

Teach First's Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice: Distributive Justice and the Politics of Progressive Neoliberalism

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Instruction

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**TEACH FIRST'S THEORY OF TEACHER EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL
JUSTICE: DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND THE POLITICS OF PROGRESSIVE
NEOLIBERALISM**

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By

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ABSTRACT

In this critical ethnography I examined Teach First, the U.K. teacher education program modeled after Teach For America (TFA). Teach First described itself as “a unique business-led programme dedicated to addressing educational disadvantage by placing elite graduates in the schools that need them most” (Teach First, 2010). Teach First was thus problematically positioned at the crossroads of both neoliberal and progressive ideologies. My research addressed this problem by uncovering Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice by applying a framework developed by Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2010) to interviews, observations, and artifacts that I collected at the 2008 Teach First Summer Institute. I then critiqued this theory using the tools of “Policy Sociology,” a British research tradition that examines the political, ideological, and economic assumptions that drive education policy.

My research led me to identify Teach First as a “progressive neoliberal” (Lahann & Reagan, in press) organization which is driven entirely by a theory of teacher education for social justice based on the idea of justice as distribution. This theory explains why the staff of Teach First appreciated the organization to have a mission of social justice while at the same time endorsing and promoting neoliberal policies which conflict with many theories of teacher education for social justice that draw from theories of justice as recognition. I conclude that while Teach First was committed to improving the lives of marginalized populations, its theory of teacher education for social justice implicitly supported the systemic and hegemonic forces of neoliberalism which produce educational inequity.

For Olivia, Rory, and TBD

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¹ I was actually going to try to get it wrong one final time in this section, but then I thought I'd screw it up by actually doing it right for once, and the whole joke would have been a bust.

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To Rory, the greatest joy in my life. One day you'll be able to read this. One day

I'll be able to explain to you what the heck Daddy was babbling about for three-hundred pages. And one day, if I find the right words, I'll be able to explain to you just how much you mean to me. You, too, TBD.

Finally, to Olivia. I mean, how am I supposed to write this? How exactly am I supposed to “acknowledge” your role in completing this dissertation? The entire proposition is patently ridiculous—as if any words can do justice to how much I love you and how much I've relied upon you over the last few years. I'll give it a shot, and I can't be bothered that this thing is a public document--you deserve public exultation. Thank you for being my wife, my best friend, and the most amazing mother to my children. For who you are in the best of times, and, even more, for who you are when things get tough. For everything we've been through and everything that's still to come. Thank you.

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Chapter One: Research Problem

This dissertation examines “Teach First,” a teacher preparation program in the U.K. which was based on “Teach for America” (TFA), the highly publicized alternate-route teacher education program in the United States. Although it was not officially affiliated with TFA, Teach First was closely modeled after it: recent “elite” college graduates teach for two years in some of the most under-performing secondary schools in England. To date, only one study (Hutchings, Maylor, Mendick, Menter, & Smart, 2006) has been conducted on the Teach First program. Teach First described itself as “a unique business-led programme dedicated to addressing educational disadvantage by placing elite graduates in the schools that need them most” (Teach First, 2008a). Its rhetoric, agenda, policies, and practices combined to locate it at the intersection of progressive² and neoliberal ideologies, which appears counter-intuitive given the way that these two schools of thought have been opposed in the literature of education reform. In this regard, Teach First was an example of a recent trend in both the U.K. and the U.S. in which neoliberal education policies were framed with the language of progressive education philosophy.

The research problem that this study addresses is how these seemingly contradictory philosophies seemed to coexist within Teach First. This problem is examined by uncovering a theory of teacher education for social justice that was

² For the purposes of this research, I am using a flexible definition of “progressivism” as the loose collection of educational reform theories which share the assumption that “schooling and teacher education are crucial elements in the making of a more just society” (Zeichner, 2003, p. 507). In contrast, I treat “social justice” with much more precision, as an explicit theory for social reconstruction in education. Although this distinction is somewhat arbitrary as both terms suffer from a lack of specificity in the literature, recent work has attempted to clarify the meaning of social justice (e.g. Cochran Smith, 2010), while “progressive” remains a considerably more ambiguous term.

subsumed within and throughout Teach First's mission, policies, and practices. Using a framework for a theory of teacher education for social justice developed by Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2010), and three "theoretical strategies" of policy sociology developed by Stephen Ball (1990), this research proposes and critiques Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice. This theory is developed through critical ethnographic analysis based on interviews, observations, and artifacts collected during the 2008 Summer Institute, the primary teacher education component in the Teach First program. The major research question examined is, "What is Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice, and what are this theory's political, ideological, and economic assumptions about education, teacher education, and social justice?"

Answering this question requires a critical and nuanced understanding of the term "social justice." Unfortunately, social justice has recently, in educational policy and research, become more catchphrase than philosophy. As North (2006) summarizes,

The label 'social justice' is appearing throughout the field—in teacher education program discourses and policies, teacher-activist organization statements..., educational conference programs, and scholarly articles and books.

Unfortunately, educators, educational researchers, and educational policymakers frequently employ this catchphrase without offering an explanation of its social, cultural, economic, and political significance. (p. 507)

In fact, as Zeichner (2006) notes, it is "difficult to find a teacher education program in the United States that does not claim to have a program that prepares teachers for social justice" (p. 328). The ubiquity of the term "social justice" combined with its lack of clear conceptualization has led the term to lose so much meaning that it currently includes

competing, even mutually exclusive theories that all make the same claim to social justice (Gewirtz and Cribb, 2002; North, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2010).

To this point, scholars whose theories of educational change flatly contradict one another each use the term “social justice” to describe their educational agenda. For example, Peter McLaren and his colleagues (2010) in the edited volume, *Revolutionizing Pedagogy: Education for Social Justice Within and Beyond Global Neo-Liberalism*, claim a mission of social justice in their efforts to advance a “pedagogy of critique” applied to “the production of subjectivities under capitalism” (p. 4). Their agenda is to interrogate the discourses of capitalism and neoliberalism for the subjective knowledge that is disseminated, without critique, as objective truth. Meanwhile, organizations such as The Core Knowledge Foundation, also claim a social justice agenda, despite pursuing goals which directly conflict with those of McLaren and his colleagues. As Matt Davis (2008), director of the core knowledge reading program, describes them,

This is a curriculum designed for social justice. The well-off kids, the ones whose parents read to them, teach them about numbers and letters, take them to New York and Washington, DC in the summer, visit museums, listen to public radio, and so on – those kids are going to tend to soak up a lot of cultural literacy in the home environment, and they will be able to make sense of a lot of what they read. But other kids are not as fortunate. These children need to get their cultural literacy in the schools.

In this case, the cultural literacy curriculum he refers to represents a transparent attempt to define exactly what it is that all children need to know, no matter their individual culture or background. Such an agenda is absolutely mutually exclusive with that of

McLaren and his colleagues, but both take the label of “social justice.” As Boyles et al (2010) argue, these multiple, conflicting meanings of social justice obfuscate educational reform to the point that it becomes difficult for the public to distinguish one educational philosophy from another.

While Teach First did not use the language of “social justice³,” it was an example of the broader problem of neoliberal education reforms that are advanced with the language of progressivism. Given the current context of neoliberal education reform, particularly in light of its recent progressive framing, it is essential for research to attempt to unpack and resolve the tensions between progressive and neoliberal ideologies in order to appreciate the degree to which neoliberal agendas have the potential to, for better or worse, effect social justice. To frame this problem, I first summarize the ubiquity of neoliberal education reform globally in the U.S. and in the U.K., paying particular attention to recent reforms that cast themselves in a progressive light. Next, I briefly survey the critiques of neoliberalism which charge that no matter its rhetoric, neoliberalism is antithetical to progressive goals. Then I provide an overview and brief history of Teach First. Finally, I show that Teach First was an example of both neoliberal and progressive policy. Each of these pieces is developed in significantly more detail during the remainder of this research, but, in order to appreciate the scope of the research problem, it is useful to give each of them a brief treatment here.

Neoliberal Education Reform: Globally and in the United States

Michael Apple (2006) identifies neoliberalism as “the common sense of an emerging international consensus” (p. 15) among policy makers about the most

³ Despite not using the term “social justice,” in interviews the staff of Teach First universally agreed that Teach First, as an organization, had a mission of social justice. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

appropriate model for education reform. Since its rise to prominence in the 1970's, neoliberalism has served as the often invisible and supposedly objective worldview within which social, economic, and political challenges are reduced from complex conceptual issues to technical problems requiring the free play of individual self-interest and the guiding hand of market forces to generate solutions (Harvey, 2005). Accordingly, from the perspective of neoliberalism, corporate involvement is not only welcome in public education, but encouraged. The effects of neoliberalism have been felt across the globe, as evidenced by recent education reforms in the U.S. (Apple, 2006), Western Europe (Ahonen, 2002), Africa (Weber, 2002), and Latin America (Torres, 2002). Indeed, as many scholars (e.g. Chomsky, 1999; McLaren, 2001) have argued, neoliberalism has been the defining philosophy of neo-imperialism and globalization, and has driven market-based Western-initiated education reforms in the developing world.

The last two decades of educational reform in the United States reflect a commitment to these tenets with broad, albeit tacit, bipartisan support (Torres, 2005). As Cuban (2004) notes, the application of business-crafted solutions to American public education has become so normalized, that it is often not even viewed as having been “borrowed from the corporate closet” (p. 240). A review of recent educational reforms in the United States reveals the pervasiveness of neoliberal influence on current education policy: the ever-increasing number of charter schools, corporate partnerships and sponsorship of educational initiatives, educational management organizations, “CEOs” of schools districts, the creation of a competitive market for teacher education via alternate-route preparation programs, and, of course, the school choice and accountability provisions of No Child Left Behind itself. The Obama administration has continued this

trend, advocating neoliberal policies based on competition, accountability, quantifiable student achievement, and teacher performance. Indeed, it is hard to imagine an education policy more neoliberal than the Race to the Top competition which put states into competition with one another and then explicitly rewarded the winners based on the degree to which they exemplified neoliberal education reform in the form of charter schools, teacher accountability, performance pay, etc. (Cofield, 2010). Race to the Top was, in essence, a neoliberal method of pursuing neoliberal goals.

Neoliberal Trends in Public Education in the United Kingdom

In comparison to the United States, the effects of neoliberalism in the U.K., particularly in England, have been just as pronounced. A defining aspect of New Labour's "Third Way" (a hybrid of state intervention and free-market policies, see Hill, 2001a), is a commitment to neoliberal social policy, particularly in regards to education (e.g., Harvey, 2005; Hursh, 2005). Since the election of the Labour government in 1997, the gap between the business world and public education in England has grown increasingly thin (Crouch, 2003, Rikowki, 2005). In what Richard Hatcher (2006) identifies as the "reagenting" of public education, the state has come to invite and then rely upon the corporate world for innovation and implementation of education policy. Indeed, the most prominent example of this has been the creation of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), which has, in return for financial investment, formally turned over the design and operation of schools to "sponsors," including individual businesspersons and corporations like UBS Financial Services.

Yet this is only one example among many. From Local Education Authority (essentially school districts) functions to the training of teachers in state-sponsored

curriculum, the government has chosen to purposefully divest its role in public education. In 2004, England's Department for Education and Skills (DfES) made it clear that this was not just a trend, but a policy goal, promising to do even "less direct management of the system and less direct service delivery" (p. 102) in the future. John Furlong (2005) and David Hill (2001a), among other scholars, have identified teacher education policy in England as a direct product of this ideology, noting the competitive market for teacher preparation that was intentionally created by New Labour policies. No longer just the domain of universities, teacher education in England has been recently flooded with alternate-route pathways, such as Teach First, designed to compete with one another to improve quality and efficiency.

Critiques of Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has been heavily critiqued as both a general philosophy for public policy, and one especially unfit for public education. Critics contend that neoliberalism sustains and promotes capitalism's exploitive class conflict (McLaren, 2001), imposes hegemonic political discourse (Olssen & Peters, 2006), creates environments in which the underprivileged are less able to participate politically (Giroux, 2004), and redefines citizenship itself in terms of self-interest, as opposed to public need (Chomsky, 1999). Moreover, scholars in both the United States and England have persuasively argued that business models and partnerships should be considered antithetical to the goals of public education (e.g. Apple, 2006; Ball, 2006a; Cuban, 2004), and teacher education in particular (e.g. Apple, 2001; Earley, 2000; Sleeter, 2009). Furthermore, a number of critics have shown that neoliberal policies that rely on the private sector serve to further entrench educational inequity worldwide and in England in particular (e.g. Ball, 2007;

Hill, 2001a; Regan, 2007). The argument of many critics is that neoliberalism's faith in the market process, its laissez faire approach to rectifying social inequities, and its reinforcement of hegemony, are at odds with progressive and social justice ideologies, which assert that the mission of public education is to rectify social inequities and empower marginalized populations through democratic education (Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Lahann, Terrell, Shakman, 2009).

Neoliberal Policy, Progressive Language, and Progressive Neoliberalism

A notable characteristic of recent education reforms in both England and the United States has been the framing of neoliberal policies with the language of equity, fairness, and justice. As Apple (2006) notes, No Child Left Behind, for all of its conservative mechanisms, “incorporate(s) a number of progressive-sounding issues and (is) couched in seemingly progressive language” (p. 90). Framing the problems of the nation in terms of an achievement gap between rich/white and poor/minority children, but instilling policies based on choice, competition, and accountability, overlays neoliberal thought with a progressive tone. Similarly, TFA, with its mission of, “One day all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education”(TFA, 2008a) employs similar progressive language, but is, itself, also a manifestation of neoliberal education reform which has deregulated teacher education. A similar pattern has occurred in England with the Every Child Matters (ECM) legislation, a sweeping series of neoliberal policies accompanied by progressive, child-centered language. Through rigid accountability and a series of private sector partnerships, ECM is dedicated to “narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers” while also giving

children “a voice in government and in public life” (Department for Children, Schools, and Families, 2005a, 2005b).

The recent Race to the Top competition is another example of neoliberal policy draped with progressive language. Consider, for example, President Obama’s (2009) remarks when he announced the Race to the Top competition,

That's the common spirit -- the spirit of common purpose, that all of us have to have in America today. And I'm absolutely confident that if we're all willing to come together and embrace that spirit -- in the living room, in the classroom, and the State House, on Capitol Hill -- then not only will we see our students reaching farther, not only will we see our schools performing better, not only are we going to help ensure our children outcompete workers abroad and that America outcompetes nations, but we're going to protect the dream of our founding and give all of our children, every last one of them, a fair chance and an equal start in the race to life.

This merging of neoliberalism and progressivism is the fundamental problem that this research addresses. Emilie Reagan and I (in press) have argued that in some instances this conflation is more than just describing neoliberalism with progressive words. For example, we identified TFA as drawing on a distinct form of political philosophy that we characterized as “progressive neoliberalism.” This ideology simultaneously adheres to and violates neoliberal tenets in pursuit of progressive goals. It is a major argument of this research that Teach First is another example of progressive neoliberalism.

Furthermore this research relies on the assumption that in order to fully understand and

critique this ideology, it is imperative to understand the theory of social justice that undergirds it.

Overview of Teach First

It seems likely that many scholars would argue that Teach First should have been understood as an example of the recent, counter-intuitive trend in which neoliberal policies are couched in progressive language. However, it is also possible that Teach First might actually have been fully committed to progressive goals pursued through neoliberal policy. By examining Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice via the frameworks of Cochran-Smith (2010) and Ball (1990) I am able to explain how these apparent contradictions are resolved by a theory of social justice that draws upon the idea of justice as distribution. Before turning to evidence of Teach First's neoliberal and progressive ideologies, I briefly summarize the model and history of Teach First. Chapter Four contains a much more detailed and thorough summary of Teach First's history.

Like TFA, Teach First was not created by people with professional experience in public education. Rather, in 2002, McKinsey & Company, a management consulting firm, was contracted by the British government to conduct a study that would examine the ways in which corporations could better serve the needs of public education in London. McKinsey concluded that England could benefit from the model of TFA. The following year, Brett Wigdortz, an American and a member of the consulting team, with support from both the government and major corporations (e.g. The Canary Wharf Group, HSBC, Citibank) created Teach First (Teach First, 2008b). Originally placing teachers only in London, Teach First has since expanded to other regions: the Midlands

(Birmingham and Nottingham), the Northwest (Liverpool and Manchester), and Yorkshire.

Teach First recruits “exceptional graduates” from “top universities” into the program (Teach First, 2008d, p.1). Admission to the program is very competitive, as Teach First is accorded a good deal of prestige by other employers and the media. Recently, the London Times (2010) ranked it as the 8th most prestigious graduate employer in the country—far and away the highest ranking of any non-profit organization. Teach First encouraged participants to think of themselves as an elite group, as this statement from their website indicates: “By joining Teach First, you will not only become part of a remarkable story that is changing the face of education and helping thousands of pupils, but you will mark yourself out as a cut above the rest” (Teach First, 2008e). Teach First was highly praised by schools (Hutchings et al, 2006), the press (e.g., The Telegraph, March 7, 2006), leaders of all three major political parties (Teach First, 2010), and the Offices for Standards in Education (OFSTED, the government agency responsible for quality control in teacher education) itself (2008).

The primary training component for Teach First participants was an intensive six-week Summer Institute. The Summer Institute consisted of two parts: regional and national training. In the three-week regional training, participants received their initial teacher preparation from “partner universities” which served the role of “regional training providers” (Canterbury Christ Church University for the London Region, the University of Birmingham for the Midlands Region, and the University of Manchester for the Northwest Region). Then, participants from all three regions converged on Canterbury, where they continued to receive instruction in Professional Studies (“general subjects”,

i.e. learning theory, school culture, multicultural education, etc.) and Subject Studies (best practices unique to the subject they will be teaching). In the evenings they attended workshops provided by Teach First Ambassadors (alumni), consultants, and veteran teachers. All members of the Teach First staff, and many funders and political supports, attended at least part of the Summer Institute. The Teacher Development Agency (TDA) and OFSTED, which together control the accreditation of Teach First as a provider of teacher education, conducted an annual performance review at this time. After the Summer Institute, participants continued to receive support in the form of observations by staff from the regional training providers, monthly day-long workshops organized by subject, and an annual Teach First conference.

Teach First as a Neoliberal Organization

Teach First should be considered an example of neoliberal reform for two principle reasons: its role in the competitive market of teacher education and its explicit and profound relationships with the business world. As previously discussed, England has seen a recent surge in alternate route teacher education programs like Teach First. Thus, while the specific structure and agenda of Teach First reflected a neoliberal ideology, its status as an alternate-route program was in itself an example of neoliberal reform. Furthermore, like TFA (Sellers, 2007), Teach First fully embraced a business model to guide the organization. For example, as Hutchings et al.(2006) report, “the marketing strategy now aim(ed) to ‘brand’ Teach First in a way that is recognisable from year to year” (p.14). Teach First formally incorporated business partnerships into both the training and goals of the program. As part of its vision, “Teach First unashamedly expects many of its participants to become future Ministers, CEOs, and serial entrepreneurs of

our times” (Teach First, 2008g). Thus, as Hutchings et al. put it, “the programme appeal(ed) both to altruism and to ambition” (p. 11). Indeed, Teach First considered itself not simply an instrument of education reform, but “an employer for employers” (Teach First, 2008f). Such a belief was reflected in its rather problematic recruiting slogan, “Make a difference while keeping your options open” (Teach First, 2008a).

