Novice Veterans: An Exploration of the Roles Teach for America Teachers Inhabit

Christa S. Bialka
Villanova University
christa.bialka@villanova.edu

Shannon Andrus
Educational Researcher
shannonhandrus@yahoo.com

Abstract

The development of one's teaching identity is a dynamic and multi-layered process, which becomes more immediate when one enters the profession through an alternative route, such as Teach For America (TFA). This grounded theory study examines how participation in three interrelated institutions—the urban school, the university, and TFA—directly affects the identity development of TFA teachers in one urban, northeastern US location. Through longitudinal, semi-structured interviews, the authors developed an emerging theory that explains how participation in these three institutions engenders the development of a novice veteran teaching identity. This study fills a void in current research as it offers a novel way to consider the identity development of alternatively certified teachers and offers insight into how to best support them as they navigate this process.

Keywords: teacher identity, alternative certification, urban education, Teach For America

Please contact the first author for all correspondence regarding the content of this article.

> It's funny that after one year, I'm a veteran. I mean we have a small school. There's like 20 teachers at our school…and I've been at the school more than like five of them, for a year and a half. I'm definitely looked up to, or considered one of the leaders in the faculty, which is really weird. It's like I'm this 'veteran' teacher. (Anika, second year Teach For America teacher)

As a second year teacher, Anika's allusion to her role as a veteran of her field is striking. However, her perception is shared by other teachers who enter the profession through Teach For America (TFA). Placed in the classroom with only a few weeks' training, TFA teachers are typically forced to sink or swim in some of the most challenging schools in the country. Termed an "alternative certification program," TFA's broader mission is to bring to light the injustices in America's educational system and expose the next generation of lawyers, doctors, policy makers, and other professionals to these inequities. As is well known, urban public schools in the United States face numerous challenges, with difficulties related to funding, teacher retention, and poverty inhibiting too many students' access to a quality education (Donaldson, 2009; Hollins, 2012). Students of color are disproportionately affected by this educational discrepancy, as "almost three-quarters or more of fourth and eighth grade Black and Hispanic public school students could not read or compute at grade level in 2013" (Children's Defense Fund, 2014, p. 34). In an effort to eliminate educational inequity, TFA, a national non-profit organization, recruits thousands of "exceptional leaders" to teach in under-resourced urban and rural schools for two years (Teach For America, 2015).

Since its inception in 1990, the TFA program has grown exponentially. While the original group consisted of approximately 500 teachers, in 2013-2014 roughly 11,000 TFA members were placed in 50 regions across the country (Kopp, 2011; Teach For America, 2015). Since most TFA teachers have little to no prior teaching experience, each summer the new recruits, or "corps members" (CMs), participate in a mandatory five-week summer institute where they learn some of the basics of teaching (Gabriel, 2011). Following their summer preparation, CMs enter public school systems and simultaneously begin university coursework to earn their teaching certification according to their state's alternative route certification requirements.

CMs concurrently inhabit three roles during their two-year tenure: (1) participants in TFA, (2) paid employees of a school district, and (3) graduate students in an education program. All of these institutions put demands upon the CMs and all provide various types of support. While research has addressed the rationale of alternative certification programs (Hawley, 1990; Higgins, Hess, Weiner, & Robinson, 2011; Humphrey & Wechsler, 2007; Humphrey, Wechsler, & Hough, 2008) and the retention (Nagy & Wang, 2007; Zeichner & Schulte, 2001) and support (Dill, 1990; Foote, Brantlinger, Haydar, Smith, & Gonzalez, 2011; Humphrey et al., 2008; Koerner, Lynch, & Martin, 2008; Nagy & Wang, 2007) of alternatively certified teachers, there is little available literature about how those support structures affect the professional identity development of alternatively certified educators. Considering the teachers' lack of experience coming into their work and the great challenges that confront them in the schools in which they are placed, it is important to closely examine the tripartite identity the teachers must assume and understand its formation and implications.

The authors contend that the combined influence of this multi-faceted experience led the TFA teachers in the study, with a few key exceptions, to take on what is termed the *novice veteran* teaching identity. It was found that the novice veteran identity is shaped by a particular set of circumstances that occur because of the interplay of the roles that CMs assume given their participation within the three aforementioned institutions. In the study, this identity appeared to inform how novice TFA teachers provide and receive support, conceptualize their teaching identity, and make choices while in practice.

In this study, the authors explicate a grounded theory of the *novice veteran*, drawing on a longitudinal study of 19 TFA CMs earning their certification from a teacher education program at a private, northeastern US university while simultaneously working in a large, urban school district. These novice CMs faced, to various degrees, a similar set of challenges common to many teachers in under-resourced and overburdened schools. The students in the schools were mostly from low-income homes, and the schools' average test scores were typically lower than state averages and amongst the lowest in the city. Most of the schools had high teacher turnover and many hired numerous first year teachers every year, whether from TFA, another alternative certification program, or a traditional teacher education program.

In addition to teaching in similarly challenging school environments, these CMs were also united by the experience of being selected for TFA and completing the summer teaching institute. Through their first two years of teaching, they attended both TFA-led and university-taught education classes together. In most cases, the majority of the teachers' friends and roommates were also participating in TFA. Findings reveal that these factors directly inform CMs novice veteran identity development.

In this study, the authors examined how support within the institutions of the public school system, the university, and the TFA organization itself inform the novice CMs' identity development as teachers. The authors defined *support* as the sharing of teaching ideas, advice, and materials; emotional encouragement; and any interaction between individuals designed to help a novice teacher personally or professionally. *Novice* refers to a teacher in his or her first, second, or third year of teaching in a classroom for which he or she is solely responsible. For the participants in this study, support exists amongst three different, yet interrelated, *institutions*: the school, where the teachers provide instruction; the university, which provides the teachers with coursework and additional programs related to certification; and TFA, which recruits the teachers and acts as the sponsoring organization. Based on these definitions, the central question of this research study is: *How does the nature of support within the three separate, yet interrelated, participating institutions affect the teaching identity of novice Teach For America teachers?*

Conceptual Framework

The following section outlines the conceptual frame employed to investigate the aforementioned research question. The authors begin by highlighting the two areas of literature that most heavily influence the conceptual framework: the development of a teaching identity and the concept of support as it pertains to new educators learning to teach.

Understanding Teacher Identity

While there are numerous approaches to understanding and studying teacher identity (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Fletcher, 2012; Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012), at its core, the concept of teacher identity is premised on "the beliefs one has about teaching and being a teacher . . . that are continuously formed and reformed through experience" (Walkington, 2005, p. 54). Conceptually, the development of one's teaching identity is a complex, dynamic, and multi-layered process (Friedrichsen, Lannin, Abell, Arbaugh, & Volkmann, 2008; Malderez, Hobson, Tracey, & Kerr, 2007) that is shaped by numerous influences, both internal and external (Butler, 1993; Mockler, 2011; Wenger, 1998).

