Preservice teachers often report feeling unprepared in their ability to teach in low-income and/or poor schools (Whitney, Golez, Nagel, Nieto, & Nieto, 2002), so teacher candidates feeling unprepared to teach in these particular schools is not new in education. However, getting an understanding of what teacher preparation programs can do to better prepare candidates for high-poverty schools by having teacher candidates share their "voices" adds a different perspective to teacher education research.

We found in this study that all of the teacher candidates, either through their interviews, photovoice, or the group photovoice discussion, believed that their teacher preparation program did not do enough to prepare them for teaching in high-poverty schools. We would argue that it is possible that many teacher candidates in U.S. teacher education programs feel the same way.

But perhaps even more significant is the connection made by four of the six teacher candidates between race and social class. These connections were often grounded in deficit perspectives, including a lack of systemic critique and a view of themselves as possible saviors of these students. As noted, they attributed their perceived inability to teach in high-poverty schools to their lack of experiences in high-poverty and racially diverse communities and schools.

Based on our data analysis, we believe that teacher preparation should examine race and poverty separately, as well as in combination, to more deeply interrogate social and historical structures that produce intersectional inequity. This is the same conclusion that Milner and Laughter (2015) reached in their conceptualization of poverty and race in teacher education.

The data from this research highlight a need for teacher preparation programs to do more to prepare teacher candidates for high-poverty schools, and it is important to hear teacher candidates' voices when they say they need more clinical experiences in high-poverty schools. However, we would argue that such clinical experiences alone are insufficient for disrupting deficit perspectives. In the next section, we offer implications for further research and for teacher education programs.

Implications for Teacher Education Practices and Programs

As noted by the teacher candidates themselves, teacher preparation programs need to provide teacher candidates with clinical experience in high-poverty schools. Clinical experience is an important component of teacher preparation (Welsh & Schaffer, 2017), and providing teacher candidates with a clinical experience in high-poverty schools offers the opportunity to work with a diverse population of students.

In many teacher education programs, there is no requirement for teacher candidates to experience working with students living in poverty. Recruiting participants to participate in this research study was difficult because very few teacher candidates have completed clinical hours in a high-poverty elementary school. All of the teacher candidates in this study expressed a lack of preparedness and the need for a significant number of clinical hours in high-poverty schools. They all expressed that completing clinical hours in these particular schools was a learning experience that they could not have received in their courses. Nevertheless, they still felt minimally prepared.

Again, as Jennings (2007) reported, teacher preparation programs are not engaging candidates in conversations about social class, and only half of the programs are having conversations about race. Our findings suggest that teacher preparation courses need not only to discuss race and social class but also to guide teacher candidates in interrogating concepts such as Whiteness and privilege.

In a TEDxTeachersCollege talk, Emdin (2016) used a metaphor of White teachers carrying their heavy load of guilt up a hill toward their students, and when they get there (to the classroom), they unload their White guilt onto their students, trying to save them. Instead, they crush them, because they were so obsessed with their own guilt and what they could do to "save" the students that they never took the time or made the effort to get to know their students' realities.

Teacher education courses need to provide teacher candidates with knowledge of how to address White guilt and "savior syndrome." Photovoice may provide a pedagogical space within clinical placements for such work. Teacher educators can also prompt teacher candidates to invite their *students* to document their worlds through their own photovoice projects—to document

the complexities of their realities, their lives, which are more complex than their race and class.

Teacher education programs must also restructure their clinical coursework so that not only are they engaging critically in coursework with issues of race and class and creating clinical experiences focused on working with students from both racially and socioeconomically backgrounds, but they are also bringing together opportunities for community-engaged clinical experiences (Zygmunt et al., 2018).

Warren (2018), for example, argued that along with field experiences, teacher education programs should engage teacher candidates in critical classroom discourse with their peers and faculty (instructors, supervisors) to notice and interrogate their own beliefs and dispositions. Such critical dialogue, Warren stated, can help cultivate teacher candidates' perspective taking and empathy (Warren, 2018).

This study addressed what elementary education teacher candidates believe they will need to feel prepared to teach in high-poverty elementary schools. Based on the data from this study, teacher candidates shared that they need knowledge on how to build relationships with students who attend high-poverty schools as well as coursework and clinical experience focused on students who live in poverty and attend high-poverty schools. The connection that teacher candidates often made between poverty and race provided an additional finding.

The voices of these teacher candidates add a different perspective to teacher education and provide an opportunity for teacher preparation programs to make changes that will support not only teacher candidates but students who attend high-poverty schools. It is the responsibility of teacher preparation programs to make sure that they are effectively preparing teacher candidates to teach in *all* settings, including high-poverty schools.

Teacher preparation programs can no longer offer one or two courses that mention social class or poverty. There must be a focus on providing teacher candidates with knowledge and experiences that will help them become effective teachers in high-poverty elementary schools. Teacher candidates are next in line to teach in our schools; it is important that their voices be heard and taken into consideration.

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