Teach First’s corporate relationships also affected the training that participants received. After their first year of teaching, all Teach First participants attended compulsory business training in leadership skills, titled “Foundations of Leadership.” This course was designed and implemented by the Tanaka Business School of Imperial College London, and was intended to serve as a “mini-MBA” (Hutchings et al., p. 61). Participants were also offered a wide variety of internships with Teach First corporate sponsors in the summer between their first and second years of teaching. For many, these internships led directly to careers after their two years in the classroom were finished. Corporations (i.e. Citibank, Salesforce) also provided significant cash rewards to the most successful Teach First participants of each cohort at the annual “Teach First Inspiration Awards Dinner,” a black-tie affair in London’s elegant Royal Courts of Justice (Teach First, 2008h). Ostensibly a ceremony to recognize the achievements of Teach First participants, it also doubled as Teach First’s most significant fund-raiser of the year. Tickets were extremely expensive (\$500), to the extent that they prohibited most participants from attending. Rather, the guest-list consisted of government leaders, corporate partners, potential donors, and those participants selected to receive the cash prizes. Teach First’s neoliberal qualities and relationships to the corporate world are discussed in significantly more detail in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

Teach First as a Progressive Organization

However, Teach First was not just a neoliberal organization, it was also a decidedly progressive one. In addition to its “elite status,” much of what distinguished Teach First from other major alternate-route programs in England (such as the Graduate Teacher Programme or the Postgraduate Certificate in Education) was its overt use of progressive language and authentic commitment to social reconstruction. It positioned itself as more than an elite form of teacher education and an “employer for employers”; it described itself as an organization committed to changing society in more just ways. Teach First literature was filled with rhetoric that emphasized “making a difference,” even if the next line was “while keeping your options open.” Teach First defined “making a difference” in terms of participants working to eliminate “educational disadvantage” (Teach First, 2008f). Among its goals was to address “the imbalances and injustices that cause poverty” (Teach First, 2008g) and “to build a body of outstanding leaders in all sectors of society with the skills, resources, networks and knowledge to substantially reduce educational inequalities and their root causes” (Teach First, 2008i). As one of Teach First’s ambassadors summarized, “Education changes life opportunities. To have people growing up with such big differences in the quality of their education means, in effect, that they will have massive differences in the quality of the rest of their life, and that society thinks that's OK. People in Teach First think that's not OK” (Teach First, 2008d). Teach First’s progressive ideology is discussed in significantly more detail in Chapters Four and Five of this dissertation.

Conclusion

As previously discussed, scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have argued that neoliberal reforms, and business involvement in education in particular, are antithetical to the mission of progressive education and ill-suited for teacher education. Yet despite its overt neoliberal qualities, Teach First positioned itself as an agent of social change, attempting to reconstitute English society in a more just fashion, all the while benefiting from and relying upon neoliberal policies which have been heavily critiqued for producing, if not consciously pursuing, the opposite result. This research makes sense of this problem by uncovering and critiquing Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice and showing how, as a progressive neoliberal organization, Teach First drew upon a theory of justice as distribution that not only licensed, but necessitated a blend of progressive and neoliberal policy.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

My research draws on scholarship from four overlapping fields: (1) critiques of neoliberalism, (2) conceptual literature on the meanings and tensions of “social justice” in teacher and public education, (3) critical approaches to teacher education, and (4) the largely British tradition of “policy sociology,” which is an approach to analyzing education policy with critical, qualitative methods originally borrowed from the field of sociology and aimed towards social justice.

First, I review critiques of neoliberalism in order to later apply them, in Chapter Seven, to Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice. Second, I review recent scholarship on theories of social justice in public education and teacher education in particular. This work serves three functions for my research: (a) it demonstrates that “social justice” is hardly a term with a fixed meaning; (b) it unpacks the tensions and, at times, contradictions in the multiple ways in which it is defined; (c) it serves to outline the broad goals of the theories of justice which I will use to help identify and refine Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice. In this section I also introduce Cochran-Smith’s (2010) framework for a theory of social justice in teacher education which I rely upon greatly to analyze the data that I collected at the 2008 Summer Institute. Third, I make use of critical approaches to teacher education to situate the type of questions my dissertation poses within the broader context of conceptual and empirical research that has investigated the relationship between teacher education and social justice. Finally, I review the field of policy sociology, in particular the work of Stephen Ball whose “three theoretical strategies of policy sociology” (1990) I use to critique Teach First’s theory of social justice. Although my research method is critical

ethnography, I reserve my literature review of this field for Chapter Three.

Before discussing each of these fields individually, it is important to clarify why I am not reviewing literature around either Teach First or TFA. Although Teach First itself has not been the subject of research, TFA certainly has (see Zeichner and Conklin, 2005 for a recent summary). However the literature on TFA is not particularly useful to this study because it has largely focused on issues of the effectiveness of TFA as educational policy (e.g Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002, Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005) rather than the politics or ideological perspectives underlying this approach to reform. Moreover, although there has been no shortage of critique of TFA and the questions it raises for teaching and teacher education (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2005a; Darling-Hammond, 1994), there has been relatively little scholarship that analyzes TFA's theory of education reform. Two exceptions to this are Thomas Popkewitz' (1998) *Struggling for the Soul: The Politics of Schooling and the Construction of the Teacher* and the recently published *Relentless Pursuit: A Year in Trenches with Teach for America* by Donna Foote (2008). However, Popkewitz' post-structural research on TFA's Summer Institute, while specifically attending to the political dimensions of race, culture, and power in education, was ultimately more focused upon the social construction of teaching, and less upon issues of policy and justice. Furthermore, it has little to do with much of what defines TFA politically, as it did not problematize it in terms of its status as an alternate-route teacher education program. As Popkewitz puts it, he chose to “view Teach for America as an exemplar of educational reform and schooling rather than to view the program as the case itself” (pp. 15-16).

Foote's book (2008), on the other hand, certainly attends to the TFA model of teacher education, including its political goals and the ways in which these goals are translated into the teacher education experiences of its corps members. However, it brings no element of critique to the research, nor does it even give ideological ground to those authors who have criticized it. Rather, it is a collection of personal narratives about new teachers making a difference in the lives of under-privileged youth. Much of the reason for this focus, one would assume, is that Foote was not writing for an academic audience, nor was she trying to situate her findings in broader discussions about teacher education. Accordingly, while offering a trove of data on TFA, it provides little use in terms of a conceptual research base upon which to build my work on Teach First. Additionally, as noted earlier, only Hutchings et al. (2006) have conducted a study focused specifically on Teach First. Therefore, given the dearth of studies which have examined Teach First or TFA in terms of their political philosophies, this dissertation draws upon research which had similar questions about the design, implementation, and effects of other policies in public education, and teacher education in particular.

Neoliberalism

Before discussing critiques of neoliberalism, it is prudent to provide a more thorough description of this political philosophy and its role in shaping recent education policy. Political Science scholar Robert McChesney provides a useful definition of both neoliberal policies, and the thinking behind those who support them,

Neoliberal initiatives are characterized as free market policies that encourage private enterprise and consumer choice, reward personal responsibility and entrepreneurial initiative, and undermine the dead hand of the incompetent,

bureaucratic and parasitic government. (McChesney, 1999, p. 7)

However, as British scholar Mark Olssen (1996) points out, neoliberalism is not the absolute commitment to laissez-faire public policy of classic liberalism in which individuals are trusted to efficiently act for their own benefit. Rather, neoliberalism calls for state policies which create competitive entrepreneurs as opposed to ones which set them free to act out for their own and, as a result, society's benefit. From a neoliberal perspective, then, the state's responsibility is to pursue the goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition, and individual initiative not by removing itself from the equation, but through positively constructed policies of auditing, accounting and management (Olssen and Peters, 2005). This conception of state policy is a critical and defining characteristic of neoliberalism: faith in the market process valued over commitment to social outcomes. Although neoliberal policies certainly have their desired goals, their fundamental logic and philosophical justification draw not from what they achieve, but from how they propose to achieve it.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the last two decades of educational reform in the United States reflect a deep, implicit, and relatively uncontested commitment to these tenets, with broad support from both Democrats and Republicans (Torres, 2005). The sweeping reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act, known as No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), provides a useful example of neoliberal policy and some of its inherent flaws. At the heart of NCLB (and its accompanying funding measures and state legislation) was a commitment to consumer choice fueled by mandated competition (schools' choice of teachers, parents' choice of schools, teachers' choice of preparation program) and informed by objective data (teacher certification exams, high stakes

testing). Yet as scholars are quick to point out, the choices available and the data provided all represent implicit assumptions about learning, teaching, and knowledge (i.e., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). Though cloaked in the language of rationality and objectivity, the aims of NCLB are anything but neutral. Rather, they present narrow, canonical (neoconservative) understandings of “high quality” teaching and knowledge, which explicitly limit the goals of public education. As such it epitomizes neoliberal policymaking: the creation of a market economy in which the commodities are already defined and the entrepreneurs forced to compete, not on their terms, but on those of the state. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter One, this neoliberal trend in education reform has only intensified under President Obama with competitive grant programs like Race the Top and the Investing in Innovation fund pitting education stakeholders against one another. Moreover, while it is unclear exactly what the new rebranding of the ESEA will look like, it appears almost certain that the core neoliberal principles of NCLB will persist under the Obama/Duncan administration (Russom, 2010).

NCLB and Race to the Top do not, however, mark the inception of neoliberal education policy in the United States, so much as a milestone. It is simply the federal government’s most recent, and sweeping, move to both firmly define the goals of public education, while at the same time divesting governmental support, and trusting market forces to achieve them (Kantor and Lowe, 2007). Teacher education, in particular, has been a location of neoliberal reform for a number of years. Lois Weiner (2007) suggests four categories into which these reforms can be grouped: privatization (i.e., the growing number of for-profit teacher preparation and teacher staffing programs), fragmentation of control and oversight of schooling (i.e., hiring and practicum placements in charter

schools, non-university based programs for teacher preparation), use of standardized tests to gauge teacher quality, and the weakening of teacher unions as a voice in what constitutes teacher quality. This includes the increasing proliferation of non-university based programs (sometimes identified as “alternate-route”) such as Teach For America, The New York City Teaching Fellows, or any one of a number of state run programs. Nationwide, the number of such programs has been growing steadily since their inception in the early 1980s; currently all 50 states, and the District of Columbia, offer some alternative to university-based teacher education programs, enrolling over 59,000 teacher candidates in 2006 (Feistritz, 2007). Both their growing prominence and significant public support at both the state and federal level (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) are significant of neoliberalism’s profound effect on teacher education policy. Non-university based programs aim to reduce the bureaucracy of teacher education, freeing the market to better find, train, and place the nation’s teachers. This type of business-infused thinking epitomizes the rationale behind neoliberalism’s application to education policy.

However, as with NCLB, non-university based programs are hardly a laissez-faire approach to teacher education through which schools are free to hire any teachers they choose. Instead, prospective teachers must still pass state licensing examinations embedded with presupposed political notions of teacher quality and requisite teacher knowledge (National Research Council, 2001). Indeed, in this respect the course of teacher education neatly matches the route that student education has taken in the past twenty years: in both cases, neoliberal policies have brought market forces to bear on public education, while simultaneously defining the knowledge which serves as currency

for that competition.

Critiques of Neoliberalism

Although neoliberalism is proving an increasingly popular policy model worldwide, it is not without its share of critics, especially in its application to public education. I organize these critiques into three distinct, yet complementary groups: a reproduction of power critique, a democratic critique, and a social justice critique. These labels work solely as a heuristic and should not be considered firm categories. To the contrary, each critique is reinforced by the other two, serving more as a specific lens than a unique position. Moreover, at the heart of each critique are the shared assumptions that education is an inherently political process and that neoliberal reforms run contrary to the empowering role public education should play in a just society.

First, in the reproduction of power critique, scholars contend that neoliberalism sustains and promotes capitalism's exploitive class conflict by reproducing power relations through the accumulation of wealth (McLaren & Farhmandpur, 2001). As such, it represents the hegemonic, politically imposed discourse of the empowered class in Western states. This discourse requires the participation of the dominated, on the terms of those in power (Olssen and Peters, 2006). In this reproduction of power critique, neoliberalism is understood as maintaining hegemonic social norms of interaction, preserving class relations in policy through systems of public education in which those in power remain entrenched by virtue of their access to both fiscal and cultural capital. This critique asserts that in neoliberalism class and race disparities will reproduce themselves because the privileged are better equipped to compete over scarce resources: the best teachers and the best schools. Teachers and schools, in turn, have a vested interest in

competing for the best students (Apple, 2001). Earley (2000) argues that this competition, no matter its language or intention, is an unfair one that is not well suited for public education because the market, like any other competition, necessitates both winners *and* losers.

Second, in what I identify as the democratic critique, scholars argue that neoliberal education policy does not serve the ends of democracy. Closely related to the reproduction of power critique, the democratic critique differs from it because it understands disparities resulting from neoliberalism primarily in political terms, rather than economic ones. This critique views the democratic ideal as being fundamentally communal, not an individualistic arena in which actors compete against one another for private gain. Scholars who critique neoliberalism from this perspective argue that neoliberal policies create environments in which the underprivileged are less able to participate politically (Giroux, 2004) and citizenship itself is redefined in terms of self-interest, as opposed to public need (Giroux, 2002; Chomsky, 2002). Furthermore, they assert that neoliberalism conceives of the school as a space for economic exchange, instead of one of political empowerment. Neoliberalism thus redefines democracy in economic terms through the valorization of privately held capital (Apple, 1998; Teeple, 1995). In contrast to this thinking, scholars who critique neoliberalism democratically advocate for an explicitly political education, one in which students are taught to critically engage with governance, and do not have their learning thrust into the market (Hyslop-Margison, 2006). However, these scholars are quick to note that while education can play the public role of revitalizing democracy and the public good by challenging the hegemony of neoliberalism, for now it still remains inside the scope of neoliberalism,

subject to the effects of its policies and systems (Gandin&Apple, 2002).

Finally, the social justice critique combines elements of the reproduction of power and democratic critiques, but casts them both in terms of a more essential struggle for equity. The social justice critique charges that the primary goal of public education should be to empower marginalized populations and redress social inequities. Scholars argue that this goal is incompatible with neoliberalism's laissez-faire approach to social injustice (e.g., Ahonen, 2002) and its reliance on market forces (Earley, 2000).

Moreover, since neoliberalism positions the market as an apolitical, objective instrument (Apple, 2006), it lacks the explicitly political focus that a social justice agenda requires of education policy. Furthermore, scholars who critique neoliberalism in terms of social justice argue that even if the market could be conceptualized to work towards social justice goals, it lacks the technical ability to do so because of the nature of teaching. To this point, Cochran-Smith (2003) argues that because competition is fundamentally about fear, it is unlikely to prove successful in education since teaching is primarily about caring, learning, and changing the world, and it can not be reduced to "bottom lines of efficiency and profitability" (p. 374). Drawing on such an ethically constructed vision of public education, the social justice critique contends that by ignoring the political and moral dimensions of schooling, neoliberal reforms are ill-equipped to address inequities and only serve to reinforce the social relations that produced them in the first place.

Progressive Neoliberalism

Although neoliberalism is often identified as a conservative ideology, as Apple (2001) notes, the assumptions of neoliberalism are also often held by educators considered by both themselves and others to reside at the more progressive end of the

political continuum. Indeed, this serves as evidence for his argument that the “conservative modernization” of education owes its success to the mutually beneficial, but sometimes uneasy alliance between four sets of actors (who are often unaware of their group membership) with four very distinct sets of political beliefs: neoliberalism, neoconservatism (a vision of an idealized past which advocates a return to “traditional” knowledge), authoritarian populism (religious fundamentalism), and managerialism (bringing business norms into the education world) (Apple, 2006).

However, while this alliance has certainly been successful in achieving education reforms that have advanced all of their causes to some degree, between groups their beliefs are often mutually exclusive (Apple, 2006). Moreover, because each set of thought occupies a distinct political domain in terms of public policy (form of government, what knowledge is worth knowing, role of religion, form of state interventions), many individual actors can find themselves in absolute agreement with some elements of conservative modernization, while being firmly opposed to others. Even within groups there is room for a variety of mutually exclusive opinions that do not deviate from a shared fundamental understanding. For example, there are certainly a number of neoconservatives that are also authoritarian populists (i.e., the Traditional Values Coalition [2010]) which argues that America’s idealized past was as a Christian state), while other neoconservatives appreciate their mission as a secular one that emphasizes the objective importance of the Western canon (i.e., Will, 2006).

Of particular interest to this literature review are the potential fractures within neoliberalism. Neoliberalism preaches adherence to a state-designed and state-enforced market, but it leaves open the question of what commodities will be bought and sold.

Accordingly, there exists political space for “progressive neoliberals” (Lahann & Reagan, in press) with social justice agendas that fall outside of the alliance of conservative modernization. In such a space, these actors would find value in the market principles of neoliberalism, but question the neoconservative and/or authoritarian populist goals towards which they were applied. In their place, progressive neoliberals would instead pursue goals of equality, equity, and political or social empowerment. In Chapter Seven, when I identify Teach First as a progressive neoliberal organization, I also explore the distinctions between equity and equality. I believe this distinction is a crucial one that helps explain how Teach First can be both a progressive *and* a neoliberal organization. Furthermore, I posit that while progressive neoliberalism is well-suited for pursuing equality, the distributive justice upon which it is based compromises its ability to achieve equity.

Competing Theories of Social Justice

Zeichner (2006) allows that the deregulation movement in teacher education (i.e. alternate route programs like Teach First and TFA) is not necessarily mutually exclusive with the goals of social justice. Yet, at the same time, identifying exactly what constitutes “social justice” is not an easy task. Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2010) reminds us that “although social justice has become a watchword for teacher education, the concept is under-theorized” (p. 6). This argument is evidenced by a number of recent reviews of the literature (e.g. North, 2006, Weidman, 2002), the wide-ranging theories of social justice found in Michelli and Kaiser's (2005) and Ayer, Quinn, and Stovall's (2009) edited books on the subject, and the pluralistic, often competing, conceptions of social justice in policy sociology (Gerwitz & Cribb, 2002). Cochran-Smith (2010) summarizes

these tensions as arising largely from the struggles of relating theories of distributive justice that draw from a neutral, objective understanding of “fairness” to theories of justice as recognition that draw upon the politics of identity and difference. In this section of the literature review, I summarize the differences between theories of justice as distribution and recognition, including the critiques of distributive justice inherent in theories of justice as recognition.