Perhaps the most robust interpretation of teacher identity comes from Kaplan and Flum (2010). After synthesizing much of the research on teacher identity, the authors parsed out four central tenets of identity development:

> One is that identity involves an integrated psychological structure of personal attributes, values, and goals. Another is that this structure is self-constructed—its establishment requires the individual's agency in identifying, selecting, and integrating abilities, beliefs, and goals. A third important aspect of the concept that all identity researchers share is that the self-construction of identity takes place through social interactions that are located within the social–cultural environment. Finally, identity researchers agree that the more integrated and coherent the identity structure is, the more adjusted the individual is. (p. 56)

Thus, an identity is both taken on by the individual as well as placed upon him or her by others. Ultimately, a cohesive identity structure (i.e., a fit between self- and socially-constructed norms and expectations) can dictate whether an individual will accept or reject the given identity. New teachers can often struggle with these nascent identities, as they are expected to make sense of and adapt to numerous contexts and perspectives that are oftentimes in competition with one another (Beijaard et al., 2004). For example, a new teacher might be forced to navigate a school policy that runs contrary to his or her personal beliefs about teaching and learning.

Unlike pre-service teachers, who begin to cultivate their teaching identities prior to entering the classroom, the process of developing a teaching identity becomes exceedingly more immediate when an educator enters the profession through an alternative route, such as TFA. Since alternative certification programs "allow persons to enter the teaching profession by earning a standard license or teacher certificate without completing a traditional four- or five-year university-based program" (Humphrey & Wechsler, 2007, p. 485), this implies that one's teaching identity is developed in situ rather than cultivated over a prolonged period of time. Since alternatively certified teachers develop their identities in practice, "the people assigned to assist new teachers in navigating their first years within the school system can provide crucial instructional, emotional, and political support" (Foote et al., 2011, p. 400). Thus, it is critical to consider the contexts in which alternatively certified educators teach and learn, as well as the systems of support that work to inform their role as professionals.

Framing Teaching Identity and Related Support

One way of understanding teachers' identity development is by paying attention to the contexts and cultures in which they work (O'Connor, 2008). As Beijaard et al. (2004) noted, "what surrounds a person, what others expect from the person, and what the person allows to impact him or her greatly affect his or her identity as a teacher" (p. 113). Within these contexts, the development of one's teaching identity is largely influenced by the support received, as these structures often reveal the connections between and influences on different parts of the teachers' experience (Fletcher, 2012; Friedrichsen et al., 2008). Support can occur through both formal and informal channels, and the nature of the support structure is largely dependent upon the institution providing said assistance. Since the school, certification institution, and TFA act upon and inform one another, their influence is best understood by looking at all of the facets holistically rather than in isolation. The following subsections detail how the teachers in this study receive support within each organization and address how these institutions work in concert to affect TFA teachers' identity development.

TFA. TFA, the institution responsible for recruiting and placing new teachers, or CMs, plays a critical role in the development of one's teaching identity. First, the teachers are entering the profession through an alternative certification route and, while some teachers participating in TFA do have an education degree, the majority have no prior teaching coursework and limited, if any, teaching experience prior to joining. Additionally, and in contrast to many alternative certification programs, TFA is by definition a two-year experience. As such, there is no official expectation that teachers will remain in the classroom as a career. In fact, TFA anticipates that many or most of their teachers will go on to other professions and affect change in education through other routes (Kopp, 2011; Teach For America, 2015).

The aims of TFA, and its overall approach to teacher training, are frequently critiqued. Given that TFA aims to increase CMs' awareness of educational inequity rather than retain teachers, critics (e.g., Cann, 2015; Veltri, 2008) have asserted that many CMs use TFA as a resume builder rather than a springboard for future equity-related activity. Furthermore, TFA's theoretical culture and related perception that "good teachers can overcome the ailments of socioeconomic disparities if they subscribe to notions of hyper-teacher-accountability" has contributed to CM disillusionment and burnout (Brewer, 2014, p. 246). Questions of TFA teacher effectiveness also abound (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008; Veltri, 2008). Additionally, researchers have argued that the organization perpetuates, rather than mitigates, issues of power and privilege (Cann, 2015; Veltri, 2008). More specifically, Cann (2015) has argued that TFA promotes the "White savior industrial complex," which "proposes band-aid solutions in the form of White saviors, ignoring the deeper entrenched forms of institutional racism" (p. 291). Without the opportunity to unpack their perceptions of the communities they intend to teach, CMs run the risk of propagating the narrative that students in minority communities need to be saved (Cann, 2015; Veltri, 2008). These critiques are based on legitimate concerns about TFA CMs roles and effectiveness, yet the fact remains that the program places thousands of teachers in public schools every year. Given that these young adults will be placed, with very little advance preparation, in struggling schools

for just two years, it is important to understand what they are bringing to this teaching experience and how the experience shapes the work they do.

Throughout the recruitment process, TFA seeks out "a diverse group of leaders with a record of achievement who work to expand educational opportunity, starting by teaching for two years in a low-income community" (Teach For America, 2015). Potential CMs often attend elite colleges and universities, which Tamir (2009) defines as "highly selective institutions, which admit students who score relatively high on their SAT tests" (p. 528). Furthermore, the selection process is extremely rigorous; candidates must complete an online application, a phone interview and a final interview that includes both group and individual activities (Higgins, Hess, Wiener, & Robinson, 2011). In fact, in 2014 only 15% of the 48,500 TFA applicants were accepted (Teach For America, 2015), a lower acceptance rate than many of the most selective colleges in the country (National University Rankings, 2015).

TFA places an emphasis on supporting new CMs. TFA assigns each CM a manager of teacher leadership and development (MTLD) for one-on-one support, as well as a learning team leader who presents monthly group presentations to give CMs more ideas for teaching particular content areas (Gabriel, 2011; Teach For America, 2015). Both of these support personnel may be TFA alumni; in fact, many learning team leaders are themselves only second year TFA CMs. Although the MTLDs are in communication with the university, they have the capacity to determine how closely they work with the university and related personnel. Finally, in addition to assigning CMs university-based mentors and MTLDs, TFA also works to cluster CMs in schools.

Urban schools. The difficulties a teacher encounters during his or her first year in the classroom are well known, and numerous researchers (Donaldson, 2009; Good et al., 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008) have discussed the ways that new educators struggle during this time. These difficulties are especially salient for teachers in urban schools. As Darling-Hammond (2008) explicated:

> In poorer districts, teachers who earn much less have to spend more of their own resources buying books, paper, and other materials for their students — and [they face] extensive challenges presented by their students, who are more likely to live in poverty, be new English learners, and have a range of special needs. (p. 731)

TFA is an organization that focuses on placing their members in the most challenging urban and rural schools in the country (Teach For America, 2015). Furthermore, even within a generally challenging school district, TFA CMs are often placed in schools that are struggling the most (Darling-Hammond, 2008).

According to Burstein, Czech, Kretschmer, Lombardi, and Smith (2009), "teachers indicate that they are unprepared for the challenges they face in urban schools, with only 20% reporting that they feel confident in working with students from diverse backgrounds" (p. 25). For this reason, Huisman, Singer, and Catapano (2010) found that adult relationships are critically important for new teachers in urban schools, as these connections are responsible for "mitigating additional stressors" that accompany this role, such as a potential lack of support and incomplete teacher preparedness (p. 488). Freedman and Appleman's (2009) longitudinal, mixed methods study examined the factors that affect teacher retention in urban schools. Of particular

import is their finding that cohorts affect retention in a positive way. For these reasons, "clustering" or "cohort building" is deemed a potentially promising support practice, particularly for urban teachers (Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Seifert & Mandzuk, 2006). Through this process, new teachers are grouped together as a means of cultivating social and practice-based ties. Seifert and Mandzuk (2006) reiterated Freedman and Appleman's findings, as they found that cohorts fostered cooperation, connections, and in many cases, critical emotional support.

Certification institution. First year CMs are expected to navigate their role in the classroom while also taking the coursework for teaching certification required by the No Child Left Behind Act (Foote et al., 2011). These certification programs, most typically housed within colleges and universities in close proximity to the CMs' placement sites, often provide streamlined programs that align with CMs' direct entry into the classroom. When examining the forms of support offered by the respective certification programs, Heineke, Carter, Desimone, and Cameron (2010) explained:

> In these institutions, newly formed teacher education programs include increased mentoring and supervision of teachers in their urban K-12 classrooms, hiring teacher practitioners who have experience in urban classrooms to teach classes, and sequencing courses and experiences to best meet the already demanding schedules of first-year teachers. (p. 126)

Although the scope and sequence of courses is specific to the certification institution, universities' alternative certification programs are intended to both instruct and support the new teachers as they navigate their first one to two years in the classroom.

New teacher mentors, assigned by the university, can provide an additional layer of support. These mentors may include former teachers, teachers on-site at the CMs' schools, and/or advanced graduate students enrolled at the certification institution. The university-based mentor observes the teachers several times during their two years, and offers guidance and various types of teaching support. Since CMs often enter TFA with college degrees outside of the content area which they are assigned to teach and with little to no pedagogical training, the university plays a critical role in terms of preparation and related support (Foote et al., 2011; Nagy & Wang, 2007).

Establishing a Foundation for Grounded Theory Methodology

In order to understand better the teachers' experiences within this tripartite system, the authors used a qualitative research approach guided by grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory is rooted in a belief that "meaning is negotiated and understood through interactions with others in social processes" (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1374). A grounded theory design allows researchers to look at a process and develop a theory shaped by the participants rather than selecting a theory prior to the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). As such, grounded theory is "inductively developed during a study (or series of studies) and in constant interaction with the data from that study" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 42). The goal of this qualitative method is to create a theory that not only isolates but also explains social processes, which in this case includes the education and identity development of novice teachers within a particular set of interrelated institutions. This is achieved through observing these processes in their particular

environments and determining how participants act and react under these conditions (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007).

Grounded theory is an appropriate methodological approach for this study for two main reasons. First, the authors were interested in developing a logical and plausible explanation as to how CMs were supported through the process of learning to teach, and what this meant for their practice as alternatively certified teachers. In line with the grounded theory process, initial data gathered from the participants informed subsequent interview questions. It was clear that the idea of "support," which the authors knew they wanted to ask about from the beginning, was understood in surprising and nuanced ways by the TFA teachers.

Additionally, grounded theory relies on theoretical sampling, which "involves recruiting participants with differing experiences of the phenomenon so as to explore multiple dimensions of the social processes under study" (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1375). Though the CMs who participated in this study were all members of the same tripartite system, there was a range and variation in both the grade level that they instructed as well as their prior knowledge of the subject matter that they were responsible for teaching. The authors found recurring comments across the cohort in the study that reflected the commonalities shared amongst the CMs' respective experiences, and outlier data worked to solidify the nascent theory. After multiple cycles of data collection and analysis, the authors developed an emerging theory of how this TFA experience affected the CMs' teacher identity development.

Context for Grounded Theory Analysis

The participants in this study were 19 TFA CMs who were first year, urban teachers at the beginning of the project. While teaching, all 19 educators simultaneously earned their teaching certification and a Master's degree in Education at the same graduate school. Three of the participants were education majors in college; the remaining 16 entered the classroom with very little formal preparation for teaching. Eleven participants self-identified as female, and the remaining eight self-identified as male. Participants largely ($n = 16$) self-identified as White, though two self-identified as African-American or Black and one self-identified as Other. It is also important to note that the co-investigators of this research both self-identified as White and female.

The authors recognized the framework of circumstances within this tripartite experience as salient prior to data collection, as participants would assume a variety of interrelated roles across and between these institutions, which are described in detail in the following sub-sections. As findings later revealed, 15 of the 19 participants in this study assumed the novice veteran identity, and the experiences of the four outliers actually work to reinforce the grounded theory of the novice veteran.

Data Collection and Analysis

This paper draws from a qualitative, longitudinal research study (Schultz, 2010), which investigates two pathways for becoming a teacher. This comparative study addresses the temporal dimensions of learning to teach, whether this occurs before entering the classroom or

while teaching, and the spatial dimensions, whether teacher education occurs in the university classroom, at the school site, or elsewhere. Nearly 300 interviews were conducted over the course of four years with 25 TFA CMs matched with 25 new teachers prepared through a pre-service teacher education program. These interview data were supplemented by document review, surveys, and informal observations at various school sites, classes, and other settings.

As participants in the "Comparative study of learning to teach" project, the teachers were interviewed two to three times per year. These interviews ranged from approximately 30 minutes to one and a half hours and addressed a broad range of questions about how participants were learning to teach. All of the teachers were interviewed across their two-year TFA experience, and several continued to be interviewed for one or two additional years regardless of whether or not they continued teaching. As co-researchers in the larger project, the authors interviewed participants and developed the protocols used for these interviews (see Appendix A). As a result, the authors were able to adapt interview protocols in line with grounded theory analysis of initial data.

The data analysis process began by focusing on the interviews of all 25 of the first-year cohort of TFA teachers within the "Comparative study of learning to teach" data set, looking specifically at a strand of the research that addressed the ways in which novice TFA teachers spoke of being supported. The authors included the 19 teachers who completed all of the first and second year interviews. Throughout the coding process, ATLAS.ti, a computer program configured for data analysis was used. Drawing on Corbin and Strauss's (2014) grounded theory coding process, the authors began by conducting open coding on the remaining 19 participants, which involved identifying categories of information across the data. Open coding made the authors aware of the ways that participants engaged in three interrelated institutions: their school site, the certification institution, and TFA itself. As a result of the open coding process, this sub-study eventually focused on the experiences of the 19 TFA teachers who continued to be interviewed for a third year after the end of their TFA commitment.