Recently, education scholars including Cochran-Smith (2010), Sharon Gerwitz and Alan Cribb (2002), and Connie North (2006), have sought to clarify the relationships between different theories of “social justice” in education, by borrowing from the field of political philosophy (e.g., Fraser, 1997, Fraser & Honneth, 2003; and Young, 1990), which has, in comparison to education, engaged with these tensions much more directly. In laying the groundwork for my analysis of Teach First, I draw primarily from the work of these education scholars who have already argued the applicability of these political theories to education with the understanding that the origins of these arguments lie outside the field. Although there is not agreement on the best ways to organize such a complex field, a major recognized division in the field of social justice falls between theories of justice as distribution and theories of justice as recognition. In this discussion I focus upon these theories at levels that extend well beyond teacher education into public education, and even more generally, into the general social obligations of a democratic state. At these removed levels, theories of justice lose grounding in the particular challenges of teacher education for social justice, but gain clarity in the ways in which they overlap and conflict.

Cochran-Smith (2010) summarizes theories of distributive justice as those which

“focuses on equality of individuals, civic engagement, and a common political commitment to all citizens’ autonomy to pursue their own ideas of the good life” (p. 7). A descendant of classic liberalism, distributive justice seeks to theorize how anything which has worth in a society-- rights, freedoms, material goods—may be most justly divided among a citizenry. Addressing injustice, then, is a two-fold process which necessitates first conceiving of what equality means (i.e., equal opportunity, versus equal claims, versus equal outcomes, etc.) and, second, devising a set of political principles which dictate how such a conception will proceed in policy.

By way of example, consider the varied notions of equality in education. On one hand, the even application of the accountability measures of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) can be said to be equal in that they hold all schools to the same standards. However, since all schools do not have the same resources, the legislation reflects inequity by expecting the same results. Theories of distributive justice attend to questions such as these by attempting to refine what is “just,” “fair,” and “equal.” However, they do not question the relative value, form, or application of that which is to be distributed.

Theories of distributive justice are defined by three shared characteristics: egalitarianism, monism, and objectivity. First, distributive justice is fundamentally egalitarian because it defines justice as the fair provision of social resources, including material goods, power, and opportunity, to all people equally (Young, 1990; Fraser, 2003; Boyles et al, 2010). Injustice, then, is the arbitrary and unfair exclusion of individuals and groups of people from the social goods and structures that would benefit them (Kymlycka, 1995). Furthermore, distributive justice is characterized by both its monistic and objective qualities. “Monism” means that it does not admit the possibility

of different theories of justice being valid; there can be only one correct theory of justice. This does not mean that distributive justice philosophers such as Rawls are so arrogant as to suggest that they have discovered exactly what justice is. Rather, it means that they believe that a theory of justice should exist universally for all people, in all situations. These theories are formulated in such a way that there is no conceptual space for more than one theory coexisting. Consider this aspect of distributive justice as two different meteorologists making forecasts about the weather. One predicts sunshine, the other torrential rain. While both believe in the accuracy of their predictions based on empirical data and conceptual models, both are positing rather than proving, and it is impossible for both of their theories to coexist with one another as anything other than competing theories; they are inherently mutually exclusive of one another.

The third, closely related, characteristic of distributive justice is the idea that justice should be objective; justice should mean the same thing to all people. While justice as recognition allows for the idea of subjectivity, justice as distribution does not. In theories of distributive justice, those social resources that need to be distributed are presumed to have the same value for all people. Moreover, in distributive justice, it is impossible for one person's legitimate justice needs to conflict with those of another (Gerwitz & Cribb, 2002). Any apparent conflict in distributive justice claims is borne out of imperfect theories of justice and flawed social systems—justice itself, as an idea, is always true to all people equally. The most common metaphor used to explain this idea is that “one man's rights stop at another man's nose.” In other words, any justice claim that would appear to infringe on another person's legitimate justice claim is actually not justice at all. Theories of distributive justice are objective because they draw from an idea

of justice that exists independent of social constructions. Indeed, for distributive justice theorists, the hallowed ground, even if it is asymptotic, is to develop political theories that honor this idealized and elusive perfect vision of objective justice.

It should be noted that many of the authors that I cite in this literature review refer to “redistributive justice” as opposed to “distributive justice.” While the two terms are not synonymous, they are closely related. Essentially, the difference between the two terms is that “distributive” justice refers to the fair distribution of scarce resources that are not, as of yet, privately owned. “Redistributive justice,” on the other hand, refers to taking resources that are already in someone’s possession, and then transferring them to someone else who has a legitimate justice claim to them. Thus, to put these theories in practical political terms, distributive justice would concern itself with how to divide up access to public resources (i.e. oil reserves, public parks, etc.), while redistributive justice would focus on issues such as fair taxation. However, distributive and redistributive justice are very similar in that they share these three characteristics of egalitarianism, objectivism, and monism. Moreover, they are in no way competitive with one another. Instead, they complement one another by applying the same assumption to two different domains of public policy: public and private property. Furthermore, while distributive justice can be contrasted with redistributive justice, the term “distributive justice” also functions as an overarching category under which distributive and redistributive justice both fall (Fleurbaey, 2008). Accordingly, for simplicity’s sake, in this research I refer only to “distributive justice.” I do this in part because the major arguments I wish to make in terms of “social justice” concern the significant differences between theories of

(re-)distributive justice and theories of justice as recognition, not the nuances within the field of distributive justice itself.

To provide a useful example of distributive justice, I briefly summarize John Rawls' theory of justice. This is not to argue that the philosophy of Rawls encompasses all the strains of distributive justice, i.e., egalitarianism, desert-based principles, utilitarianism, or libertarianism (see Fleischacker, 2005 and Roemer, 1998, for recent comprehensive treatments of the variety and scope of theories of distributive justice). Rather, I do so because, within the field of distributive justice, Rawls's theory of justice is the most often cited in modern discussions, particularly in regards to education. Moreover, it is my argument in Chapter Seven that Teach First's theory of justice is not only distributive, but also closely resembles Rawls' theory of distributive justice. In brief, since Teach First is focused on creating equal opportunity for all students, it conflicts with the equal outcomes of strict egalitarianism, the rigid meritocracy of desert-based theories, the rough coalescence of "good" that founds utilitarianism, and the laissez-faire assumptions of libertarianism.

First published in 1971, *A Theory of Justice*, is, perhaps, the most influential text of political philosophy in the 20th century. Widely cited, supported, and critiqued, it represents an attempt to challenge utilitarianism with a "workable and systematic moral conception" (vii), by presenting a deontological social contract that is framed around distributive justice. In Rawls' interpretation, and in contrast to simple utility, distributive justice takes the form of "justice as fairness." This theory was somewhat revised with the publication of Rawls' *Political Liberalism* (1993), but not in ways that are substantive to my discussion of theories of social justice as monistic/pluralistic, objective/subjective,

and based on distribution/recognition. Accordingly, given its place in philosophical history, my discussion works from his original text.

Rawls submits that the basis for designing any theory of justice, and, by extension, any political system which incorporates these principles, should be “the original position,” roughly equivalent to the “state of nature” that existed a priori to the implicit social contract described by philosophers such as Locke and Hobbes. From the original position, an impossibility in reality but the idealized point from which to try to think about issues of justice, one operates under a “veil of ignorance.” Rawls contends that only under this veil will principles of justice that are the most fair be chosen, for only from this vantage point can it be ensured that “no one is advantaged or disadvantaged by...the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances” (p. 12). From this original position, Rawls generates two principles of justice as fairness. First, each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. And second, social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that (a) they are to be of the greatest benefit to the least-advantaged members of society, and (b) offices and positions must be open to everyone under conditions of equality of opportunity (p. 303).

Rawls’ first principle is a hallmark of classic liberalism. This self-limiting conception of rights is perfectly neutral in its universal applicability: all persons should want and use equally the same set of rights. Yet because it is specifically referring to conceptions of liberty (i.e freedom of speech, freedom of expression, etc.) and not the equitable distribution of resources, it is tangential to a discussion of justice in education reform. Rawls’ second principle, however, strikes at the heart of theories of social justice

in teacher education. Commonly known as “the difference principle,” it has two-parts, asserting that social inequalities should be structured in such a way that they (a) benefit the least advantaged persons in society and (b) reflect equal opportunity. In other words, justice as fairness means a true meritocracy in which inequalities in reward ultimately serve the good of those less able to compete. As Rawls summarizes, “In justice as fairness men agree to share one another's fate” (p. 102). Such a statement reflects (1) a commitment to improving the lives of the disadvantaged, while (2) also implicitly defining the manner in which lives should be improved in exactly the same homogeneous way. As will be discussed below, in its commitment to improving the lives of disadvantaged people Rawls’ theory has common ground with theories of justice as recognition. However, the objective, normalized way in which he describes utility represents the critical difference between theories of justice as distribution and theories of justice as recognition.

It is precisely this distinction that forms the basis of theories of justice as “recognition.” As North (2006) summarizes, “The politics of recognition, emphasized by various feminist, communitarian, cultural studies, queer, (dis)ability, postcolonial, psychoanalytical, and poststructuralist theories, take issue with the presuppositions put forth by this redistributive vision of social justice” (p. 513). North elaborates on this contention by distinguishing between commitments to “sameness” and “difference” in theories of justice. While theories of distribution focus on the former, theories of recognition attend to the latter. Theories of recognition call for attention to differences, rather than solutions to them, and allow for the possibility that what is a desirable outcome for one group of citizens may not be the same for another.

Indeed, this sameness/difference dichotomy forms a major critique that scholars who advance theories of justice as recognition have of distributive justice. Their argument, essentially, is that any theory of justice which treats human needs as universal, a hallmark of theories of distributive justice, is inherently flawed. As North (2006) explains, “The remedying of recognition injustices therefore does not require eliminating group differences, as suggested in the redistributive model, but instead revaluing them or reinventing conceptualizations of the human being that lead to oppression and domination” (p. 514). Thus, there are two separate and sequential levels of this critique. First, theories of distributive justice are flawed because they treat people as being the same, when, in fact, there are significant group differences which necessarily affect how individuals perceive and define justice. In other words, because people are different, justice and injustice are necessarily different, too. Second, theories of distributive justice, through their assumptions about the essential sameness of all people, risk licensing normalizing, hegemonic policy in the name of justice. In Chapter Seven, I argue that this is a very worthy critique of Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice and of progressive neoliberalism in general because of the degree to which they both rest upon theories of distributive justice that value sameness instead of difference.

Another defining aspect of theories of justice as recognition is that they are inherently “pluralistic.” Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) identify theories of justice as recognition as “pluralistic” because within them, “social justice is viewed as simultaneously concerning the distribution of material goods and resources on the one hand and the valorization of a range of social collectivities and cultural identities on the other” (pg. 499). Accordingly, while distributive theories of justice reflect monism in

that, once conceived, they remain internally consistent, pluralistic theories of social justice invite tension in that they bring in questions of distribution versus recognition, along with the possibilities of overlapping claims to recognition from different group perspectives. The following table, which I adapted from Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) helps clarify the distinctions between pluralistic and monistic theories of justice in education by comparing their disparate answers to six overlapping questions about the nature of social justice:

Justice Question	Monistic Theories	Pluralistic Theories
With what should social justice concern itself?	Unified conceptions of justice (e.g. distributive OR procedural etc.)	Justice as multi-dimensional (e.g. distributive AND cultural AND associational)
What are the “goods” in a society with which social justice should be concerned?	A single currency of relevant goods	Different, possibly incommensurable, kinds of good
What kind of claim should be made for social justice?	Single account of the relevant criteria for claims to justice (e.g. needs OR desert OR ability to benefit)	‘Pluralistic’ model of relevant claims (e.g. needs AND desert AND ability to benefit etc.)
What is the scope of social justice?	Trans-contextual model of justice (i.e. one model of justice for all goods and settings)	Context-dependent model—model depends on nature of good and setting
What should be the scope of social justice?	Universal model—treated the same	Differentiated models—recipients relevant for justice
What is the scope of who should dispense justice?	Centralized model of justice—a central agent with responsibility for arbitration and ‘dispensing’ of justice	Diffused and centralized model—i.e. agency and responsibility shared between all, including centre and periphery.

Adapted from Gerwitz and Cribb (2002), p. 501.

This table shows that theories of recognition, no matter how competing, stem from the

same fundamental understanding of pluralistic justice because of the degree to which they recognize the importance of difference in establishing valid justice claims. Monistic models, on the other hand, implicitly standardize and normalize the terms under which questions of justice are to be resolved. Furthermore, because theories of justice as recognition are inherently pluralistic, they are also inherently subjective. Thus, while they may find themselves at odds with one another, the way in which they are constructed admits the potential legitimacy of other theories because they implicitly value the role of subjective positions in defining justice/injustice. Theories of distributive justice, on the other hand, are inherently objective because they admit as valid only one conception of justice and one appreciation of the value of the resources to be distributed.

To continue the example from above, when applied to NCLB theories of distributive justice would not likely take into account whose voices have been privileged or marginalized in the construction of the standards to which students are held. Indeed, a primary critique of theories of distributive justice is that they fail to look outside of the socially and historically constructed ways in which certain voices have been privileged over others. These privileged voices, in turn, have controlled the ways in which the value that theories of distributive justice negotiate has been prescribed. Accordingly, critics of distributive justice argue that any discussion of the objective distribution of resources is necessarily tainted a priori with the bias of dominant power. In Chapter Seven, I critique Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice from this perspective, arguing that the ways in which it defined "educational disadvantage" were culturally loaded with normalizing bourgeois values.

To conclude, it is important to note that while aspects of distributive justice can

be part of a pluralistic and subjective view of justice as recognition; justice as recognition is inherently antithetical to a monistic, objective understanding of justice as distribution. Monistic/objective theories of justice represent a singular world-view of right and wrong; one in which a lone theory of justice, properly constructed, would be of equal value to everyone and the most any other theory could do is modify or replace the original. With a monistic theory of justice, the co-existence of other valid theories is an impossibility. On the other hand, Cochran-Smith (2010), North (2006) and Gewritz and Cribb (2002) explain that while pluralistic theories of justice have tensions, and indeed conflicts with one another, they are not irresolvable in public and teacher education. Furthermore, they all argue that while it may be impossible to fully honor any one theory all the time, recognizing the diversity of justice theories is an essential responsibility of researchers and educators. As Cochran-Smith (2010) puts it, it is possible, and even desirable that a theory of social justice in teacher education should recognize theories of distribution and recognition as “co-fundamental,” while also acknowledging that they are necessarily in tension with one another. In Chapters Seven and Eight, I argue that Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice would benefit from recognizing the co-fundamental nature of theories of justice as distribution and recognition.

Cochran-Smith’s (2010) Framework for a Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice

Cochran-Smith’s (2010) recent chapter for the *International Handbook of Educational Change*, “Towards a Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice,” is a unique contribution to the field of teacher education in that it not only advances a theory of social justice, but shows the ways in which such theories are necessarily constructed,

the premises upon which they are founded, and how they relate to one another. In addition to organizing her own research- and practice-based theory of social justice in teacher education, this framework also provides a means by which to chart other theories of teacher education for social justice. In Chapter Seven, I use this framework to draw out and critique Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice.

Cochran-Smith (2010) contends that any theory of social justice in teacher education is necessarily based off of three sub-theories: a theory of justice, a theory of practice, and a theory of teacher preparation. She identifies a theory of justice as one, “that makes explicit its ultimate goals and considers the relationships of competing conceptions of justice” (pg. 3). A theory of practice is defined as, “the activity of teaching, the nature of teachers’ work, and the knowledge, strategies and values that inform teachers’ efforts for social justice” (p. 3). Finally, she describes a theory of teacher preparation as one that “focuses on how teachers learn to teach for justice, the structures that support their learning over time, and the outcomes that are appropriate for preparation programs with social justice goals” (pg. 3). Summarizing how the three sub-theories interact with one another, she writes,

The three parts of this theory are integrated and imbricated with one another rather than discrete. Likewise, the questions they engender are interdependent: What do we mean by justice? How do we think about teaching practice in a way that enhances justice? How do we conceptualize and assess teacher education that prepares teachers to foster justice and supports them as they try to live out this commitment by working in educational settings? (p. 3).

Thus, while each sub-theory contributes individually to an overarching theory of social

justice in teacher education, they are also united by broader and more fundamental understandings of justice and the nature and purpose of teaching and public education.

Cochran-Smith (2010) explains that the construction of this framework is grounded in four premises. First, in terms of teacher education, social justice is not just a series of activities, but a, “coherent and intellectual approach to the preparation of teachers that acknowledges the social and political contexts in which teaching, learning, schooling and ideas about justice have been located historically and the tensions among competing goals” (p. 4). Second, teaching and teacher education are inherently political activities, and that the idea of an ideology-free education is a contradiction in terms. Third, teacher education is not divorced from education reform but rather has the potential to be a site for educational change. And fourth, teacher education for social justice is appropriate for all teacher candidates, regardless of their demographic or the demographics of the children they will teach. Social justice can be affected not only in urban or rural, under-resourced schools, but in every classroom, by every teacher, and with every student.

Taken together, the three sub-theories of social justice in Cochran-Smith's theory of social justice teacher education, and the four premises upon which they are built, call for the educational research community to take a more active role in conceptualizing what is meant by “social justice” and to recognize the inherently political ways in which it will be formulated. Her framework also serves as a template by which to understand and draw out unexamined theories of social justice in teacher education, even if those theories violate the four premises which support her understanding of what a theory of teacher education for social justice should be. Put another way, her framework provides

a way of understanding theories of teacher education reform which position themselves in terms of social justice, even if they fail to possess the fundamental understandings that she argues all theories of teacher education for social justice should have.

For example, a theory of social justice in teacher education might conceive of “justice” in apolitical terms, as the neutral and equal distribution of educational resources. Such a theory might call for fairly rote teacher training, and view teaching itself as a relatively technical act. While it can be fairly argued that such an approach is both wrong and ill-suited for the goals of public education, by analyzing the suppositions of this theory through the lenses of a theory of justice, a theory of practice, and, and a theory of teacher preparation, one has a means by which to better organize the theory itself, and to compare where and how it diverges with other theories which pursue the same broadly defined goal of social justice. In Chapter Seven, I use her framework to draw from the data I collected a theory of teacher education for social justice for Teach First. Her framework serves to both organize the data as well as critique those aspects of the theory which are circular or under-developed. I discuss in more detail the process of using her framework in this way in Chapters Four and Seven.

Critical Approaches to Teacher Education

This research also draws from the field of critical approaches to teacher education. I use this literature in two distinct ways. First, I summarize the different positions from which teacher education has been critiqued in order to later apply these critiques to Teach First. Second, I posit that critical authors have by and large approached teacher education for social justice with conceptions of pluralistic justice that have incorporated theories of justice as both recognition and distribution. However, these

theories of social justice in teacher education, even when well developed, have not been unpacked in terms of their relationship and compatibility to other theories of justice. Rather, the supposition appears to be, as Cochran-Smith (2010) argues, that these theories simply co-exist as different lenses by which to view need for teacher education for social justice. My argument in this section, then, is that while critical approaches to teacher education have generated a useful repository of empirical and conceptual knowledge about teacher education for social justice, they have yet to effectively theorize how these sets of knowledge interact with one another.