After identifying a strand of research, the authors began the process of axial coding, whereby they sought to establish relationships between initial codes. As a result of reviewing the data through the axial coding process, a pattern of difference was noticed between the ways that CMs in their first year talked about support while learning to teach compared to those teachers in their second year and beyond. While the authors' initial analysis focused on how participants were supported throughout the process of learning to teach, they began to recognize that these second- and third-year novice teachers spoke more of *offering* support rather than receiving it. The authors found this phenomenon particularly interesting, as the parent study was an investigation of how these participants were learning to teach, not how they were teaching others. Out of this analysis "implicit and explicit responsibilities," "support as fluid," and "attitudes about teaching and self" emerged as core categories around which the grounded theory grew. Finally, the authors engaged in selective coding, which allowed them to "explicate a story from the interconnection of these categories" (Creswell, 2009, p. 184). Through selective coding, themes were searched and patterns connected to the teachers' length of time in the classroom, noting any changes between first, second, and third year teachers.

As a result of conducting this grounded theory analysis, the emergence of a *novice veteran* identity was noticed. This term is not intended to conflate the experiences of traditional, veteran teachers and alternatively certified teachers in their second and third years. As will be discussed, these novice veterans were, in many cases, the senior-most members of their school staff and assumed roles and responsibilities that are typically reserved for teachers with more classroom experience. For this reason, a novice veteran identity is very different from that of a truly veteran teacher who may have decades of experience in the classroom. This paradoxical identity appeared to inform how novice TFA teachers provided and received support, conceptualized their teaching identity, and made choices while in practice. Through the analytical process, the authors noticed that second- and third-year CMs frequently mentioned providing support to first year TFA teachers. It was found that assuming the role of supporter had a direct effect on the identity development of these more experienced CMs. This phenomenon was especially interesting because the data revealed that participants appeared to identify with the role of support-provider more so than support-receiver, hence the concept of the novice veteran. Again, this is not to say that these teachers felt that they had mastered the craft of teaching. Instead, they described being veterans of a very specific TFA experience that was directly informed by the ecology of TFA, their graduate certification program, and the urban public school system in which they were employed. Thus, the authors use support as a lens to explore the transition from first year teacher to novice veteran.

Limitations

It is also important to address the limitations to this study. First, the number of participants in this study is quite small when compared to the number of individuals participating in TFA. However, the authors knew that the circumstances in which the TFA teachers in the study were placed—challenging urban schools with high teacher turnover—are common across the TFA experience. The tripartite experience of being a new teacher working as a member of TFA while earning one's teaching certification is also, by definition, part of being a TFA teacher. While the findings of this study, and the related theory of the novice veteran, are intended to set the stage for larger scale research, the authors believed that this sample is quite likely representative of the experiences of TFA teachers across the country.

Another limitation to consider is that self-report bias is an issue, as all methods were based on information offered by study participants. By utilizing the interviews of 19 CMs, the authors hoped to be able to account for range and variation across the teachers' experiences. Also, since this study was conducted within a very specific set of interrelated institutions, findings are not generalizable to all contexts. As such, this study is difficult to replicate in its entirety. However, future researchers might consider whether the novice veteran identity is transferrable to other contexts that involve TFA, a certification institution, and an urban school environment as the components of its system. Furthermore, while recognizing the salience of gender and race as they relate to any form of identity development, the authors felt that an investigation of these identifiers extended beyond the scope of this study. Through this initial study, the authors hoped to prompt a large-scale study of this phenomenon.

A Grounded Theory of the Novice Veteran Identity

The authors began to apply a grounded theory approach to data a larger study (Schultz, 2010) when, during the second year of interviews, it was noticed that the TFA teachers in the study were answering questions about how and where they were receiving support with descriptions of the support they were *giving* rather than getting. It was decided to focus on this group of TFA teachers and look more closely at how they were defining support, what it looked like within their professional and personal lives, from whom they were getting support, as well as to whom they were giving support as they learned to teach.

Over three, and in some cases four, years of interviews conducted with the teachers, the authors began to develop a theory of the novice veteran and how the TFA experience in this urban district was influential in developing a particular, and largely unexpected, teacher identity within most of these teachers. Due to the expectations placed upon the CMs within TFA, the urban school environment and the certification institution—in conjunction with their past experiences and personalities—the CMs in this study appeared to heed a call to be a leader. This also entailed caring for and supporting their cohort members, despite being in a highly challenging situation both professionally and emotionally. The following sections look at the three salient institutions and the ways that they individually and collectively were influential to the teachers' development as novice veterans.

TFA: Feeling Obligated to Support First Year CMs

Given the shared sense of experience second year TFA teachers felt with the incoming cohort behind them, most second year CMs offered the new teachers support through both formal and informal channels. Ashley (all names in this study are pseudonyms), a second year CM, recognized how useful a specific set of resources would have been for her practice:

> I try to tell second years to send your stuff in, 'cause if I was a first year last year and someone was, like, "Here, here's a *To Kill A Mockingbird* test" I would have died. It would have been fantastic . . . And now I have a huge packet that I send. I mean, *To Kill A Mockingbird* is not for another few months but, I'm sure English II teachers are going to be psyched when they get that 'cause it's a packet and a test and everything is right there. (AM, 05-22-08)

For Ashley, generating material was a way to "give back" to the next cohort of CMs. In fact, she felt so strongly about providing support that she encouraged other members of her cohort to do the same. When asked if she saw herself supporting incoming TFA teachers, Gina, a CM at the end of her first year, explained that she "feel[s] obligated, definitely. I mean, the stewardship part of our program is definitely that" (GM, 05-23-07). This language aligns with the mission of TFA, as it is, in part, premised on the concepts of leadership and stewardship.

There were also opportunities for teachers—even during their second year—to become instructors in TFA's weekend classes required for both first and second year teachers. TFA also provided opportunities for leadership as teachers moved past their second year, and several of the interviewees in this study moved out of the classroom and into the role of MTLD. As Omar, an MTLD, explained, "What that means is that I support first year teachers, second year teachers. . .

I also work to select new corps members and do organizational priorities such as recruitment and matriculation and alumni affairs, et cetera" (ON, 11-12-08). The nature of the TFA experience—whom it chose as teachers, the extreme demands on the teachers for a constrained time frame, the emphasis on cohorts, and the sense of stewardship imbued in the experience—appeared to contribute to a certain mindset within the group of TFA teachers interviewed for this study. They seemed to be united by their shared participation in an intense experience.

Urban School: Assuming Leadership Positions

The next institution influencing teacher identity development is the school system in which the teachers work. Though the 19 participants in the study taught various grade levels in several different schools across the district, there were many commonalities. In almost all cases they were part of a cohort of TFA teachers in the school. They were also almost all placed in schools with few or no truly veteran teachers. In many cases, by their second year, CMs were among the more senior faculty at the school.

Research has shown that it typically takes a new teacher three to four years to begin to no longer feel like a novice (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). This did not seem to be the case for most of the TFA teachers in the study. By their second year, or even the end of their first year, these teachers spoke of feeling and acting like "veterans" within their school contexts, as they were taking on official and unofficial leadership roles within their school and as members of TFA. Additionally they were acting—out of necessity, conviction, or both—autonomously in their classrooms and were actively mentoring and supporting first year teachers. As he approached the end of his first year in the classroom, Tom reflected:

> When I come back, the reality is I'm a seasoned veteran of [my school]. Because it's my second year here. And most teachers [at this school] don't stick around for longer than that. The teachers who have been here the longest at our school have been there four years. We don't have teachers who've been at [this school] for fifteen years, let alone twenty or twenty-five years. (TC, 04-28-07)

Not only did most of the teachers' schools have high levels of teacher turnover, but many had administrative turnover as well. While some teachers spoke highly of administrators or other more experienced teachers offering useful support, it appeared that many teachers felt that they were on their own at the school except for the support of their fellow CMs. It is possible that there was some degree of self-segregating of the TFA teachers within their own group, isolating themselves from connections and potential support, from administrators and non-TFA teachers. Given this (real or perceived) vacuum, the teachers in the study tended to feel that it was their duty to step in and offer support to other teachers and, in some cases, even take on some administrative roles by their second year. Most participants in the study revealed that they relied most heavily on other CMs as supporters.

Formal and informal opportunities for leadership were also available within the public school system. The participants in the study described mentoring new teachers, serving as club coordinators, and even becoming department chairs. In her third year, Anika was asked to become the Academic Enrichment Coordinator at her school. As she explains:

> I oversee like testing and enrichment at our school, especially English testing. I help out all the English teachers for that. . . . A lot of it really is like I'm just a right hand man, kind of like a principal . . . I do more of the walking around and dealing with students kind of thing. . . . I'm also in charge of the gifted program, which from the start has been a big deal. . . . I have to get a bunch of kids tested to see if they are gifted. So I'm in charge of all that. (AM, 03-14-07)

As this quotation demonstrates, Anika has assumed a formal leadership position at her school after two years in the classroom. This pattern was found throughout the data: even in their second and third years, CMs were taking on official and unofficial duties as leaders in their schools and guiding other, slightly less experienced, teachers.

University Context: Viewing Coursework as a Burden

Finally, the teachers were all a part of a third institution during their tenure with TFA, the university where they were required to fulfill requirements to be granted a teaching license and, if they chose to do so, continuing courses over a second year to earn a master's degree in education. All of the teachers in the study did choose to do the additional coursework for the degree. However, interviews indicated that the CMs chose to draw on TFA, not the university, for pedagogical strategies. When reflecting on how to plan a lesson, Kevin referenced TFA's approach:

> Teach For America taught me that when you plan a lesson, you need to have at least five sections. You need to have your intro, well, you have your opening, your intro to new material, your guided practice, your independent practice, and your closing. You need a way to assess it. You know, you need a way to assess how the kids are doing. You need to like "track your students," quote unquote. . . They help us know the nitty-gritty of what you need to do. (KJ, 01-03-08).

This representative quote revealed that while CMs were required to take courses at the associated university, they most often drew on TFA as a teaching exemplar. In this way, most of the teachers did not feel that the university offered them much help as they navigated their first two years of teaching.

Many CMs expressed that while they appreciated the support their university mentors could offer, they only saw them sporadically. The coursework itself was seen mostly as a burden with little practical help in the classroom. As one representative quote revealed:

> And then Thursday night having [university classes] and then having [university] module classes and those don't feel particularly relevant to what we're doing in the classroom, so in a lot of ways, they're like another frustrating kind of a feeling. In another time and setting they might be useful, but they don't feel particularly useful now. So those are like you feel like you could be doing other things if you didn't have those things to do. (EG, 04-12-07).

The teachers often expressed the feeling that the university coursework was too theoretical and not applicable to the day-to-day concerns that they had managing their classrooms and preparing content. The teachers generally felt a stronger connection to TFA than to the university and they

tended to credit their TFA mentors and peers—along with their own growing classroom experience—with being most influential on their process of learning to teach. In this way, it appears that the CMs did not see the university as a relevant source of support. As a result, the CMs seemed to choose not to integrate the role of "university student" into their nascent teaching identities.

Outliers: Exceptions that Support the Rule

As previously mentioned, four of the participants in this study did not assume an early veteran identity. Two teachers were in a school in which there were no other TFA teachers. Two others explicitly recognized and rejected the novice veteran identity. The authors found that these outliers and their particular circumstances and attitudes further supported the concept of the novice veteran.

Isolation as a mitigating factor. Of the 19 teachers interviewed, only two were placed in schools where no other TFA teachers were present. While many new teachers are placed in schools where they are the only new staff member, the data suggest that this was particularly problematic for first year CMs. In fact, these two teachers spoke of being "isolated" from the TFA network, which engendered feelings of frustration. Don, a first year CM, expressed his consternation:

> Well, I told you that I feel very isolated. There was definitely a sense of camaraderie that I felt with the other Teach For America corps members. And we, you know, all of us have been spread out in the city, and there are no other corps members at this particular school. . . . There's so much pressure in the first year to do amazing things and when you're in a place without any support, you can't. I just don't know if it's possible. (DC, 05-22-07)

Don did have his university-based mentor, his MTLD, and other personnel working within his school available as supporters; however, in his estimation, the role that they played paled in comparison to being placed with other CMs. Don's struggle speaks directly to the research (Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Seifert & Mandzuk, 2006) that finds that clustering new teachers in schools allows teachers to grow personally and professionally. As a result of his isolation, Don did not speak of feeling comfortable supporting other CMs as he moved into his second and third years of teaching.

Like Don, Stacy was the only TFA teacher in her school during her first year in the program. In her second year, she moved to a school where there were a number of other TFA teachers, in both their first and second years. While Stacy did not assume any formal school or TFA leadership positions in her second year, she spoke of helping CMs navigate their first year: "you can tell they have much less idea of what's going on. I'm trying to help them . . . 'cause last year I had [non-TFA teacher] friends at my school, but it wasn't the same" (SJ, 10-22-07). It appeared that Stacy's prior position as the only TFA teacher in her school had hindered her professional growth, as she felt isolated and unsure of her role in the classroom.

Recognizing—and rejecting—the role of the novice veteran. Two of the teachers in the study rejected the idea of becoming a source of support by their second year of teaching. Ryan and Melissa recognized that they were being positioned as potential supporters of first year TFA

teachers. However, they were not comfortable assuming this identity and pushed back against this role. In fact, in his second year, Ryan appeared to entirely reject his TFA identity, and instead wanted to be viewed as solely a "district teacher":

> There are many, many kinds of district teachers. But basically, when you're a district teacher, it's "I'm here to teach. I'm here for the students. I'm here because it's my obligation." The TFA teacher, you're concerned with doing things a very specific way. Everything has to be focused on academic achievement. (RS, 04-10-08)

Ryan's desire to be viewed as a district teacher versus a CM and his conscious choice to disengage from a TFA-related role (that of a leader and support provider) speaks to the complex identity of a TFA teacher. Although Ryan actively disengaged from the role of the novice veteran—or even a TFA teacher—he is still positioned as such by first year CMs. In fact, another interview participant, Jessica, brought up Ryan specifically in an interview. She noted his strengths as a teacher and how "extremely helpful" he was in assisting her with lesson planning. Thus, even in his rejection of the early veteran role, Ryan is viewed as a source of support by less experienced TFA teachers. In addition, while still only in his second year, Ryan was recognized by his principal as a teacher with exemplary classroom management skills.