As a heuristic, I loosely organize critical approaches to teacher education into two closely related and overlapping critiques: a socio-political critique and a diversity critique. Within each critique are a wide spectrum of voices whose opinions do not necessarily coalesce with one another. Yet at the same time, although their methods and arguments may vary, their arguments function in a similar fashion. At the heart of both critiques are two shared and noteworthy assumptions. First, that teacher education plays a necessary role in the creation of a more just society. And second, that this process is inherently political. Indeed, this second assumption has proven extremely contentious of late as demonstrated by the controversy over the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education's (NCATE) decision to first include and then remove “social justice” as a disposition to be valued in teacher candidates. While Cochran-Smith (2006) asserts that “teacher education is fundamentally a political enterprise, which must be analyzed and understood as such” (p. 179), the response by conservative educational/political organizations to NCATE's use of “social justice” demonstrate that this argument is in itself widely considered to be a somewhat debatable one (Cochran-

Smith, Barnatt, Lahann, Terrell, Shakman, 2009). From this shared position, the socio-political and diversity critiques focus their attentions in different directions, creating varied theories of justice as distribution and recognition. After discussing each of these critiques in more detail I return to organize them relative to each other.

First, what I identify as the socio-political critique is the argument that teacher education must recognize its capacity and responsibility to play a role in economically and politically empowering marginalized populations. A corollary to this argument is that teacher education programs are often unable and/or disinclined from doing so specifically because of hegemonic systems already in place. While some authors that I group in this critique sometimes identify themselves, or are identified by others, as Marxist/Neo-Marxist scholars, I shed that term here in order to reflect the more broadly shared sentiments that capitalism has failed to provide for all students equally, and that teacher education is a product of this system, yet can play a role in reversing its effects. In recent years, authors have focused this critique directly upon neoliberalism and its model of forced competition (e.g., Apple, 2001; Earley, 2000, McLaren & Farhmandpur, 2001; Weiner, 2007). Their argument is that by forcing teacher education programs into competition with one another, not only are the appropriate aims of public education subverted, but class differences are perpetuated.

Furthermore, scholars who critique teacher education from this socio-political perspective argue that it is incumbent on teacher educators to prepare the next generation of teachers to advance democracy in their classrooms. However, as McLaren and Farhmandpur (2001) argue, too often, teachers are not taught a “revolutionary pedagogy” that can challenge the hegemonic effects of an inequitable system, but are instead

educated in the normalized and professionalized skills required by forced systems of accountability both in public education, and in teacher education itself. As Lois Weiner (2007) points out, this is a competition which has become even more intense as the market has become flooded by an ever increasing number of alternative-route (such as Teach First and TFA) and for-profit teacher education programs.

Earley (2000) summarizes the immediate effects of this competitive, market-based approach to teacher education, “teachers and those who design and administer their preparation programs must have as a primary concern competition, being a winner not a loser, and certainly not being cast as a culprit” (p. 37). Her argument, and that of other scholars who critique teacher education from this perspective, is that teacher education is driven by the need to succeed in neoliberal environments. In the process, teacher education is forced to adapt to the normalized currency of that competition, leaving behind the social justice mission with which it should concern itself. Apple (2001) lends further gravity to this situation by appraising the long-term effects of teacher-education that is driven by competition measured in the over-simplified and culturally privileged terms of test scores,

Of crucial importance is the question of whether our students in teacher education programs will be prepared to understand the ideological and political restructuring that is going on all around them. Will our current and future teachers be able to deconstruct the larger forces surrounding them? Will they have the tools to connect local with global tendencies, to think strategically about ways of interrupting neoliberalism and neoconservatism? At a time when the very

meaning of democracy is being changed, we cannot afford to ignore these radical reconstructions. (p. 195).

Thus, in this socio-political critique, teacher education is both a site of the damage from neoliberalism, as well as a tool by which its effects might be reversed. Indeed, it is this belief that has led authors to call for teacher education curriculum that expands the knowledge base teachers should have, moving it beyond what Deborah Britzman (2000) terms the “normative cloak of professionalism” (p. 202). James Fraser (2005), for example, argues that the goal of progressive teacher education should be to prepare teachers who can “foster student learning and linking that learning to a vibrant democracy in the larger society” (p. 279). Joel Westheimer and his colleagues (2009) echo this call, arguing that while the ability to teach skills and knowledge are certainly vital elements of any teacher education program, there is a dramatic need to prepare teachers to teach their students to reconstruct society more justly as well.

The diversity critique finds similar fault with teacher education programs that present normalized sets of knowledge that maintain inequity. However, authors who argue from this position (e.g. King, S. & Castenell, 2001; King, J., 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Sleeter, 2001a; Sleeter, 2001b; Sleeter, 2009; Richert, Donahue, and Laboskey, 2009) do so more from frameworks of critical race theory and multiculturalism than from lenses of economic and political power. At the heart of this critique of teacher education is the argument that there is not a single set of knowledge that has value, and, perhaps more importantly, that there is also not a single way of knowing. Furthermore, critical scholars who argue from this perspective contend that teacher education has long been dominated by a single, hegemonic epistemological

orthodoxy, that of the white middle class. In turn, rather than learning to “co-construct” knowledge with their students (Cochran-Smith, 2006), teacher candidates are instead being trained in the best ways to disseminate a previously established white canon to diverse students.

Christine Sleeter (2001b), in a review of the literature surrounding multicultural teacher education, terms this the “overwhelming presence of whiteness” which “silences” minority voices. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1999) reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that multicultural teacher education “continues to suffer from a thin, poorly developed, fragmented literature that provides an inaccurate picture of the kind of preparation teachers receive to teach in culturally diverse classrooms” (p. 114). Indeed, it is this assumption which serves as the warrant for scholars (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 1999; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) to call for the application of critical race theory to teacher education to both critique current practices and generate new ways of preparing teachers to work with diverse populations. A recent useful example of this is the work of Joyce King (2008), who argues for the existence, applicability, and value to teacher education of a “blues epistemology,” a way of knowing based upon the experiences of marginalized populations. Taken as a whole, the diversity critique questions whose knowledge is represented in curriculum, and it contends that social justice requires recognizing diverse epistemologies, and integrating them into programs of teacher education.

The socio-political and diversity critiques of teacher education are hardly mutually exclusive positions. Both find fault with current practices, both hold social justice to be the ultimate goal of public education, and both situate themselves in terms of the needs of historically marginalized populations. Yet at the same time, they each

represent different foci of justice. Considering these critiques in light of the conceptual work on theories of justice discussed earlier is illustrative for understanding the differences between these critiques, and how theories of justice guide the ways in which social justice is defined in teacher education.

I identify the socio-political critique as drawing primarily from theories of distributive justice in that it does not problematize the “goods” of education so much as question who has the most access to them and why. In contrast, the diversity critique focuses more upon theories of justice as recognition, as evidenced by its calls for multiple epistemologies and identification of the valuable knowledge derived from the varied experiences of all students. However, it is essential to note that neither critique is monistic in its conception of justice. The diversity critique, by its very nature, admits more than one theory of recognition. However, scholars who have argued from this position (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2004; Sleeter 2001b) have also addressed the need for resources to be distributed more equitably and the value of certain core skills which all students should know equally well. In this respect, they admit the value of theories of distributive justice, but refine them with the pluralism and subjectivity of theories of justice as recognition. Similarly, socio-political critics of teacher education (e.g. Apple, 2001; Westheimer et al., 2009), which I identify as drawing primarily from a theory of justice as distribution, have also attacked the neo-conservative, canonical knowledge which is passed off as neutral and objective. In this way, both critiques build from theories of justice as distribution *and* recognition, and are, ultimately pluralistic. Indeed, it is precisely this combination of theories of justice as distribution *and* recognition that

Cochran-Smith (2009) was advocating when she argued that the two approaches to justice should be understood as “co-fundamental.”

Policy Sociology

The final field of research that I discuss is the largely British tradition of “policy sociology.” Although the term “policy sociology” is not widely used in American social science scholarship, it is frequently employed internationally. The term was first coined in 1987 by British scholar Jenny Ozga, who described it as “rooted in the social science tradition, historically informed, and draw(ing) on qualitative and illuminative techniques” (p.144). However, since that time, it has come to encompass a broad variety of research techniques and foci, loosely grouped by their attempts to bring sociological theories to bear on the study of education policy (Shane & Ozga, 2001). In effect, the point of policy sociology is to expand the study of education policy from the technical and largely quantitative research methods which defined the field until the 1980’s to the more qualitative and nuanced approaches of sociology. Policy sociology is, however, a very diverse research field that includes a number of varied theoretical perspectives, including: Marxist, Neo-Marxist, critical, Queer, and Feminist. Policy Sociology scholars view this as a strength of the field. In fact, they argue that the need to study equity and agency across multiple social contexts (i.e. race, gender, class), demands diverse research questions, methods, and answers (Hill 2001b; Raab, 1994).

Some time ago Patti Lather (1992) divided post-positivism into three distinct, yet overlapping paradigms. Although she did not use the language of “policy sociology,” her heuristic is useful for separating out the field’s mosaic of foci, epistemologies, and purposes. The field of policy sociology includes analyses in each of Lather’s three

overlapping categories: interpretive (e.g., Ozga, 1999), emancipatory (e.g., Ball, 1994; Singh and Taylor, 2007), and deconstructive (e.g., Lingard, Rawolle, and Taylor, 2007). Within the field of policy sociology, this dissertation research relies most heavily on the theories and methods used by Stephen Ball, whose work falls into Lather's category of "emancipatory" research. In many ways, Ball's work is conceptually similar to that of a number of North American critical education scholars such as Michael Apple (e.g., 2006) or Peter McLaren (e.g., 2005), each of whom have undertaken large-scale conceptual/empirical investigations of policy from a critical perspective, while complementing them with micro-level investigations on their effects on social justice. However, while Ball's scholarship is conceptually similar to the work of these authors, it also offers the distinct advantage to this research of being almost exclusively focused on English education reform.

While Ball is certainly not the only scholar to write in the field of policy sociology, he is widely recognized for developing a critical theory of policymaking which serves as the basis for much of the current empirical work in the field (Hill, 2001b). Ball's educational research frequently maintains an explicit focus on the effects of neoliberalism on social justice, and is thus quite appropriate for the questions I will be asking about Teach First. At the core of Ball's theoretical framework is a firm belief in the power of human agency (Ball, 1993; Hill, 2001b). From this perspective, justice and injustice are mutable, and rational actors have the power to reduce/affect them in the form of education policy. Another major assumption of Ball's research is the idea that education policy must be understood as "text" and "discourse," both in the terms of those that create it, and those who respond to it (Ball, 1993). Ball argues that policy is text in

that it is encoded and decoded in complex ways “via actor’s interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources, and context” (1993, p.44). Not only is policy neither static, nor consistently implemented, but it always has different meanings to different actors in different contexts. Ball argues that educational research needs to acknowledge this subjectivity, and to examine policy on both a macro and a micro level in order to “relate together analytically the ad hocery of the macro with the ad hocery of the micro...to look for the iterations embedded within chaos” (p. 43). To Ball, it is incumbent upon policy sociologists to make meaning of this chaos, and to do so from a critical perspective that advances the cause of social justice. As he puts it, while policies themselves are “crude and simple,” the creation and implementation of policy is “sophisticated, contingent, complex, and unstable...created in a trialectic of dominance, resistance, and chaos/freedom” (Ball, 1990, p. 11).

What places Ball’s work firmly within Lather’s category of “emancipation” is his insistence that policy be read not only as text, but through a Foucauldian understanding of “discourses,” as “what can be said, and thought...who can speak, when, where, and with what authority” (1993, p. 48). Ball’s extensive empirical research on British public education, particularly around neoliberal reforms involving school choice, corporatization, and marketization (e.g. 1994, 2000, 2007) has attempted to problematize these discourses in terms of “their effects on social justice and what it means to be educated” (2006b, p. 277). He has done this by analyzing education policy through three “theoretical strategies”: ideological (what/whose beliefs are validated), political (how is social order constructed), and economic (how is education funded and who gains from it) (1990, p. 10). In Chapter Seven, I link each of these theoretical strategies to a previous

section of this literature review (economic/neoliberalism, ideological/critical approaches to teacher education, and political/theories of justice) in order to explore the unexamined assumptions which drove Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice.

Finally, Ball (1994) notes that this form of policy sociology relies on three traditions: post-structuralism, critical policy analysis (an increasingly common research paradigm in the United States, though primarily conducted from a feminist perspective, e.g., Marshall, 1997), and critical ethnography. Although each of these three traditions carries with it its own assumptions and epistemologies, in Ball's work they overlap and reinforce one another (Ball, 1997). From post-structuralism his research takes the founding assumptions of policy as discourse and text. From critical policy analysis, his research accepts the need to examine macro-level policies, and to do so from an emancipatory perspective. And from critical ethnography, his form of policy sociology takes its research method. The result is research that examines a policy problem on a large scale in terms of how it has been constructed and acted upon, but then examines its effects through ethnographic analysis of the people who it has affected.

I use Ball's work in policy sociology in three ways, each of which will be explained in more detail in the following chapter. First, I use his macro-level agenda of understanding the chaos of policy in terms of domination and emancipation to frame the over-arching questions I have about Teach First and its theory of teacher education for social justice. Second, I borrow from policy sociology the use of critical ethnography as the appropriate research method to answer these questions. Finally, I use his "three theoretical strategies" (1990) of policy sociology to organize my critiques of Teach

First's theory of teacher education for social justice that I uncovered through the use of Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework.

Chapter Three: Research Method

As this preceding literature review has shown, this research is informed by critiques of neoliberalism, work from critical teacher education, conceptual work on the meaning of social justice, and the field of policy sociology. Policy sociology not only serves as the lens through which I read data, it also explicitly demands a particular type of research method to collect and analyze it: critical ethnography. Accordingly, this dissertation uses critical ethnography as its primary method of data collection and mode of analysis. While I use the theoretical frameworks of Ball (1990) and Cochran-Smith (2010) to interpret the meaning of data, this conceptual work is used *ex post facto* to data collection and primary analysis. In the following chapter I discuss critical ethnography in some depth, explaining how it both informed and guided my research method. Then, I detail my research method, both in terms of data collection and data analysis, in order to explain how this data was gathered and how these theoretical frameworks were implemented in making meaning of them.

Critical Ethnography

In relying upon the theoretical frameworks of Ball (1990) and Cochran-Smith (2010) discussed in Chapter Two, my research method was informed by the assumptions of policy sociology and critical approaches to teacher education. Yet the primary value of these theories is to guide how I understand the data in terms of my overarching research questions. Cochran-Smith's framework allows me to analyze Teach First in terms of teacher education for social justice, and Ball's work provides means to critique Teach First for its economic, political, and ideological assumptions

about education. And, as detailed in the previous chapter, while both frameworks certainly make use of particular types of knowledge, they primarily serve to interpret and make meaning of these data ex post facto to data collection. They serve to organize the data in ways that speak to the enduring tensions and complexities of social justice, particularly in teacher education.

This choice to conduct a critical ethnography of Teach First was made not only because of policy sociology's explicit reliance on critical ethnography as the appropriate research method for the questions the field poses, but because, as will be shown, its lenses, assumptions, and methods are well-suited to the research perspectives and data sources that I use. Indeed, the choice of critical ethnography was not so much a choice as an inevitability given the questions I wanted to ask, the stance I wanted to maintain, and the data I used. In the following sections, I summarize the goals, history, methods, and challenges of critical ethnography. As this review of the field shows, critical ethnography is the appropriate research method for this research as its epistemology concerning the fluid nature of culture and its assumptions about the purpose of research are not only mirrored by this dissertation, but provide this research with a rich history of conceptual thought to help guide the collection and analysis of data.

To summarize the methods and stance of critical ethnography, I draw from literature that specifically refers to "critical ethnography" as well as research that discusses what can be termed "conventional ethnography" (Thomas, 1993), or ethnography without a specifically critical lens. I use the both fields in concert with one another for two reasons. First, critical ethnography ultimately relies upon the

tools and methods of conventional ethnography, which have been described in greater detail over a longer period of time than critical ethnography itself. Second, I wish to make use of scholarship on the complexities and tensions of ethnography that apply to critical ethnography, but are not explicitly linked to it. I first discuss the history of critical ethnography and those aspects which distinguish it from conventional ethnography. Next, I discuss ethnography's defining methods, principles and themes. Finally, I discuss the tensions and "muddles," or "problems", of ethnography. In each aspect of this discussion, I provide links to my own research in order to show how my work builds and benefits from the field of critical ethnography.

Critical ethnography as a method of social science research came to prominence in the last quarter of the twentieth century out of what Quartz (1992) describes as the "unease" of researchers with the "accepted role of the scholar as an apologist for the status quo" (p. 450). Fighting against this model, critical ethnography came, on both sides of the Atlantic, to embody a pro-active justice-oriented form of research, an example of what Patti Lather (1986a) identifies as "research as praxis." Paul Willis' (1977) *Learning to Labour* and Paul Corrigan's (1979) *The Smash-Street Kids*, both of which illuminate the lives of marginalized populations, are often identified as early examples of this form of fundamentally emancipatory research. It has since become a well-recognized and utilized research paradigm, frequently used by scholars from a variety of perspectives to uncover and help rectify diverse forms of inequity (see Anderson, 1989 for a useful summary of critical ethnography at its historical midpoint, and Jordan, 2003 for a more recent treatment of the current state of the field).

Sociologist Jim Thomas (1993) offers the following definition of critical ethnography which highlights its explicit focus on social justice:

Critical ethnography is a type of reflection that examines culture, knowledge, and action...It deepens and sharpens ethical commitments by forcing us to develop and act upon value commitments in the context of political agendas. Critical ethnographers describe, analyze, and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centers, and assumptions that inhibit, repress, and constrain...Critical ethnography proceeds from an explicit framework that, by modifying consciousness or invoking a call to action, attempts to use knowledge for social change. (Thomas, 1993, pp. 2-4).

It is, as Lather (1986b) puts it, “openly ideological research”; research that makes no apology for its agenda but states very clearly the assumptions and biases with which it is conducted, and the goals which it wishes to achieve.

In policy sociology, critical ethnography serves as the method by which policy sociologists collect data, but its role is more than just method—critical ethnography is a stance. As Ball (1994) describes it, critical ethnography is a “counterpoint to the bland and misleading, rational scientism...which predominates within the more prescriptive writing of educational management and administration” (pp.2- 3). More than method, then, critical ethnography is a research stance, one that is defined by its pursuit of social change by exposing inequitable social relations. Indeed, what distinguishes ethnography from critical ethnography, is the use of ethnographic tools that draw out the voices of “marginalized or oppressed social groups” as well as “the voices of authority and influence” (Ball, 1994, p. 3). This process does not happen in isolation from the

researcher, but in reflexive relationship to him/her (Anderson, 1989). As the researcher probes issues of equity and power, the goal of critical ethnography is that the participants further their own self-understanding as well as that of the researcher. Indeed, this is precisely the goal that Lather (1986b) believes necessarily belongs to all critical research. She identifies this as “catalytic validity,” or “the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses, and energizes participants” (p. 67).