Like Ryan, Melissa felt the pressure associated with supporting first year CMs. Melissa also recognized the existence of the novice veteran identity and was not comfortable assuming it, so much so that she requested that TFA not place first year teachers at her school:

> We didn't have a lot of openings, and I did go way out of my way to ask not to have corps members placed there because I didn't want to feel responsible for them when I'm still trying to get my footing as a teacher. . . . I didn't want to feel responsible for their success or failure. . . . So it's not that I'm not willing to help, it's that even if it was not formally expressed I would feel responsible for the success or failure of someone else from my program coming and doing a great job or a terrible job, and I didn't want to feel that responsibility. (MT, 10-08-07)

Again, Ryan and Melissa's rejection of the role of veteran and mentor seemed to have more to do with the perception of and pressure emanating from the role rather than a denial of its existence. As is discussed in the following section, TFA must provide CMs with opportunities to learn how to support others, as they are irrefutably positioned as resources by neophyte TFA teachers.

Discussion

As the findings reveal, the nature of operating within these three interconnected, challenging environments, coupled with participants' respective identities as TFA CMs and interactions with other TFA teachers, led to the development of the novice veteran identity. The novice veteran identity is largely defined by the nature of the support CMs received and offered within these interrelated institutions. Given the overwhelming nature of being a first or second year teacher in a challenging school environment, while also taking graduate school classes, one might expect that these CMs would have relied very heavily on all of the many potential sources for support made available to them. In practice, however, those sources of support were sometimes unavailable, such as when there were few or no truly veteran teachers working in the same school with a CM, or when those present were considered unhelpful, as many teachers felt about

their administrators and professors. Considering that alternatively certified teachers develop their identities in practice, these support systems are especially critical, as these CMs are consistently adapting to and making sense of the numerous contexts and perspectives that they encounter (Beijaard et al., 2004; Foote et al., 2011).

CMs' attitudes proved equally important to cultivating their respective identities as support providers. This appears to be due, in large part, to their decision to enter teaching through TFA, as the organization actively seeks out individuals who are proven leaders (Teach For America, 2015). The authors found this to be true for these participants, as most spoke of being leaders in college or other contexts before entering TFA. Once a teacher joins the organization, he or she will likely have the chance to be a leader beyond the classroom. TFA's reliance on second, third, and fourth year CMs acting as mentors and MTLDs contributes to the attitude common amongst the participants that they are not only ready to offer support by their second years, but also that there is an obligation to do so. Given the high teacher turnover in the schools in which the CMs teach, there was often a necessity that they "step up" and not only offer what help they could to incoming TFA teachers, but even take on roles such as a lead teacher of a subject area, something that might be asked of teachers with decades of experience in another setting. Moreover, the clustering of CMs in schools appeared to engender a culture of camaraderie and related support (Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Seifert & Mandzuk, 2006).

The rejection of the university as a support provider also plays a critical role in the development of the novice veteran identity. Although the university comprises one-third of the tripartite system that the CMs operate within, it appears that it was the least valued component, as the CMs deliberately chose not to include the university as an element of their teaching identities. As data revealed, in addition to relying on other CMs for support, many first year TFA teachers turned to TFA, not the university, for pedagogical guidance. In this way, TFA seems to, whether deliberately or inadvertently, undermine the value of university coursework, as the notion of "teacher leader" runs in rhetorical and practical opposition to the role of "university student." For this reason, it is critical that TFA revisits the role of the university within the CMs' support network and considers how the university is positioned. University coursework has the potential to provide much-needed knowledge and skills that can assist the teachers as they navigate their first years in the classroom and provide support to other CMs. Moreover, knowledge gained through the university has the capacity to mitigate the issue of burnout that CMs are said to experience (Brewer, 2014).

Finally, research shows that internal and external factors largely determine the development of one's teaching identity (Butler, 1993; Mockler, 2011; Wenger, 1998). Thus, the nature of these external factors, coupled with the CMs internal beliefs about what it means to be a teacher-leader, appears to facilitate a process of second year CMs supporting first year CMs. A fundamental component of TFA is that the program spans two years. While many TFA-trained teachers stay in the classroom beyond two years, and the organization hopes and expects that its alumni will continue to participate in and understand urban education in various ways throughout their careers, active involvement in the experience is limited to this time frame. Although these teachers are not veterans in a traditional sense, second year CMs *are* veterans—of TFA. They are more than halfway done with their commitment and, just as they were in most cases supported and encouraged by the veterans of the program who were a year ahead of them, they typically

provide support to new CMs. All study participants recognized the role of the novice veteran; it was up to the individual to determine whether they would assume or reject this status. As such, these data appear to complicate Feiman-Nemser's (2003) assertion that it usually takes a new teacher three to four years to begin to no longer feel like a novice.

These factors, when considered holistically, speak to the research that states that one's teaching identity is both *taken on by* and *ascribed to* the individual (Butler, 1993; Gee, 2000; Kaplan & Flum, 2010; Mead, 1934; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). In this case, CMs believe in their capacity to function as leaders and providers of support. This is coupled with the ecology of their school sites as well as TFA, as the respective institutions provide spaces for the CMs to assume formal and informal leadership roles. These forces work in tandem to inform CMs' identity as novice veterans. Data also indicated that some CMs appeared to reject the novice veteran identity. In Melissa's case, she did not desire to assume the position of "teacher leader," wanting instead to focus on her classroom rather than on a CM. Ryan rebuffed the title of "TFA teacher," choosing instead to identify as a "district teacher." Given Kaplan and Flum's (2010) assertion that "the more integrated and coherent the identity structure is, the more adjusted the individual is," these findings suggest that Ryan and Melissa appeared to have a difficult time rectifying their TFA and school-based identities (p. 56).

Given this context, it is critical to consider how TFA and certification institutions address CMs' leadership capacities while they are in practice. While TFA provides CMs and graduates of the program with formal leadership roles, such as corps ambassadors or MTLDs, this study shows that second- and third-year TFA teachers also universally recognize their role as informal supporters of first year CMs. Thus, it would be useful for TFA or the certification institution to provide training to these second-year teachers. This training might focus on how CMs can informally support new teachers in their school system. In addition, as many CMs take on the roles of department chairs or administrators early in their tenure, TFA might also provide professional development that would allow CMs to navigate these positions of authority. Additionally, given that the teachers are placed in high-needs schools with rapid rates of teacher turnover, support within the school system itself appears to be lacking. Even so, TFA can consider ways to deliberately connect new CMs with non-TFA teacher-mentors within their respective schools. Doing so has the potential to reduce the burden placed on CMs as support providers, stymie the development of the novice veteran identity, and mitigate the insularity of the TFA program.

By their second year, the teachers are as much a part of the induction process as they are recipients of it. As a result, the way that teachers take up this role is recursive, as this support process is continually repeated within this complex ecology. As second- and third-year CMs give support to others, it influences not only their identity in relation to the teacher whom they are helping but also the ways that they think of themselves as developing teachers. While support, mentoring, and induction programs are often studied in relation to teacher retention or as part of new teacher education, it is important to recognize that teachers within this system are both giving and receiving support. The implications of this on the development of their identities as teachers must be considered. Ideally, teachers in their second and third years would not be placed into the role of support provider. However, given the nature of the system in which most TFA CMs function, this is their reality. Thus, it is important to consider how to support all CMs as

they navigate their roles as alternatively certified teachers. For these reasons, this study fills a void in current research by offering a novel way to consider the identity development of alternatively certified teachers.

References

Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(2), 107–128. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2003.07.001

Brewer, T. J. (2014). Accelerated burnout: How Teach For America's academic impact model and theoretical culture of accountability can foster disillusionment among its corps members. *Educational Studies, 50*(3), 246–263. doi: 10.1080/00131946.2014.907163

Burstein, N., Czech, M., Kretschmer, D., Lombardi, J., & Smith, C. (2009). Providing qualified teachers for urban schools: The effectiveness of the accelerated collaborative teacher preparation program in recruiting, preparing, and retaining teachers. *Action in Teacher Education, 31*(1), 24–37. doi: 10.1080/01626620.2009.10463508

Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "sex."* New York, NY: Routledge.

Cann, C. N. (2015). What school movies and TFA teach us about who should teach urban youth: Dominant narratives as public pedagogy. *Urban Education, 50*(3), 288–315. doi: 10.1177/0042085913507458

Children's Defense Fund. (2014). The state of America's children. Retrieved from http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/state-of-americas-children/2014-soac.pdf

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2014). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2008). A future worthy of teaching for America. *Phi Delta Kappan, 89*(10), 730. doi: 10.1177/003172170808901008

Darling-Hammond, L., Holtzman, D. J., Gatlin, S. J., & Heilig, J. V. (2005). Does teacher preparation matter? Evidence about teacher certification, Teach For America, and teacher effectiveness. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 13*(42), 1-51. doi: 10.14507/epaa.v13n42.2005

Dill, V. (1990). Support for the "unsupportable." *Phi Delta Kappan, 72*(3), 198–199.

Donaldson, M. L. (2009). Into—and out of—city schools: The retention of teachers prepared for urban settings. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 42*(3), 347–370. doi: 10.1080/10665680903034753

Feiman-Nemser, S. (2003). What new teachers need to learn. *Educational Leadership, 60*(8), 25–

29. Retrieved from
http://educationalleader.com/subtopicintro/read/ASCD/ASCD_232_1.pdf

Fletcher, T. (2012). Experiences and identities: Pre-service elementary classroom teachers being and becoming teachers of physical education. *European Physical Education Review, 18*(3), 380–395. doi: 10.1177/1356336X12450798

Foote, M. Q., Brantlinger, A., Haydar, H. N., Smith, B., & Gonzalez, L. (2011). Are we supporting teacher success: Insights from an alternative route mathematics teacher certification program for urban public schools. *Education and Urban Society, 43*(3), 396–425. doi: 10.1177/0013124510380420

Freedman, S. W., & Appleman, D. (2009). "In it for the long haul": How teacher education can contribute to teacher retention in high-poverty, urban schools. *Journal of Teacher Education, 60*(3), 323–337. doi: 10.1177/0022487109336181

Friedrichsen, P., Lannin, J., Abell, S., Arbaugh, F., & Volkmann, M. (2008). Examining incoming identities in an alternative certification program in mathematics and science. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science & Technology Education, 4*(2), 175–188. Retrieved from http://www.ejmste.com/v4n2/Eurasia_v4n2_Friedrichsen.pdf

Gabriel, R. (2011). A practice-based theory of professional education: Teach For America's professional development model. *Urban Education, 46*(5), 975–986. doi: 10.1177/0042085911400324

Gee, J. (2000). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education, 25*, 99–125. doi: 10.3102/0091732X025001099

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory; Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Good, T., McCaslin, M., Tsang, H., Zhang, J., Wiley, C., & Bozack, A. (2006). How well do 1st-year teachers teach: Does type of preparation make a difference? *Journal of Teacher Education, 57*, 410–430. doi: 10.1177/0022487106291566

Hawley, H. (1990). The theory and practice of alternative certification: Implications for the improvement of teaching. *Peabody Journal of Education, 67*(3), 3–34. doi: 10.1080/01619569009538690

Heineke, A. J., Carter, H., Desimone, M., & Cameron, Q. (2010). Working together in urban schools: How a university teacher education program and Teach For America partner to support alternatively certified teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *37*(3)123–136. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/23479501

Higgins, M., Hess, F., Weiner, J., & Robinson, W. (2011). Creating a corps of change agents. *Education Next, 11*(3), 18–25.

Hollins, E. (2012). *Learning to teach in urban schools: The transition from preparation to practice.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Huisman, S., Singer, N., & Catapano, S. (2010). Resiliency to success: Supporting novice urban teachers. *Teacher Development, 14(*4), 483–499. doi: 10.1080/13664530.2010.533490

Humphrey, D. C., & Wechsler, M. E. (2007). Insights into alternative certification: Initial findings from a national study. *Teachers College Record, 109*(3), 483–530.

Humphrey, D. C., Wechsler, M. E., & Hough, H. J. (2008). Characteristics of effective alternative teacher certification programs. *Teachers College Record, 110*(1), 1–63.

Kaplan, A., & Flum, H. (2010). Achievement goal orientations and identity formation styles. *Educational Research Review, 5*(1), 50–67. doi: 10.1016/j.edurev.2009.06.004

Kane, T. J., Rockoff, J. E., & Staiger, D. O. (2008). What does certification tell us about teacher effectiveness? Evidence from New York City. *Economics of Education Review, 27*(6), 615-631. doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2007.05.005

Koerner, M., Lynch, D., & Martin, S. (2008). Why we partner with Teach for America: Changing the conversation. *Phi Delta Kappan, 89*(10), 726–729. doi: 10.1177/003172170808901007

Kopp, W. (2011). *A chance to make history: What works and what doesn't in providing an excellent education for all.* New York, NY: Public Affairs.