Critical ethnography relies upon the tools of ethnography to illuminate social interactions, but it views these interactions through the lenses of justice, power, and equity with the explicit goal of affecting social change through the knowledge that is generated from them. Unlike “conventional ethnography,” critical ethnography expects to affect the behavior of those researched by engaging with them in dialectic about their lived experiences. Although critical ethnography in education is usually done by specifically giving voice to those marginalized by inequity, it can also serve to explain the ways in which they have come to be excluded from power by interrogating the hegemonic voices ultimately responsible (Thomas, 1993). Its defining characteristic is not who is researched, but the agenda, focus, and goals of the research in relief to conventional ethnographies (Tricoglus, 2001). For example, Popkewitz (1998) identifies his research on TFA as critical ethnography because it is as an attempt to “displace conventional ethnographies that take for granted the position of the actor, the knowledge of pedagogy, and the 'naturalness' of the speech.”

Sociologist Steve Jordan (2003) identifies four defining themes within critical ethnography that help explain this characteristic in more detail: (1) Critical ethnography is focused on how ethnographic research can be connected with the wider political

economy of capitalism; (2) critical ethnography focuses on revealing the sources and effects of unequal social relations; (3) critical ethnography represents an ethical stance; (4) critical ethnography refines or restructures social, economic, or political theory.

Taken together, these themes show a field that is fundamentally devoted to uncovering sources of inequity while simultaneously contributing to the ever-expanding knowledge-base by which this inequity can be fought.

These four themes that Jordan (2003) identifies provide a useful heuristic for understanding how this dissertation is itself as a critical ethnography. The first theme is that critical ethnography is focused on how ethnographic research can be connected with the wider political economy of capitalism. This study explores the political economy of capitalism by examining the ways in which an organization that exemplifies neoliberal/capitalistic thinking positions itself in terms of social justice and teacher education. Teach First identifies itself as a form of social entrepreneurship and relies heavily on its corporate partnerships for both funding and as models of effective practice. By focusing on an organization positioned at the crossroads of public education and the private sector, this research brings the tools of ethnography to bear on the political economy of capitalism as instantiated in teacher education.

The second theme of critical ethnography outlined by Jordan (2003) is that it focuses on revealing the sources and effects of unequal social relations. This study reflects this theme by attempting to unpack what Teach First means when it claims to fight “educational inequity,” and focusing on the problematic, deficit-modeled ways in which an organization with considerable social power attempts to improve the educations of those it deems disadvantaged. As such, it addresses both the sources and effects of

unequal social relations by understanding how “inequality” is defined by an organization whose mission it is to diminish it.

Jordan’s (2003) third theme of critical ethnography is that it takes an explicitly ethical stance. This dissertation does so, with the assumption that the purpose of schooling in a democratic society is to affect social justice. Moreover, my stance is that all educators who embrace a mission of “social justice” must be able to define exactly what that means. It is a term that must be well-explored, with significant nuance, or else it risks becoming another tool of normalization in which the empowered define the terms of marginalization. If social justice is not well-explained, the term can be employed, perhaps unwittingly and paradoxically, in unjust, hegemonic ways. This stance not only guided the selection of the research question and the theoretical frameworks employed, but, in the chapters that follow, shapes the critical analysis of the data collected in this ethnography.

The fourth theme of critical ethnography identified by Jordan is that it refines or restructures social, economic, or political theory. This theme is, perhaps, the most resonant in this dissertation. My research adds to the theoretical understanding of teacher education for social justice by exploring the ways in which competing understandings of justice produce different forms of teacher education. In doing so, it informs theories of teacher education for social justice, while also exploring the conflict in broader theories of justice as they evidence themselves in models of teacher education. Moreover, this research also applies a critical lens to neoliberal education reform, problematizing the ways in which justice is defined and pursued by political actors with a neoliberal agenda.

It is important to note that most critical ethnographies are designed to directly give voice to those marginalized by inequitable and unjust education policy. My work makes no such attempt. Indeed, it focused on the participants and staff of Teach First, who, by the nature of their social positions are not groups that would traditionally be considered “oppressed.” However, this research maintains its critical lens by focusing upon how the organization defines social justice and the ways in which this understanding shapes the teacher education curriculum of teacher candidates who will work with historically marginalized populations. In its focus upon Teach First and the dominant culture the organization represents, this study attends directly to “the voices of authority and influence” (Ball, 1994, p.3) in teacher education. The organization I am researching and the choice to conduct a critical ethnography means that this study bears some similarities to the one conducted by Popkewitz (1998) on Teach First. Popkewitz conducted a critical ethnography by examining the character of authority, not the culture of the oppressed. While there are substantive differences in the research questions of our two studies, they are very much alike in that they are critical ethnographies of empowered actors who work with, and, to some degree, either for or against the oppressed.

My ultimate goal in this dissertation is to contribute to the body of critical research in teacher education which examines the way power is reinforced and the means by which cycles of hegemony can be disrupted. As Thomas (1993) points out, such an agenda can be served by examining those in power as much as it can by looking at those without it. My research is an example of the former. It is firmly critical in its stance, but directed at the makers and shapers of educational policy, rather than at the lives of

marginalized populations which are affected by it.

Challenges and Tensions Within Critical Ethnography

Like ethnography, critical ethnography faces many challenges and tensions as a research method. As ethnography has moved out of anthropology and into sociology and then education, it has continued to be refined and critiqued from both positivist and post-positivist positions for issues of ethics, validity, and generalizability. Over thirty years ago, Frederick Erickson (1973) surveyed the field of ethnography as it applied to education, making clear that while there was much of value to be imported from other fields, there were elements of educational ethnography that made it a distinct research tradition with its own. His essay, written in the infancy of educational ethnography and before notions of critical ethnography had been advanced (see Everhart, 1976 for another example of early conceptual work on the field of educational ethnography), is based on the recognition that ethnography borrows from fields that are built upon translating the foreign into understandable sets of knowledge relative to our own understandings. However, he argues that since education and communities of schooling are, more or less, familiar to the researcher and those who read the research, the research burden is inverted. Rather than making the “strange” become “familiar,” it is the responsibility of the ethnographic researcher in education to make the familiar, “strange.” He describes this burden as one of adopting the, “critical stance, of the philosopher, continually questioning the grounds of the conventional, examining the obvious...Often it is the taken-for-granted aspects of an institution that in the final analysis turn out to be most significant”(p. 17).

Thus, according to Erickson (1973), the burden of the educational ethnographer is

to open up and make unclear what was previously thought clear, to problematize and unpack conventions and ideas that have become so normalized as to be unquestioned. In fact, Erickson also advanced an early defense of post-positivism, contending that while ethnography was inductive, “there are no pure inductions” (p.11). Rather, the researcher brings with them a theoretical framework to make sense of the data. This framework, dynamic in its dialog with the data, necessarily shapes the questions asked and the way in which the data is understood. Erickson’s early observations about educational ethnography formed the basis upon which critical ethnography would build, embracing subjectivity that was critical and making the familiar strange in pursuit of social justice. By “making strange” the familiar notions of justice, this research embraces Erickson’s charge to educational ethnography. In fact, the stance of this study is that “justice” has become all too normal, an empty word that does not represent all the complexities that the review of the literature has shown to exist. Accordingly, this study, as a critical educational ethnography, accepts Erickson’s burden to defamiliarize education. It does so by questioning what it means for Teach First to address educational disadvantage, and, from that analysis, how Teach First pursues social justice through teacher education.

Nearly thirty years after Erickson’s (1973) writing, Margaret Eisenhart (2001) reflected on the field of educational ethnography, which had grown immensely, discovering new challenges and tensions along the way. Her thoughts on its current state and problems are instructive for the enduring hurdles which all ethnographers, including those who work from a critical lens, must overcome in their work. Eisenhart is but one of many researchers to write at lengths about the nature of educational ethnography and the tensions inherent in it, and in the intervening period between early writing such as

Erickson's (1973) and her article much conceptual work was done to advance the field (e.g. Clifford & Marcus, 1986). I use Eisenhart's piece to summarize the current state of the field and the challenges with which it must deal (for further comprehensive discussion of these issues see, for example, Erickson, 2000; Goetz & LeCompte 1994; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999 ; and Wolcott, 1997), and how those challenges have shaped my own research.

Eisenhart (2001) identifies three “muddles” ethnography has yet to clarify: culture, the enthusiasm for ethnography, and ethnographers' responsibility to others. Her first muddle is that postmodern challenges to the idea of fixed cultures have rendered the idea somewhat ineffectual. If cultures are mutable and fluid, distinct and diverse, ethnographic research on them is necessarily imprecise. However, at the same time, there are certainly common strains of lived experience which are worthy of investigation, despite the limitations of the concept of “culture.” Eisenhart then summarizes three recent strategies which hold promise for educational ethnographers attempting to make sense of culture: cultural productions, funds of knowledge, and collective representations. Each of these strategies represents an attempt to identify culture in a post-modern sense, replete with its fluidity and uncertain boundaries.

First, the ethnographer who looks at “cultural productions” attempts to read as discourse the varied behaviors and processes which result from different groups being exposed to the same situation. By working backwards from these data, researchers can attempt to plot the “contested terrain of culture” (Eisenhart, 2001, p. 21). In other words, while culture itself may not be visible and manifest, responses generated by it are. The second strategy Eisenhart offers for making sense of overlapping and nebulous cultures is

the idea of “funds of knowledge.” Based on the original work of Luis Moll and his colleagues (1992) and authors who have continued this line of research (e.g. Nesper, 1997; Yon, 2000, Gonzalez, 2005), this approach means recognizing that different sets of valuable knowledge occur in any given time and place, and the way and degree to which actors use the knowledge is evidence of the various overlapping cultures that can exist in any given setting. Finally, Eisenhart argues that culture can be seen in “collective representations.” Borrowing from the field of legal anthropology, this technique emphasizes looking at the way ideas are constructed and contested on a macro-level and how they become public symbols with diverse meanings depending on who is using them and to what ends, for example the multiple meanings of when a child describes him/herself as “Black.” Culture can be plotted by examining the multiple uses of these symbols and asking what they mean to whom, when, and to what ends. The common theme among all three of these techniques to deal with the muddle of culture is that while culture itself may be impossible to directly address or define, it can be negotiated by the research, however imprecisely, in the ways in which it is used. Such an approach recognizes that “culture” is elusive, but does not deny its existence as a mitigator and explicator of human behavior.

Eisenhart's (2001) thoughts on the “muddle” of culture are particularly relevant to my research given that I investigated an organization made up of persons who bring their own experiences, beliefs, and assumptions about public education to bear on their work. Treating Teach First as if it has a firm culture, or even uniformly held beliefs, would seem to be making the type of error against which Eisenhart so vehemently cautions. Rather, I attempt to use the strategies of cultural productions, funds of knowledge, and

collective representations in my research. Each of these strategies works from the same epistemological position: culture can not be firmly fixed, but it can be plotted by the ways in which it evidences itself.

Eisenhart (2001) offers that “cultural productions” can be read through the varied behaviors and processes that result from different groups being exposed to the same situation. In the case of this research, the “same situation” is teacher education for social justice. By examining the ways in which Teach First defines the problem of educational disadvantage, and the ways in which it has designed and implemented its teacher education program to address it, this study seeks to uncover the cultural productions of the organization as they pertain to teacher education for social justice. These productions are especially visible in relief to those cultural productions of the field of teacher education for social justice discussed in the previous chapter. Faced with the same challenge of training teachers to improve the education of marginalized populations, Teach First has developed cultural productions distinct from the field of teacher education for social justice. These productions serve as data for this critical ethnography, speaking as a cultural voice for the organization in terms of social justice. While cultural productions can occur in many forms, this research identifies them primarily through artifact analysis, discussed later in this chapter, and contrasts them with the literature on teacher education for social justice discussed in the previous chapter.

Eisenhart (2001) also suggests the use of “funds of knowledge” to help identify the characteristics of a culture in an educational ethnography. Funds of knowledge are those ideas which provide utility when used by actors within a culture. The knowledge which seem to most enable authority and expertise in the SI are the funds of knowledge

which help map what it is that the organization prizes most. In other words, they show what pieces of knowledge concerning teacher education are assigned the most value in the culture of Teach First. While funds of knowledge may be demonstrated in many forms, I primarily identify them through my observations of teacher training at the SI discussed later in this chapter.

Finally, Eisenhart (2001) suggested the use of “collective representations,” the ways in which ideas are constructed and contested as public symbols, as a means of identifying culture in educational ethnography. This study examines collective representations of what it means to be a part of Teach First, as either a participant or staff member, primarily through interviews and artifacts. To a lesser extent, these collective representations are also visible in observations of some parts of the Summer Institute. In interviews, these collective representations can be identified when research participants are asked to describe Teach First as an organization and its relationship to social justice. With artifacts, collective representations are the frequently used words, phrases, and images that Teach First uses to describe itself. These descriptions are the shared and contested forms of collective representation which speak to the way the culture of Teach First defines itself in terms of teacher education and social justice. In observations, I also attend to frequently employed symbols. However artifacts and interviews lend themselves better to the collective representations because they reflect explicit thinking about how something is to be represented, rather than the organic, fluid representations which I viewed in observations of the Summer Institute.

The second muddle that Eisenhart addresses is the popularity of ethnography in educational research. While certainly still contested as a method (i.e. the National

Research Council's [2002] Scientific Research in Education report that largely validated quantitative measures, despite Eisenhart and other qualitative researchers' presence on the committee), ethnography has become a dominant research method. Eisenhart's fear is that while this is certainly "good news" (p. 18) for the field of qualitative research, it has stabilized the field to the point where research methods have become too normalized and codified. She points to numerous recent texts (e.g. Wolcott, 1997; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999) on qualitative research, each of which endorses, more or less, the same research techniques. She summarizes the problem as follows,

Interest in permeable boundaries, multiple influences, dispersed networks, connections across multi-leveled and multilayered sites, and improvised responses means that ethnographers should be exploring ways to expand their reach beyond traditional methods. We must be alert to possibilities for travel across sites and groups, to methods of data collection and analysis from other disciplines, to new ways of learning about and representing diversity as well as commonality, and to ways of exploring connections within and across sites. (Eisenhart, 2001, pp. 23-24).

To summarize, her concern is that stability in the field of ethnography has licensed research methods that may prove inadequate to answer the complexity of questions founded upon more nuanced understandings of culture, implicitly (and ironically given the margins from which ethnography came) silencing newer methods which may prove useful. Eisenhart is interested specifically in research methods which break from traditional notions of culture, recognizing that it shifts in time and place. She points to examples such as the work of Michelle Fine and Lois Weis (1998) which challenge the

idea of a static, coherent culture by arguing that actors are different cultural beings in different settings. Her argument is that the solution to the muddle of ethnography's success is to disrupt the uniformity of the current set of ethnographic research methods, bringing them more in line with the fluid constructs required to sort out the muddle of culture.

My study also struggles with this second muddle-- the popularity of ethnography and the stability of its research methods. In terms of conducting, organizing, analyzing, and interpreting my data, I relied heavily on two texts that I have found to be imminently useful: *Doing Critical Ethnography* by Jim Thomas (1993) and Phil Carspecken's (1996) *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research*. Each of these foundational texts provides an overview of all aspects of the research process, and I used both as guides in the stages of coding, categorizing, and reading the data. Despite their utility, however, these two texts represent the "conventional" research methods to which Eisenhart refers. They marshal traditional qualitative research methods to fit a critical perspective: observations, interviews, and artifact analysis (though Carspecken does not specifically identify this final method, it is alluded to in terms of "cultural products"). These are exactly the methods which Eisenhart questions as insufficient to answer all the questions ethnography poses.

I address Eisenhart's second muddle of educational ethnography by marshalling a diverse body of literature and approaches to answer my research question. While I use foundational texts to guide my research method, this research relies on theoretical frameworks from outside the field of educational ethnography. Cochran-Smith's (2009) framework for theories of social justice in teacher education makes no mention of

educational ethnography, critical or otherwise. Furthermore, her framework also looks outside traditional sources of educational thought, relying heavily on recent thinking in political philosophy and the work of other education scholars (e.g. North, 2006 and Gewertz and Cribb, 2002) who are similarly inclined to broaden the scope of the conceptual research admitted to thinking about education and social justice. Cochran-Smith's willingness to look outside the field of teacher education to organize ideas found within it is emblematic of the way in which I attempt to address Eisenhart's second muddle of the stability of the field. I use critical ethnography to identify the culture of Teach First, which is then used to formulate a theory of social justice for the organization, which is in turn analyzed in terms of teacher education practice. This process destabilizes the traditional format of an ethnography, highlighting and voicing the culture of a marginalized population, because it is the most organic way of approaching my research question. This is not a solution to the muddle of stability, but it is an attempt to benefit from the history of the field without letting it limit the way in which the research was designed.

Eisenhart's final "muddle" is the ethical responsibility of the ethnographer to others. On one level, this concern is the prima fascia requirement of respecting confidentiality and protecting the interests of research subjects. However, Eisenhart extends this discussion to a second, deeper level, by exploring the ethical dimensions of ethnography that is designed to promote some sort of social change. Though she does not identify ethnography such as this as "critical," she is, in essence, writing about the ethical implications of critical ethnography. She wonders, in light of postmodern and poststructural critiques, whether research which takes a position on a social problem is

implicitly denying its own validity by attempting to make “truth claims” about data gathered. However, she concludes that though it may be, “misguided activism or liberal guilt” she has a responsibility to, “speak about what (she) think(s) would be best in circumstances about which (she has) some special knowledge” (p. 20). This is a question that strikes at the heart of critical ethnography. Indeed, the entire premise of critical ethnography is that researchers have some theoretical framework of social justice which is being honored in the questions they ask, the data they gather, and the ends towards which they marshal it. Thus, while being a form of post-positivism that builds from claims about different ways of knowing, it ultimately subscribes to some form of positivism in that it also is making claims about the world in terms of equity, fairness, and justice. This would seem especially true for critical ethnographies that expect that the research itself will in some way affect the behavior of those researched. With regards to this muddle, Eisenhart struggles to generate a set of possible solutions, or even a direction in which the field should head,

Perhaps needs identified out of everyday experience, such as for adequate nutrition, medical care, or educational opportunity, should be the basis for intervention (by the researcher). Perhaps agreed-upon principles, such as justice or equality, should be the basis. Perhaps some combination of the two or some others. Specific plans for change will have to emerge from local deliberation and collaboration around the various possibilities. (Eisenhart, 2001, p. 24).