Malderez, A., Hobson, A. J., Tracey, L., & Kerr, K. (2007). Becoming a student teacher: Core features of the experience. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 30*(3), 225–248. doi: 10.1080/02619760701486068

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mead, G. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Mockler, N. (2011). Beyond "what works": Understanding teacher identity as a practical and political tool. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 17*(5), 517–528. doi: 10.1080/13540602.2011.602059

Nagy, C. J., & Wang, N. (2007). The alternate route teachers' transition to the classroom: Preparation, support and retention. *NASSP Bulletin, 91*(1), 98–113. doi: 10.1177/0192636506299153

National University Rankings. (2015, September). *U.S. News & World Report*. Retrieved from

http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/data

O'Connor, K. E. (2008). "You choose to care": Teachers, emotions and professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(1), 117–126. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2006.11.008

Schultz, K. (2010). A comparative study of learning to teach: Investigating the preparation of TFA teachers and pre-service teachers in Philadelphia. Unpublished manuscript.

Seifert, K., & Mandzuk, D. (2006). Student cohorts in teacher education: Support groups or intellectual communities? *Teachers College Record, 108*(7), 1296–1320. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9620.2006.00694.x

Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal, 41*(3), 681–714. doi: 10.3102/00028312041003681

Starks, H., & Brown Trinidad, S. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research, 17*(10), 1372–1380. doi: 10.1177/1049732307307031

Sutherland, L., & Markauskaite, L. (2012). Examining the role of authenticity in supporting the development of professional identity: An example from teacher education. *Higher Education, 64*(6), 747–766. doi: 10.1007/s10734-012-9522-7

Tamir, E. (2009). Choosing to teach in urban schools among graduates of elite colleges. *Urban Education, 44*(5), 522–544. doi: 10.1177/0042085909339373

Teach For America. (2015). Why teach? Teach For America. Retrieved from http://www.teachforamerica.org/why-teach-for-america

Thomas, L., & Beauchamp, C. (2011). Understanding new teachers' professional identities through metaphor. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*, 762–769. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2010.12.007

Veltri, B. T. (2008). Teaching or service?: The site-based realities of Teach For America teachers in poor, urban schools. *Education and Urban Society*, *40*(5), 511–542. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124508319281

Walkington, J. (2005). Becoming a teacher: Encouraging development of teacher identity through reflective practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 33*(1), 53–64. doi: 10.1080/1359866052000341124

Wang, J., Odell, S. J., & Schwille, S. A. (2008). Effects of teacher induction on beginning teachers' teaching: A critical review of the literature. *Journal of Teacher Education, 59*(2), 132–152. doi:10.1177/0022487107314002

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Zeichner, K. M., & Schulte, A. K. (2001). What we know and don't know from peer-reviewed research about alternative teacher certification programs. *Journal of Teacher Education, 52*(4), 266–282. doi: 10.1177/0022487101052004002

Appendix A

TFA Interview Protocol: Year One – First interview

Questions pertaining to experiences before TFA:
1.   How did you make the decision to become a teacher?
         a.   How do you feel about this decision now?
         b.   How do your friends or family feel about this decision?
2.   How did you make the decision to teach in TFA?
         a.   At this moment what do you think of that decision?
         b.   How do your friends or family feel about this decision?
3.   Tell me about your past experiences with teaching. (Probes: formal, informal)
         a.   What from these experiences stands out as what you bring to teaching today?
4.   Prior to coming to TFA and [the university], what formal preparation for teaching have you had?
5.   What knowledge and skills do you bring from past formal and informal experiences?
6.   What did you know about teaching in an urban school, teaching urban students, interacting with urban parents, and being in an urban community prior to becoming a TFA Corps Member?
7.   What do you know now?

Questions pertaining to experiences in TFA and [the university]:
8.   What has TFA (i.e., summer institute, learning teams) prepared you to do so far?
9.   What has your [the university] coursework (Thursday night seminars, methods modules) prepared you to do so far?
10.   What are the most important things you need to learn now? (Probes: teaching, cultural differences, knowledge of the community, learning a new culture)
         a.   Who do you think can help you learn these things? How?
11.   Who do you talk to about teaching?
         a.   What topics do you talk about with them?

Questions pertaining to current teaching experiences:
12.   What has your experience been like so far as a first year teacher?
13.   Tell us a story from your first month of teaching.
         a.   How did you prepare for your first day of school?
         b.   How did you know what to do?
         c.   Who was most supportive during this time?
14.   Tell me a story about teaching today.
         a.   How did you know what to do today?
         b.   For day-to-day situations at school, who do you rely on most for help or support?
15.   Describe the social organization of your school. In whom do you seek help or support?
16.   How has your teaching changed since the first day of school?
17.   Think of a moment in the last couple of days when you needed to make a decision. What kind of decision was it? Can you walk me through the decision-making process?
18.   How are you learning to teach?
         a.   Are you talking to people? If so, who?

b. Are you watching movies or TV shows? Which ones?
c. Are you reading books? Which ones?
d. Why are you doing (or not doing) these things?

TFA Interview Protocol: Year Two – First interview

1. How are you doing?
2. How are you feeling about being back? How does it feel different from last year?
3. What do you feel like you've learned since last year? How did you learn it?
4. What are you teaching this year?
5. What did you do over the summer?
6. Did you do anything over the summer that helped you to prepare for this year? Anything that gives you a new perspective or new ideas about teaching?
7. Tell me about your first day this year. What things did you do differently than last year? How did you learn those things?
8. After having taught for a year, how did you prepare for this year? How was that different from last year?
    a. What did you draw on? (Probe: Courses? Mistakes? Observations?)
9. Who did you work with to prepare for this year?
10. Is there anything specific that you drew on from last year, like moments, mistakes or observations, which you try to incorporate in doing things differently this year?
11. Who do you go to for support?
12. Are there new TFA teachers in your school? What's your relationship to them?
    a. Are there things you've learned that you want to share with them?
    b. What is the source of that learning?
13. What are your goals for yourself this year?
14. What are your goals for your students this year?
15. Think of a moment in the last two weeks (or even when preparing for the school year) when you had to make a decision. What kind of decision was it? Can you walk me through the process of making that decision?
16. How are you learning to teach? Mentors? Other corps members? Experienced teachers at your school?
17. Are there any 1st or 2nd year traditionally certified teachers at your school?
18. What are your plans at the moment for after you finish your 2nd year?

TFA Interview Protocol: Year Three– First interview

1. Where are you teaching? School? Grade? Subject?
2. How long do you plan to stay in teaching? What are your plans next year, in 5 years, etc.?
3. How have your choices this year been influenced by your experience
    a. as a corps member?
    b. as a teacher?
    c. teaching in an urban school?
    d. at [the university]?
    e. in [the city]?

4. Are there events or experiences from your two years teaching as a part of TFA that have been particularly influential or that you often think of as you are teaching now?
5. As you know, our study is about learning to teach and it's a question you've been asked many times. Comparing your two years in TFA and your third year in the classroom, how do you think you were learning to teach differently? How did supports change? Do you think you were learning more or less during your third year?
6. What are you looking to learn this year? How will you learn it? What are your sources of support?
7. How have your understandings changed about urban settings, urban schools, urban children?
8. As you start this year, what are some changes you plan to make?
9. What kinds of things do you continue to use from your program?
10. Are you in touch with friends/classmates/professors from your program?