Given the earlier discussion of competing theories of social justice, it seems unlikely that such a consensus will be reached in the near future. Even among critical researchers there exists such a wide spectrum of opinion on what constitutes “justice”

that creating a set of guiding principles for how the research should be directed seems a daunting task. Moreover, given the implicit ways in which researcher and research participants interact in dialog with one another, even at levels that fail to meet Lather's (1986b) standard of "catalytic validity," it seems that intervention is necessitated, at least to some degree, from the moment that a theoretical framework has been developed and a research question chosen. Although this muddle is endemic to all ethnographic research, it is particularly germane to critical ethnography given its explicit position as not only research, but political stance and a tool of social change. After all, since the fundamental purpose of critical ethnography is to effect change through knowledge, this muddle is not to be avoided or minimized, but dealt with purposefully as an essential element of the research design.

My work does not avoid this muddle so much as it embraces it: I hope this research affects the ways in which Teach First thinks about and performs its work. Like all critical ethnography, this study works from an explicitly political and ideological stance. As discussed earlier, my assumption here is that "justice" can itself be a hegemonic tool if it is not problematized and considered for all of its cultural norms organizations. In performing a critical ethnography on Teach First, I am hoping to shed light on the ways in which different conceptions of justice, teaching, and teacher education shape theories of social justice in teacher education. From this, I hope to generate for Teach First (and the community of researchers of teacher education for social justice) increased clarity and transparency around what it means to teach historically marginalized populations. In doing so, I am pursuing Lather's (1986b) goal of catalytic validity: re-orienting, focusing, and energizing participants. This research

will be shared with Teach First, and I hope it serves to clarify its thinking about its mission and the political and cultural complexities of the work it does. My hope is that my research participants will think more expansively about the nature of the work, embracing, at least to some degree, a critical approach to the political and cultural nature of their work. Ultimately, I hope this research leads Teach First to challenge its own truth claims. This means, necessarily, that I am, myself, making claims about the nature of teacher education for social justice. For example, the idea that “justice” must be defined clearly and considered carefully by teacher educators for social justice is itself a significant, normative claim. Thus, this research epitomizes Eisenhart’s final muddle of ethnography: that the researcher is ultimately making truth claims while at the same time attempting to challenge them. In performing and sharing my research, I am sensitive to this muddle and respect it by treading cautiously with my judgments, conclusions, and recommendations, understanding that my work is founded first and foremost around increasing transparency around teacher education for social justice.

Eisenhart’s final muddle also extended to the need to protect the personal and professional interests of research participants. In the following section which details how I conducted my research, I describe how this was done.

Research Overview

My research has two separate and consecutive goals. First, to make sense of Teach First's neoliberal and progressive ideologies by formulating an organizational theory of teacher education for social justice using Cochran-Smith's (in press) framework for a theory of social justice in teacher education. And second, to read as text and discourse the implementation of this theory within the broader context of British and

global education and teacher education reform through Ball's three theoretical strategies of education policy analysis. My data comes from three sources: interviews, observations, and artifact analysis. Table 1 provides an overview of my data analysis and the chapters in which each step of the analytical process occurs. “Normative,” “objective,” and “subjective,” analysis refer to Carspecken’s (1996) three “ontological realms,” which are discussed at the beginning of Chapter Four. A more complete discussion of this analytical process is explained in the data analysis section, which completes this chapter.

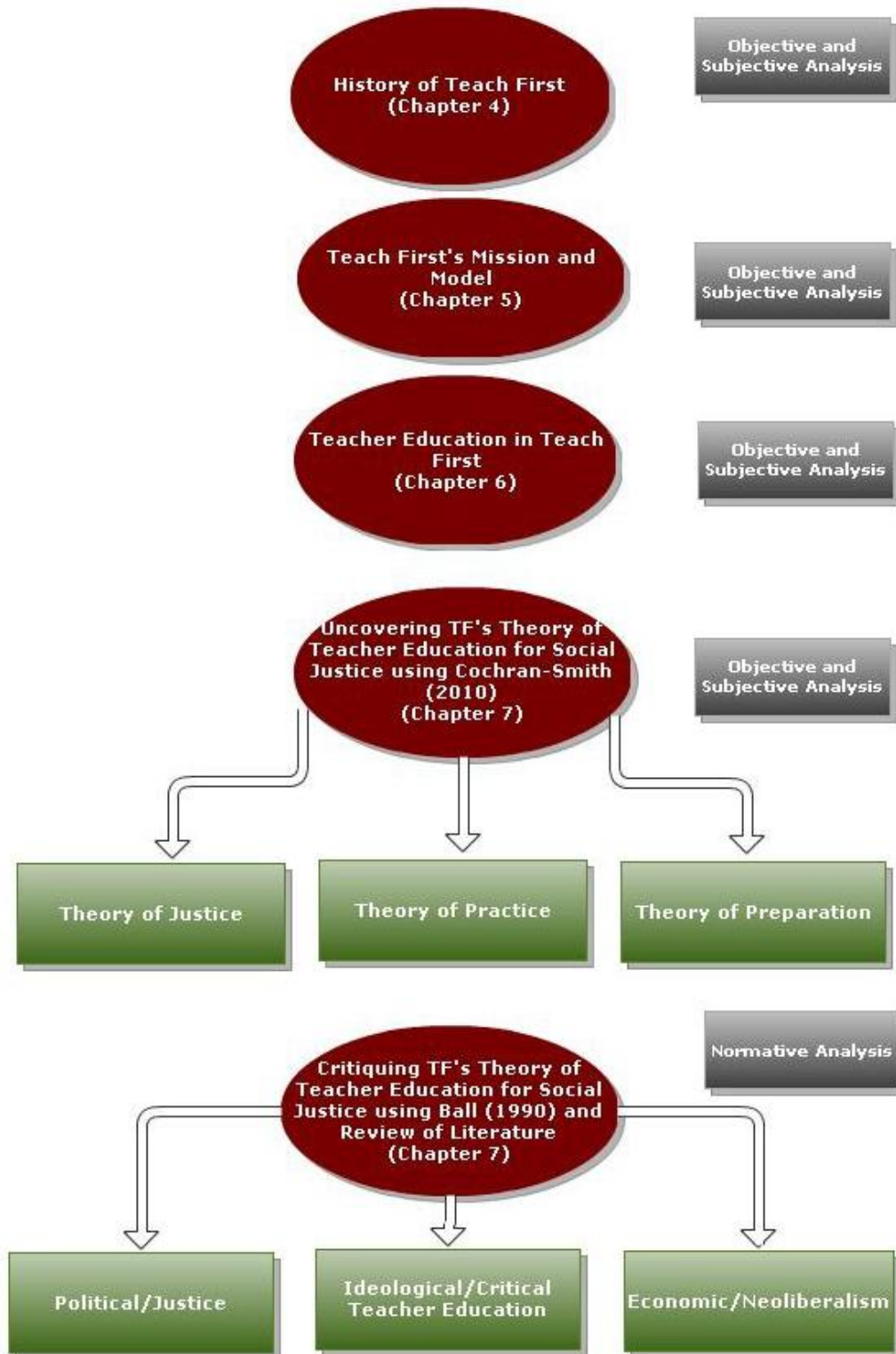


Figure 3.1 Research Overview

Research Sites

The majority of the data collection occurred during the summer of 2008 at two locations of the Teach First Summer Institute: City University, in London, and Canterbury Christ Church University in Canterbury. Although it would have been ideal to interview participants from all three Teach First locations (London, The Midlands, and Greater Manchester), time and cost prohibited such an effort. Research participants were interviewed in available locations at the two universities, and in public areas surrounding them. Follow-up data was collected during the summer and fall of 2009 after those research participants who were teachers had completed their first year of teaching and completed their year-long teacher education program with Canterbury Christ Church University. All follow-up interviews were conducted via phone.

Research Participants

The research participants of this study, broadly considered, are every Teach First participant at the 2008 Summer Institute. Although only a relatively small number of participants were interviewed, I believe that I observed every participant at the institute in trainings, workshops, or full-cohort meetings and ceremonies. Furthermore, I also observed most of the Summer Institute staff of Teach First and Canterbury Christ Church University as they led sessions. In the following sections of this chapter I discuss how these interviews and observations were conducted and how I protected the anonymity of the research participants.

Researcher Access and Role

My role as a researcher at the Summer Institute was a complex one in terms of

insider and outsider status. Although the participants had no initial knowledge of who I was, I was well known to much of the staff of Teach First and members of the partner universities. To them, I expect that I was considered very much an “insider,” as I had more experience working at the SI than many of the people who I interviewed. Furthermore, my status as an alumnus of TFA was also likely read as “insider” status, especially since several members of the staff, including three of my interviewees, were also TFA alumni. Indeed, my insider status raised difficulties in the interviews which I discuss later in this chapter. To a lesser extent, I expect that I was also viewed as an insider by the participants as well, since they were informed by Teach First of my background in TFA and my previous work with Teach First. Yet at the same time, my position as a doctoral student in education, and the types of questions I asked, established me as somewhat of an outsider to both groups as well. As will be described in more detail during the following chapters, my research agenda of problematizing teacher education for social justice draws on an academic tradition which lies outside the scope of Teach First. Thus, by the very nature of this dissertation, I was somewhat of an outsider as well. Throughout all phases of data collection and analysis, I was careful to clarify, both to others and myself, my current role as a researcher—one informed by past experiences, but working with a different agenda and purpose than in my previous roles.

The ethical tensions in this research are significant, as I had both “insider” and “outsider” status at the Summer Institute. I worked at the Summer Institute for the three summers prior to this study, designing and implementing curriculum, training ambassadors for work with participants, and liaising with university and external

training providers. On one hand, these experiences provided me with extensive insider knowledge about how Teach First functions and to what ends. Indeed, these experiences were the genesis for my research question and guided many of my methodological and theoretical choices in the design of this research. However, this prior experience with Teach First also means that I researched a program with which I have strong connections and people with whom I have strong relationships, both professional and personal. In fact, I believe that I was granted permission to do this research largely because of the work I have done for the organization in the past. I explained to the Teach First staff, including CEO Brett Wigdortz, that my research is necessarily critical, and they were still eager for me to conduct it and delivered considerable access to the SI.

Herr and Anderson (2005) described this type of insider/outsider dilemma in great length in their text, *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. While they allowed that power relations and conflicts of interest are rife in situations like this, they also point out that this type of research, “not only might have a greater impact on the setting, but is also more democratic” (p. 36). Their argument is that power relations can be used to unethically draw out data that might not be in the best interest of research participants, or which might be analyzed with extreme bias that effects knowledge claims. However, they also allow that the insider status can lead to emic perspectives that outsiders would not be able to glean. In the following sections I describe how I have attempted to reduce the effects of power relations while also benefitting from the emic knowledge that my history with Teach First afforded me.

Data Collection

During my time researching at the 2008 SI, I collected three different forms of data: interviews, observations, and artifacts. In the following sections I describe what this data is, how this data was gathered, and how I protected the interests of the research participants involved.

Interviews

The interview participants for this study are twelve members of Teach First staff and seventeen Teach First participants. I interviewed the following members of Teach First staff: the Chief Executive Officer, the Director of Training and Support, the Director of Recruitment, the Director of the Maximum Impact Project, the National Director of the SI, the Regional Director of the London SI, the Participant President, the Associate Tutor Coordinator, a Leadership Development Associate for the London SI, the National Program Director of Teach First from Canterbury Christ Church University, and both of the Regional Directors (Greater Manchester and The Midlands). Below, I discuss in more detail the processes by which I arranged and conducted the interviews, as well as describing in greater detail the professional responsibilities of the staff I chose to interview and how they relate to my research question.

Teach First Participants

The seventeen participants I interviewed were randomly selected from the more than 200 Teach First participants who attended the 2008 SI. I originally intended to interview twenty Teach First participants, but, as I will explain below, logistical reasons forced me to interview only seventeen. I acquired from Teach First an Excel document with the names of every London participant. Within this document, I assigned random,

sequential numbers to each name. Then, I chose the first twelve females and the first eight males in numerical order in order to maintain a gender balance that mirrored the ratio of females to males in the entire Teach First participant population. After I gave these names to Teach First, these twenty participants were contacted for me by Teach First staff (the Director of the London SI) and given my contact information, and told to contact me if they were interested in participating. Of these initial twenty names, only thirteen responded, but all of them, seven females and six males, agreed to be interviewed. The other seven never contacted me. Therefore, I repeated the process, choosing names in the same manner and giving a list of five females and two males to Teach First. Of these seven names, five, four females and one male, responded and agreed to be interviewed. This process was then repeated a third time with one male name and one female name. Not wanting to unduly eliminate any potential research participant, I allowed three business days from the time they were contacted to when I notified Teach First of needing replacements. This was done, in part, because I did not want to build any sort of selection bias into my research participants. Specifically, I was concerned that I only interviewed those research participants who immediately responded then I might have been implicitly selecting for some characteristic that might reflect itself in the participant's views of Teach First or the Summer Institute. The other reason this time was given was because the logistics of the Summer Institute meant that it was often difficult to contact participants, particularly during weeks two and three in which they were spread out across London schools.

The seventeen participants I interviewed were all recent college graduates. The universities they attended ranged greatly in prestige from City University London to

Oxford and Cambridge. Their courses of study were equally diverse. However, without exception, each participant was new to the education profession and had not completed a degree in education. All seventeen Teach First participants that I interviewed were made aware that I was an alumnus of TFA, and a former employee of Teach First. None of them knew me before our initial meeting, nor were any familiar with my name, history with Teach First, or research agenda. However, by means of introduction and in pursuit of transparency, they were informed of history with both TFA and Teach First. Each participant was given, and signed, a consent form (see Appendix A) that discussed the purpose of this research and allowed them the right to opt-out at any point. My interviews generally lasted between half an hour and forty-five minutes, following my interview protocol (Appendix C) with significant deviations allowed to follow up on points of interest generated by the interview.

This protocol was an extension of the one I piloted in my Qualitative Research Methods course to examine the beliefs of two TFA alumni on similar subjects. I learned from this pilot process several important lessons. First, I noticed that in asking questions pertaining to issues such as social justice, justice, and even the purpose of public education, that my experience in doctoral level reading and writing had insulated me to the difficulties of discussing ideas this abstract. Both of my pilot interview participants were very familiar with teacher education for social justice, yet still struggled to answer questions about the nature of justice and its implications for teacher education. Accordingly, my protocol was designed to build towards these questions by first establishing a base of experience and familiarity with the tangible issues surrounding education reform and teacher education at the 2008 Summer Institute. After asking very

direct questions about what they thought about certain issues and what they had seen at the Summer Institute, I moved into more abstract questions which asked them to synthesize these ideas and experiences. Furthermore, the questions I asked were designed to elicit answers that spoke to the three elements of the Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework of a theory of social justice in teacher education, which was built on theories of justice, practice, and preparation. These questions were interspersed throughout the increasing levels of abstraction in the questions. For example, I asked them how they perceived their role both as teachers and as members of Teach First (practice/justice), how they perceived the role of Teach First in education reform (practice/justice), how they understood "educational inequity" (justice), and how their experience as Teach First participants shaped these understandings (preparation). Throughout the interviews, and especially through follow-up questions, I also attempted to draw out the neoliberal agendas that seemed embedded within Teach First. This was done by asking questions regarding the Teach First's stance on the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, its corporate partnerships, and its belief in the power of social entrepreneurship.

Teach First Staff

Unlike the Teach First participants that I interviewed, every member of staff that I interviewed knew me well professionally, and, in many cases personally. Having worked with them for three previous summers, they were well-aware of not only my background in Teach First and TFA, but also the general nature of my research—that I would be attempting to understand Teach First's work in the context of teacher education for social justice. This familiarity was a consistent challenge, as I frequently needed to remind participants to speak to me as a researcher, and not as a friend and former employee.

These challenges evidenced themselves in two distinct ways. First, I was often given insufficient detail in response to my questions because, I surmise, the staff assumed I already knew some aspects of their answers. I regularly had to push these research participants to answer more completely and treat me as an outsider, despite the fact that my insider status had allowed me to ask pointed, specific questions.

Second, I had to frequently caution research participants, sometimes within the interview itself, around disclosing information that could prove professionally harmful to them. While significant steps have been taken to protect the anonymity of staff members, their distinct roles made this a much more difficult process than with the interviews I conducted with Teach First participants. For example, while in the analysis chapter I refer to a “senior staff member at Teach First” instead of their specific job title, the data they provided reflects, to a certain degree, their role and responsibilities within Teach First. Ultimately, however, I protected them in this regard by sharing with them transcripts of the quotes I used in this study. In a few cases, research participants asked for data to be excluded because they felt that it could be used to identify them.

I used the same interview protocol as I did with participants for each staff interview (Appendix C), and asked similar questions as I did to participants, but reversed to reflect their power in shaping the Teach First participants experience. For example, rather than asking how participants understood “educational disadvantage”, I asked how Teach First defined the term, and how it was reflected in the curriculum and instruction of the SI. Furthermore, I significantly deviated from the interview protocol to explore the specific areas of expertise of each staff member. For example, I asked the CEO broader questions about he had defined the mission of Teach First, while I asked SI staff members

specific questions about how this mission was integrated into the SI. Each staff member was given, and signed, a consent form (see Appendix B) that discussed the purpose of this research and allowed them the right to opt-out at any point. My interviews generally lasted between half an hour and forty-five minutes and were conducted in office space, classrooms, and public places around Canterbury Christ Church University in Canterbury and City University in London. Each staff member was contacted personally by me and agreed to the interview.

Observations

Observations comprise a significant amount of the data that I analyzed. In the following section, I explain my protocols for observations, and provide brief summaries of the locations at which I conducted the observations. When referring to specific pieces of data in the following chapters, I explain these settings in significantly more detail in order to contextualize the observations. Furthermore, a more complete summary of the Summer Institute is included in Chapter Six, which analyzes the teacher preparation that participants received.

Prior to my arrival at the Summer Institute, all Teach First staff members were informed that I would be researching at the Summer Institute and that I would be observing and recording notes. At the opening morning meeting of the London Summer Institute, the participants were told that I would likely be in their sessions. They were also told that while I would be observing and taking notes, I would not be recording any names and that their anonymity would be preserved. Normally the procedure for outside visitors who are observing the Summer Institute was a longer, more intricate one. Yet, in the case of this research, I was simply told to go wherever I wanted. However, prior to

observing any sessions, I contacted whomever was leading them in order to let them know that I would be coming. I observed Professional Studies and Subject Studies Sessions, Placement Week and Contrasting Schools Week, evening workshops, and intra-cohort events.

During weeks one, four, five, and six, I attended Professional and Subject Studies sessions during the mornings and afternoons of each day of the SI. These observations took place in classrooms at City University and Canterbury Christ Church University. These sessions, led by staff from Canterbury Christ Church University, were the primary training components of the SI and dealt with a wide variety of teaching-related issues including classroom management, theories of learning, lesson planning, marking (grading), and diversity. All instructors taught to the same objective each day, but were given significant latitude in terms of determining how they taught it. Accordingly, the learning experiences of Teach First participants seemed to vary greatly depending on the instructor to whom they were assigned. In general, I picked an unobtrusive location in the back of the classroom in which the sessions were being taught and recorded notes silently. On multiple occasions, however, I was asked to participate by the instructor leading the session. In each of these situations, I declined.

At night, I attended supplementary workshops and cohort-wide events. I also attended morning meetings, which were primarily administrative, but also featured lectures on the history and mission of Teach First. Workshop sessions were led by external training providers and Teach First Ambassadors (alumni), and they varied greatly in content and structure. Teach First had very little direct influence on the workshops, other than approving the topic on which the session would be delivered.

Given this lack of oversight and the fact that participants were free to attend whatever workshops they wanted to, I consider this data to be significantly less useful than the observations I conducted of other aspects of the SI. There were also several cohort-wide events that were held in the evenings. These sessions were planned and delivered by Teach First staff and were generally designed to be motivational, bonding events. Accordingly, they were rich with data I could mine to uncover a theory of social justice for Teach First. Likewise, morning meetings, while also being the primary delivery source of logistical details such as schedule and location changes or paperwork that needed to be collected, were similarly rich with information about Teach First's mission and philosophy.

In week two, participants visited the school in which they would be teaching in the fall. Referred to as "Placement Week", this was the most unstructured time of the SI in which participants received no teacher education from either Teach First or Canterbury Christ Church University. While at their schools, they met with school staff, observed classes, and received their "timetable," or teaching schedule for the upcoming year. I did not observe during this week because the content of the week was at the sole discretion of the placement schools and did not reflect the values or mission of Teach First. However, in my analysis section, I do discuss the implication of Teach First's creation of this week as part of the structure of the Summer Institute. In week three, Teach First participants attended "Contrasting Schools Week." It was during this week that Teach First participants received their only actual teaching experience, teaching, in general, between three-four hours at a school at which Teach First places teachers that is not their own. I discuss the theory of teacher education embedded in each of these weeks in Chapter Six.

Artifacts

I examined a number of Teach First artifacts to help draw out its theory of social justice. These included: the Policy First publication discussed earlier; promotional and recruitment videos for funders; the Teach First website; the Professional Studies Curriculum Guide for the 2008 SI; selected Subject Studies Curriculum Guides; Teach First press releases; and media coverage of Teach First. Each artifact was coded for evidence of Cochran-Smith's (2010) three sub-theories in her framework for a theory of social justice in teacher education, as well as from "the bottom-up" for the images of Teach First as represented by itself.

Data Analysis

I categorized and coded my data within two distinct and consecutive macro-levels. First, I analyzed them through the tools of critical ethnography using the framework for a theory of social justice developed by Cochran-Smith (2010). Then, I analyzed and contextualized that theory within the broader context of British and global education and teacher education policy using Ball's three modes of policy sociology analysis: political, economic, and ideological.

My first mode of analysis was a conceptually difficult one. "Uncovering" a theory of social justice for Teach First is a necessarily circular process as the evidence of that theory is, in many cases, the effect of that theory. On one hand, this represents a classic chicken and the egg conundrum—does a piece of data represent a symbol of that theory, or was it an effect of the abstract theory buried within and without the data? The difficult answer, of course, is that it was both. Teach First claimed to have a mission of affecting justice, but did not have an explicit theory of social justice or education reform

to which they subscribed. As such, the theory that I was attempting to locate did not act as a fixed object which could drive and shape the Summer Institute. Rather, it was mutable and ever-present, being defined by what took place, while at the same time playing a part in affecting the shape of things to come. Put another way, I had no access to a theory of social justice for Teach First because it was implicit, not explicit. It was not written down anywhere, and no one could describe it.

Yet at the same time, it did exist since there was certainly a goal of social change reflected in the policies and curriculum of the Summer Institute. As the data I collected show, the actions of Teach First and their partner universities were not random—they were guided by some general understandings about the nature of teaching, the purpose of education, and their mission as members of Teach First. Moreover, they were explicitly framed around ideas of equity and justice in education. What this means is that every instance of Teach First leadership, or Summer Institute curriculum—every meeting, every training, every lecture—was both being guided by this buried theory, while at the same time shaping exactly what this theory was.

In other words, the Teach First data I collected existed, a priori to analysis, as both actor and object within the dynamic social context of the Summer Institute. It was constantly acting as theory which drove teacher education, while at the same time being continually re-shaped. Accordingly, I had to be careful in my use of Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework to inductively construct a theory from interviews, observations, and artifact analysis. Her framework for a theory of social justice in teacher education proposed the elements that all such theories contain. Yet at the same time, her theory does not presuppose that all agents of teacher education set out to fill in theory of

practice, a theory of teaching, and a theory of justice. Rather, these theories were manifestations of what necessarily exists when teacher education sets itself towards social justice.

The implications of this for my research were that I could not simply read the data via Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework, looking for manifestations of theories of practice, teaching, and justice. Since the data existed outside of her framework, and did not organize itself around it, doing so would have been imposing a false geography upon them. However, her framework suggests that the data can be organized in that way, in order to better makes sense of what social justice means in terms of teacher education. To address, but certainly not resolve this conundrum, I immersed myself in the data, reading it twice—once from the “bottom up”, and a second time from the “top down”.

While it was certainly my intention when I began this research to use Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework, I did not want to predispose myself to seeing instantiations of her theory before first seeing the ways in which the data might organize itself. Rather, I wanted to first see the way the Summer Institute organized itself around broadly defined topics such as justice, teaching, and equality. To do otherwise, is, as Thomas (1993) points out, both intellectually dishonest and unethical, despite its attractive convenience. My burden was, as he puts it, the process of “defamiliarization,” in which, “we revise what we have seen and translate it into something new. We bring the tentative insights we have gained back to the center of our attention to raise havoc with our settled ways of thinking and conceptualization” (p. 63).

I defamiliarized myself to this end by reading through all the data, or, in the case of the multimedia, viewing, it twice. The first time I kept running notes on topics, ideas,

phrases, and arguments that I noticed as appearing frequently. To some extent, in the case of the interviews, these regular appearances were prompted by my questioning, so, as a check on this influence, I only used those emerging themes which appeared in “natural” environments, free from the self-fulfilling force of my own research. If it appeared in the interview as well, I noted this, but considered it less valuable for this stage of the reading. Then, I read the data a second time, this time with my loose list of bottom-up themes already created. I added to this list slightly, but for the most part refined the broad themes I had already identified.

While I was not working with a predefined lens in place, I was still working with the tools of ethnography. These strategies helped me organize and understand the data so that it can be unpacked and reformed into an understanding of Teach First’s theory of social justice using Cochran-Smith’s (2010) framework. I used the tools outlined earlier: funds of knowledge, cultural productions, and collective representations to draw out images of Teach First on its own terms. As I moved through my data I used the guiding questions of each of these strategies to marshal data into themes and patterns, working outside of any mid-level critical theory. In other words, the tools were used to generate ideas, rather than sift through data for evidence of ideas that would work with one another inside a theoretical framework. Finally, I organized these themes into funds of knowledge, cultural productions, and collective representations which helped illuminate how these themes were supported and functioning within the culture of Teach First at the 2008 Summer Institute. From this first mode of analysis, which I discuss in some depth in the following chapters, came broad notions about teaching, education, and, particularly, the somewhat underdefined idea of “educational disadvantage.”

After analyzing the data in this way, I was able to map out several themes for the data—reoccurring patterns that established what Teach First was trying to communicate at the Summer Institute. Then, and only then, after these patterns were already established could I return to Cochran-Smith’s (2010) framework and use it to organize for the purpose of analysis the story the data had already told. Using it any earlier would have severely risked shaping that story itself. Indeed, this muddle with which I struggled, is one endemic to ethnography in general—it is almost precisely the first muddle described by Eisenhart—that of trying to pinpoint an amorphous, culture free of boundaries. In the case of my research in Teach First, it was the temptation to establish the limits of a theory of social justice when the theory itself knew no definition, let alone taxonomy.

Next, I applied top-down analysis via Cochran-Smith’s (2010) framework, using the bottom-up themes I had already created to keep the data somewhat intact in its original organization. What this meant in practical terms is that, for example, while the term “educational attainment” is absent from Cochran-Smith’s framework, it was, clearly, of considerable importance to actors at the Summer Institute. Accordingly, I needed to treat it as a theme itself, while also trying to unpack how it could relate to her framework in the goal of uncovering a theory of social justice. To do so, data were re-categorized by their relevance to theories of practice, preparation, and justice, and then sub-coded into discreet forms within each of these broad labels, keeping their original themes from the first analysis attached to them. Generally speaking, I cast a wide net in terms of identifying data as being relevant to each of the three major categories, and many pieces were relevant to more than one, speaking to a slightly different meaning

when coded within those categories. Case in point, when observing a session on working with diverse populations, statements by the instructor were loaded with ideas that explicitly spoke to theories of both justice and practice, while implicitly representing a theory of preparation. Moreover, the data also represented themes of the Summer Institute that I identified when reading from the bottom-up. Therefore, I concluded this stage of the analysis by identifying how each of these themes spoke to the three sub-theories of Cochran-Smith's framework.

In essence, then, her framework was imposed on the data in two distinct ways—once in its most disorganized state, and again around the themes I earlier identified. I believe this process resulted in an authentic reading of the data that still retained the fundamental purpose of this research: uncovering a theory of teacher education for social justice for Teach First. It also had the advantage of honoring the ways in which ideology organizes itself, while at the same time bringing to bear a mode of analysis that presumes the components that any such thought must naturally possess. Indeed, this was my best solution to the chicken and egg problem I identified above. Since I was looking for an implicit theory of social justice, it seemed prudent to use analysis that targeted data both as symbols of an unformed theory, as well as the results of this theory. In other words, this analysis was conducted first from the bottom-up on Teach First's terms, and then from the top-down, using Cochran-Smith's framework to chart the elements of the theory which were already there, implicit in the ways in which Teach First went about its mission at the Summer Institute, but still categorized on its own terms, instead of only mine, or hers.

I believe that, when combined with one another, these data form Teach First's

theory of social justice in teacher education. Furthermore, my analysis attempts to identify aspects or understandings of social justice which do not appear within the ethnography. My supposition was that this theory is evidenced as much by the questions it never poses, as those for which it has answers. Indeed, as my analysis shows in Chapter Seven shows, this negative space is consistent with and emblematic of the disconnect in conceptions of justice that currently exists within the field of social justice.

My second major level of analysis was using Ball's (1990) policy sociology framework to analyze and locate Teach First's theory of social justice within the context of neoliberal education reform both in the U.K. and globally, paying particular attention to how it was situated within the field of teacher education. The assumption I made that warranted and necessitated the use of Ball's framework was that Teach First was, in and of itself, an instantiation of education policy. This dissertation treats Teach First as policy because it was licensed and supported by the government as a form of teacher training and, more broadly, as an education reform with the potential to improve failing schools. In this sense, Teach First was an attempt by the state to solve a national problem through the reagenting of teacher education (Hatcher, 2006). As such, it was public policy, but of the divested sort that typifies neoliberal reform. Although it was in the private sector, Teach First was an instantiation of neoliberal English education policy in which the state placed responsibility for the design and implementation of education reform in the hands of non-governmental agencies.

Accordingly, a significant goal of this research is to locate this "policy" in the context of neoliberal education reform in England, specifically addressing Teach First as an example of New Labour's commitment to greater corporate involvement in public

education. However, as neoliberal education reform is truly a worldwide phenomenon, I expand this analysis to include global trends in education reform, particularly in teacher education. At all of these levels, I used Ball's (1990) three theoretical strategies for policy analysis, investigating the economic (how is education funded and who gains from it), political (how is social order constructed), and ideological (what/whose beliefs are validated) characteristics of Teach First's theory of social justice in teacher education to disambiguate the problem which frames this dissertation: Is it possible for neoliberal education policy to coexist or complement teacher education for social justice, and if so, what implications does this have for the field of teacher education? In order to make the best use of Ball's (1990) theoretical strategies for policy sociology, I then linked each of his strategies to one of the areas of my literature review: critical approaches to teacher education (ideological), critiques of neoliberalism (economic), and critiques of distributive justice (political).

At this stage of the critical ethnography the stance and agenda of the research profoundly direct the analysis. My intention was to critique and explain how progressive and conservative ideologies can intersect in teacher education and to argue for both clarity and nuance when teacher education assumes a mission of social justice. Ball's framework helps to expose the powerful, complex, and overlapping ways in which education policy preserve hegemonic social relations. The final stage of this analysis was to unpack what this means when that education policy, in this case teacher education policy, is neoliberal in nature, driven by a sense of social justice that draws from an objective, monistic theory of justice as distribution.

Chapter Four: The History of Teach First

In the following section, I trace the history of Teach First, highlighting those aspects that inform an analysis of the organization's theory of teacher education for social justice. Although an overview of Teach First was provided in the first chapter, this chapter digs deeper into the history and shows how the politics that led to its founding influence the ways it currently conceptualizes its purpose and mission. Moreover, although it is not a goal of this study to contrast Teach First with TFA, this section involves many of these comparisons to TFA because of the degree to which Teach First openly emulated the TFA model. The organization of this chapter is as follows. First, I summarize the three "ontological realms" of critical ethnography described by Carspecken (1996): objective, subjective, and normative. Then, writing from the objective realm, I present the early history of Teach First, paying particular attention to the neoliberal political context in which it was founded. Finally, writing from the "subjective realm," I argue that there are two significant themes in Teach First's history that help to contextualize the 2008 data examined in Chapters Five and Six, and the theory of social justice uncovered in Chapter Seven: 1) Teach First was founded in such a way that it inherently devalued the voices of teacher educators; 2) At its inception, the staff of Teach First defined educational disadvantage solely in terms of statistical measures of academic achievement.

Carspecken theorized that there are three realms in which critical ethnographers research: the objective, the subjective, and the normative. Within each of these ontological categories or "realms," truth claims are made in different ways, using distinct forms of evidence. Carspecken summarizes the objective realm as being, "structured

fundamentally according to the principle of multiple access...a single world which is the same for all people” (p. 65). It is thus characterized by statements “about what is, about what took place, and about what sorts of events regularly precede other events” (p. 84) which would not be disputed by others who accessed the data. As such, it is not truly “objective” in that it “exists outside of human efforts to know and describe it,” but rather it exists as an “ontological presupposition that is unavoidable when making certain types of truth claims” (p. 65).

In other words, in order for the researcher to make any sort of ethnographic claims, there must be a “shared reality” that is agreed upon by all observers, such as the statement, “Teach First is a non-profit organization founded in London in 2002.” From this shared reality, the researcher can move into the subjective and normative realms to make truth claims for which there would not necessarily be universal agreement. Carspeken’s objective realm will be the first position from which I write about the history of Teach First, relying on sources and data characterized by their open access. This does not, of course, remove subjectivity, but it means that the claims I make in this section are based on data that others could access and from which they would likely make similar claims.

In this chapter, I also write from “the subjective realm,” the second of Carspeken’s (1996) ontological categories, which is characterized by privileged access and assertions about “feelings, intentions, and states of awareness” (p. 85). Truth claims in the subjective realm take “objective-reference events open to multiple access” and add to them associations which “must be inferred and are not by nature perceivable” (p. 69). Thus, while “the facts” of any event are not themselves privileged, the inferences drawn

from them by the interplay between researcher and data are. Inferences made in the subjective realm are not normative in the sense that they make value judgments on data, but they are individualized all the same because they necessitate the unique role of the actor/researcher. While the validity claims made in the subjective realm certainly rely on evidence, they are distinguished from those in the objective realm both by their inherently limited access (the thinking of the researcher) and the possibility that another observer would reach a different conclusion after interacting with the same data. For example, the argument, “Teach First thrived because of New Labour’s support for private/public partnerships in education” is not a normative claim that judges, but it is firmly in the subjective realm because it draws from a unique analysis of objective realm data. In other words, another researcher, examining the same data, might make a different subjective claim about what this data mean. The final section of this chapter consists of analysis in the subjective realm wherein I infer relationships between Teach First’s history and the way in which its mission, policies, and practices have come to be framed.

This chapter does not include analysis in Carspecken’s (1996) normative realm which involves claims about what is “right, wrong, good, or bad...our world as it is or should be” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 85). This kind of analysis is essential to critical ethnography, but I delay this until Chapter Seven in order to first present Teach First from the objective and subjective realms. Doing so allows me to describe Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice on its own terms. As this research has the goal of both critiquing *and* uncovering this theory, separating these analytical realms enables they type of disinterested analysis that best explains Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice before making judgments on it. In other words, it is an

important goal of this research to show why this theory reflects the mission and values of the staff of Teach First; adding normative claims about the limitations of this theory would considerably compromise this goal. For example, writing about why the staff of Teach First so passionately believed in the need to create equal educational opportunity, while also critiquing the idea of equal educational opportunity, would result in analysis that attempted to accomplish two distinct goals at the same time. I believe that analyzing the data in this way would have resulted in analysis that seemed muddled and even contradictory rather than sequential and complementary.

“Objective Realm” History of Teach First

To present the “objective” history of Teach First, I draw heavily on my own experience as an employee of Teach First for three summers, the 2005 study by Hutchings et al, and the very valuable history of Teach First provided by Sonia Blandford (2008) in her article, “Teach First: From McKinsey to the Classroom.” Blandford’s insight is particularly useful, but also worthy of additional scrutiny. She is not only an educational researcher and former Dean of Education at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), but also formerly led her university’s partnership with Teach First and is currently a senior level staff member for Teach First. Her article provides both an overview of the history of Teach First and also argues for an expanded corporate role in teacher education reform. I have divided this history into four sections: the McKinsey Report, the political context in which Teach First was founded, the influence of TFA, and Teach First’s formation of a university partnership. Taken together, these four sections tell the story of an organization that was heavily influenced by neoliberal thinking in education with very little input from teacher educators.

The McKinsey Report

Hutchings et al (2005) identify Teach First as a product of business groups that, in 2001, had charged themselves with finding a way to contribute to the community and, in particular, to the improvement of London schools. They state that, “Teach First came into being after two business membership organisations, London First and Business in the Community, engaged management consultants McKinsey and Company on a pro bono basis to investigate how businesses could help improve pupil performance in London.” McKinsey determined that, “the number of excellent teachers was one of the strongest predictors of improved pupil performance, especially in challenging schools” (Teach First 2010B). “Excellent”, in this case, was defined by performance on the high-stakes General Certificate of Secondary Education exams (GCSE)⁴. The implications of this definition of “excellent,” how this correlation between teachers and GCSE scores was reached, and the role it played in informing Teach First’s thinking about educational disadvantage is discussed later in this chapter in the “subjective realm” section.

As a result of this presumed link between teacher quality and GCSE scores, McKinsey recommended to the London First/Business in the Community team the creation of a teacher education program, “targeted at top graduates, using the support of business and education leaders, 'to bring additional excellent teachers into challenging schools for two years’” (Teach First 2010A). This idea was inspired by “the success of Teach for America, a programme set up in 1990 through which talented graduates are

⁴ The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is a series of tests taken by English secondary school students, usually during Year 11 (tenth grade). A passing grade of C or better on at least five exams, including English and Maths, is required for a student to be accepted into a Sixth Form, a college preparatory program in which students prepare to take “A-Levels”, which, in turn, are required for university matriculation. In essence, GCSEs function as a gateway to college attendance, and are also the most commonly used metric to evaluate the success of schools, as evidenced by the publication of GCSE results in “league tables” which rank the effectiveness of schools.

recruited to teach in the neediest urban and rural public schools in the USA” (Hutchings et al, 2005, p. 2). Beginning in February, 2002, a team including London First, Business in the Community, and Brett Wigdortz from the McKinsey team, began work on Teach First, partnering with other members of the business community and the government (Hutchings et al, 2005, p. 15-19).

Political Context of Teach First’s Founding

For Wigdortz and the early organizers of Teach First, the founding of the organization occurred at a fortuitous time in British politics. As Blandford (2008) notes, the London First/Business in the Community/McKinsey project occurred at the same time that UK higher education institutions (HEIs) were coming under government pressure “to consider new ways of educating and training the public and private sector workforce” (p. 96). Furthermore, at the same time the governing party, New Labour was also placing an increased emphasis on private sector involvement in public education through, for example, the development of academies (roughly the equivalent of American charter schools), public schools sponsored by private organizations that operate outside of the control of Local Educational Authorities (LEAs).

Moreover, teacher education policy in England had, in recent years, become more amenable to a reform such as Teach First. British teacher education at the start of the 21st century was at an advanced stage of deregulation thanks to decades of neoliberal reform that had begun in the 1980’s under the Thatcher government. Similar to other social policies of the time, these reforms were strikingly neoliberal in the sense that they were designed to introduce accountability and competition in teacher education (Furlong, 2002, 2005). Thus, at the time of Teach First’s founding, teacher education in the UK,

was counter-intuitively both wide-open and highly regulated. Indeed, at the same time, a similar phenomenon was occurring in the United States as teacher education was being deregulated to allow “alternate-route” programs to flourish, while at the same time becoming increasingly regulated with regard to content and structure. Cochran-Smith (2004) identified this irony as “highly regulated deregulation,” a term which seems equally apt for the changes occurring in the U.K.

As a result of this deregulation, new “employment-based” teacher training programs that led to licensure, but were not degree bearing and did not require undergraduate study in education were encouraged, developed, and funded, to bring in a high-caliber of teachers who might not otherwise have joined the profession. These programs can be fairly likened to alternate-route certification programs in the United States. However, given the imprecision of the term “alternate-route” in the US alone, such comparisons are difficult (Feistritzer, 2007). The essential point is that in England during the 1990s, as in the US at the same time, the idea of university-based, undergraduate teacher education was being challenged by new models which targeted teacher candidates who had not done an undergraduate degree in education. In England, these programs included the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP), School Centered Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), Registered Teacher Programme (RTP), and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Of these four programs, the GTP and the PGCE were the most prominent, and they are the programs against which Teach First is most frequently compared.

Furthermore, in this same era, many governmental leaders had come to accept the argument that teachers could make a difference in a short amount of time, and that they

need not necessarily choose the profession as a long-term career. In fact, in 1999, Ralph Tabberer, Chief Executive of the newly created Teacher Training Agency (TTA, as of 2005, the “TDA”, Teacher Development Agency) stated that teaching need not be a “lifelong commitment” (Blandford, p. 101). However, while teacher education was opened up to new routes for teachers who might only serve as temporary employees, it also came under increased regulation from the TTA and Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), which had developed increasingly strict curricular and programmatic requirements for all programs, alternate-route or otherwise (Furlong, 2002). This is, in fact, a hallmark of neoliberalism, decreasing regulation while at the same time increasing the standards by which organizations compete against one another.

This neoliberal context of deregulating teacher education reform and increased private sector involvement in education set the political stage perfectly for a program like Teach First. Indeed, it was met with quick, significant interest on the part of policy makers. Following the 2002 publication of the McKinsey report, Bret Wigdortz and his team of consultants were invited by the government to discuss the implementation of the program. Wigdortz himself was personally taken by the idea, and in Spring, 2002, he resigned his position at McKinsey to focus full-time on the creation of what would become Teach First. The organization was initially funded by a contribution of £500,000 by the Department of Education and Skills (now, the Department of Children, Schools, and Families). Wigdortz immediately secured other funding for Teach First, primarily through his relationships in the corporate world that he had developed during his time at McKinsey. Initial partners included HSBC, McKinsey, and the Canary Wharf group,

which donated office-space in the new bustling center of finance and business in Southeast London (Blandford, 2008).

Teach First also had a number of other design features that set it apart from previously established “employment-based route” programs like the GTP and PGCE. Teach First targeted recent university graduates while the PGCE, and especially the GTP were designed for career changers. In addition, Teach First exclusively pursued an elite caliber of college graduates while both GTP and PGCE programs were considerably less selective. Teach First also placed teachers solely in urban schools with high levels of poverty as reflected by the number of students who were eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals. In contrast, the GTP, a residence-based teaching program, was available at all schools, and the PGCE did not involve teacher placement as part of its program. Finally, Teach First offered an especially truncated initial teacher education program, consisting of only a six week summer institute prior to teachers entering the classroom. The GTP and PGCE, on the other hand, were designed as quicker routes into teaching; each involved a year of training before a teacher assumed full-time duties.

The Influence of Teach For America

From its inception, Teach First leaned heavily and purposely on the TFA model. Moreover, many of the initial staff hired were TFA alumni, a goal which Wigdortz actively prioritized because of their experience in such a similar program. Another similarity between the programs, one popular with critics, is that neither Wigdortz nor Wendy Kopp, the CEO of TFA, were ever teachers themselves. However, despite these overt similarities between the two programs, TFA itself had very little active participation in the design or implementation of Teach First, serving more as a model than as a partner.

This relationship has grown closer in recent years as the two organizations have formed a partnership in founding and organizing Teach For All, an umbrella organization that organizes and assists similarly modeled teacher education programs throughout the world. In recent years, Chile, Estonia, Germany, and Australia have begun TFA/Teach First-modeled programs, with a large number of other programs set to begin in a number of other countries including Israel, India, and South Africa.

In addition to the very short period of preparation and the placement of teachers in urban schools⁵, the defining, shared characteristic between TFA and Teach First is the selection of “exceptional” (Teach First’s term) or “outstanding” (TFA’s) college graduates. Both programs, have, in recent years, taken great pains to make clear that what makes these applicants “exceptional” or “outstanding” is more than GPA or degree classification alone⁶ and that they include a high value placed on “leadership qualities.” The assumption, for both TFA and Teach First, is that what made these graduates succeed in college would also allow them to succeed as classroom teachers. In both cases, the programs succeeded, not only in recruiting these graduates, but in raising their own stature to the point that they can be very selective in terms of who they choose to accept. The first two cohorts of Teach First teachers were highly populated with alumni from the top universities in England; 83% and 74%, respectively, from Russell Group Universities⁷, with more than a quarter in each year from Oxford and Cambridge in

⁵ TFA also places teachers in poor, rural areas of the United States, including the Mississippi Delta, Western North Carolina, and the Rio Grande Valley. Teach First, however, does not, in large part because poverty in England is concentrated around urban centers.

⁶ The system by which UK undergraduates are evaluated is so different from that of the United States that it is not easy to compare the two. The essential point here is that in England there is a system of differentiating undergraduate academic achievement, like GPA in the United States, and it is a significant, but not sole factor in the Teach First selection process.

⁷ A consortium of twenty leading UK universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.

particular. Moreover, as Blandford summarizes, not only were these “exceptional” graduates, but Teach First succeeded in making itself an elite employment option,

In the first year (2003) 1 300 people applied for the 250 places available. In 2007 TF reached 14th position on the Times list of the top 100 graduate employers. This list of leading employers is compiled by asking more than 15 000 final year university students which organisations they think offer the best prospects for graduates based on the training and development on offer, the quality of the employer's recruitment promotions, and its overall reputation. This rapid rise indicates very clearly the impact that TF has succeeded in making among undergraduates. (Blandford, 2008, pp.101-102)

Thus, like TFA which has continued to accept an increasingly small percentage of applicants⁸ as its popularity has risen, Teach First has established itself as not just a teacher education program that places its teachers in urban schools, but as a prestigious organization to which top college graduates compete for entry.

Despite these similarities between Teach First and Teach For America, when Teach First was founded, there were three important distinctions between its model and TFA's. First, the language of “Teach For” was rejected in lieu of “Teach First” because the thought at the time was that UK graduates would not respond to a marketing campaign with such nationalistic and altruistic overtones. Moreover, the founders of Teach First were worried that it would not be able to attract top graduates without appealing to their own self-interest (Interview 10). As Blandford (2008) puts it, “For the participants, graduating from Oxbridge and other Russell Group institutions would almost guarantee them a head start in their chosen career. Teach First would have to offer

similar or better prospects” (p. 98). Accordingly, Teach First opted for the individualistic language of “Teach First,” which highlighted both the two-year commitment as well as the future possibilities of employment after teaching.

Second, unlike TFA, participants in Teach First were immediately enrolled in a licensure program that would lead them to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)⁹ at the end of their first year of teaching (Hutchings et al, 2005). This difference with TFA, however, is more emblematic of differences in teacher education policy between England and the US than it is an organizational choice between TFA and Teach First. The centralized teacher education policy power in England meant that the licensure process was relatively the same in all parts of the country. In the case of TFA, however, the significant differences in state and district policies meant that licensure could not be a standardized part of the program. In other words, although it is an untested premise, it would seem likely that TFA would have pursued an option similar to QTS if it had been feasible. Indeed, TFA has never opposed licensure for its teachers and, during recent years, has been working closer with district and university partners towards licensing their teachers as soon as possible after they begin teaching.

A final difference between Teach First and TFA is significantly more important, especially in terms of this study. Teach First was designed with a significant, active, and public role for its corporate partners. In fact, this element of the program was quite jarring to TFA alumni, like myself, who were hired to work in the organization. TFA certainly has very strong relationships with the business community. Indeed, the heads of TFA’s business partners sit on its board of directors and it relies heavily on private

⁸ 16.7% in 2009 (Teach For America, 2010)

⁹ A major stage of the teacher licensure process in England, after which no more teacher education is

funding. However, these relationships are not advertised to corps members (Lahann & Mitescu, 2011), nor are they used as an enticement to recruits in the form of future, post-teaching employment, as they are with Teach First. Blandford summarizes how these corporate relationships functioned in the early years of Teach First,

A central factor in this initiative (Teach First) is the role that businesses play in the scheme. By building a link with Teach First, leading figures within business recognise the range of skills acquired by graduates through this prestigious scheme, potentially leading to careers outside teaching in the longer term... The promise of a short internship with leading UK and Global companies as experienced by the majority of the Teach First team is also a huge incentive to Teach First participants. Major corporations are to provide additional management training for the participants, including the possibility of undertaking a mini-MBA during their second year of teaching delivered in partnership by the Tanaka School of Business, Imperial College and the Institute of Education, University of London. Through this programme participants are therefore presented with career choices that extend beyond a two-year teaching commitment... TF's business connections also help to demonstrate to potential applicants that the skills they gain whilst teaching provide them with rapid progression within their chosen career once they have finished the two-year programme. (Blandford, 2010, p.101)

Not only did the participants stand to gain from the relationship, but, as Blandford argues, the schools in which they teach would also benefit, “the participants' business contacts may be used to link these companies to the London schools involved in the programme,

required.

thereby bringing the potential for additional resources to those schools and their students.” (p. 102).

George Iacobescu, CEO of the Canary Wharf, an early partner of Teach First, echoed this view in 2002, the year of Teach First’s founding,

I am pleased for Canary Wharf to be one of the founding sponsors of Teach First. This programme will have an impact throughout London... where many of our local secondary schools struggle to attract the number of excellent teachers they deserve. I believe the business community of London should rise to the challenge of this innovative business-government partnership by recognising the programme's value to participants' CVs, as well as through internships, business mentoring, training and financial support. (Teach First, 2010d)

According to the Teach First model then, everyone stood to gain by virtue of this partnership between the corporate world and education. Teach First participants would receive valuable career experience and increased opportunities after their time in the classroom, Teach First corporate partners would have a better chance to hire “exceptional graduates” after they finished the program. Schools would receive not only excellent teachers, but would have more chances to build relationships with corporate partners. In this regard, the Teach First/TFA comparison follows along the lines of differences in social policy between England and US. Businesses have a much more accepted role in public education in England than they do in the United States (Cuban, 2007; Hatcher, 2006), and Teach First emphasizes its corporate partnerships much more explicitly than does TFA.

Thus, the history of Teach First suggests a complicated relationship with TFA. On one hand, in the wake of the findings of the McKinsey report, Wigdortz and his partners explicitly set out to bring the TFA model to England. However, on the other, TFA itself did not play an active role in Teach First's development. Thus, I believe that the best way to describe the relationship between TFA and TF is to say that the assumptions and values of TFA were thoroughly subsumed in and throughout Teach First a priori to the importation of the TFA model, and that the TFA model was used primarily as a guide for turning those assumptions into practice.

The founders of both Teach First and TFA approached education reform, and teacher education in particular, from a decidedly neoliberal perspective. In the following section I outline a number of ways in which this perspective shaped Teach First's model of teacher education: devalued voice of teacher educators, diminished importance of teacher education, and determining success through quantitative measures of student learning. Given the similar perspectives embedded in TFA's ideology (Lahann & Mitescu, in press) and McKinsey's transatlantic presence, it seems only logical that the report would find and be struck by TFA, a highly celebrated neoliberal teacher education organization that targeted the needs of urban schools. TFA stood as an exemplar par excellence for McKinsey and, subsequently, Teach First—the empirical proof that deregulated teacher education reform that valued the skills and logic of business could be successful in improving the academic achievement of disadvantaged children in London schools.

Forming a university partnership

After funding had been secured and a model had been settled upon, the next organizational step for Teach First was to find a university partner that would function as a training provider¹⁰ for Teach First's teachers. In November, 2002, in conjunction with the TTA, Teach First initiated a competitive bidding process among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to select the training provider. In addition to the prestige and publicity that they would receive from being attached to Teach First, the HEIs were also competing for a contract with significant financial rewards. The "successful tender" (Blandford, 2008, p.98) was submitted by Canterbury Christ Church University College (CCCUC), later just Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU)¹¹. CCCUC had an established teacher training program and was able to meet the demands of the bid by demonstrating an ability to train teachers for an urban context while also managing the logistical demands of hosting the six-week summer institute. In later years, as Teach First expanded to Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Yorkshire, it added the University of Manchester, Nottingham Trent University, the University of Wolverhampton, Birmingham City University, Newman University College Birmingham, and Worcester University as training partners.

The role of the training partners was to design and implement the teacher training elements of the summer institute, in coordination with Teach First, and according to the guidelines set by OFSTED and the TDA pursuant to the regulations that govern Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and participants' progress to QTS. In addition to providing the

¹⁰ "Training provider" is the language of both Teach First and government regulations relating to teacher education, although "university partner" is frequently used as well. That the phrase "teacher education" has disappeared from this language is in itself significant as it reflects the technical ways in which teacher education has come to be viewed in England over the last two decades. The source of this change is the substitution of "training" for "education" in English teacher education policy in the early 1990's, although the term "teacher education" remains within academic circles. (Furlong, 2005).

¹¹ Canterbury Christ Church University College successfully became Canterbury Christ Church University

training received at the Summer Institute, which is analyzed in Chapter Six, Teach First's university partners were also responsible for delivering ongoing professional development and mentoring throughout each participant's first year. Blandford summarizes these post-institute aspects of teacher education in the Teach First model,

A CCCU tutor ...observes them teach every two weeks. Participants also attend subject and professional study days held in a London location delivered by the HEI (partner universities). During the first year four written assignments are submitted, assessed and moderated. The programme concludes with a return to the Summer Institute where the final presentations, portfolios and written assignments are assessed and moderated (by training provider staff). In addition to the taught and assessed elements (QTS) participants are also expected to gain further teaching experience through a five-day placement in a second school setting by the end of their first year and to complete the Training and Development Agency (TDA) numeracy, literacy and ICT on-line assessments. (Blandford, 2008, p. 100)

In this way, then, Teach First actually has had actually had a relatively small role in much of the actual teacher education that participants receive. The responsibility for almost all of it remained primarily in the hands of training providers and was evaluated by a combination of the training providers and governmental agencies. Teach First was left, by design, to run the other elements of the program, including recruitment, placement, the management of corporate relationships, and less formal aspects of teacher training that existed outside of TTA regulations.

This fact creates somewhat of a paradox: Teach First was a teacher education organization that was founded on the idea that it would cede much of the responsibility

for teacher preparation to its training providers. To some degree, this is a matter of policy; the TDA requires Teach First to have university partnerships. However, as my analysis of 2008 data in Chapter Five shows, Teach First only recently began to expand its influence on the teacher education curriculum, and it still exercised relatively little control over the vast majority of teacher education that its participants received. In the following section, and in Chapters Five and Six, I explain how this delegation of teacher education responsibilities is not the absence of a theory of teacher education for social justice, but a theory founded on the idea of teaching as leadership in which teacher education has relatively little value when compared to the leadership skills of Teach First participants.

Subjective realm analysis of the history of Teach First

From this abbreviated, objective history of Teach First, I now move into what Carspecken (1986) identified as the “subjective realm” in which I use the objective history to infer deeper, contested, less visible ideas and relationships between the organization and the ways in which it has framed its mission, policies, and practices. First, I argue that that Teach First’s neoliberal origins and close relationships with the business community yielded an organizational culture which implicitly devalued the voices of teacher educators and the importance of teacher education. Second, I posit that this in turn enabled the conflation of effective teaching with success on high-stakes standardized tests. I identify these ideas as “themes” because their importance to the purpose of this research, uncovering Teach First’s theory of social justice, is the extent to which they help inform the ethnographic analysis of data collected during the 2008 Summer Institute. As such, in the following chapters they are revisited, both implicitly

and explicitly, as integral ideas subsumed within and throughout the organization in its present state.

First, because the voices and perspectives of teacher educators were absent in the design of the Teach First model, Teach First placed a diminished value on teacher education relative to the selection and recruitment of teacher candidates. Teach First was not created by teachers, teacher educators, academics, or even policy makers with expertise in education. Instead, it was created by a businessman whose expertise lay not in education, but in organizational management. Brett Wigdortz not only headed up the McKinsey study that was used to argue for replicating TFA in London, he then also organized Teach First himself. Thus, while he brought significant skills, leadership, and energy to the process, he did not bring a background in education or teacher education. It is not surprising, then, that the teacher education model of Teach First drew heavily from those elements most prized by those organizations and stakeholders with which he was familiar. The Teach First model of teacher education was borne out of the highly influential McKinsey study, relationships with business leaders and policy makers in the New Labour government, and the desire to emulate the success of TFA with a similarly designed and implemented model in England. Absent from this list of influences is, notably, schools and schools of education.

The McKinsey/London First/Business in the Community partnership which yielded the McKinsey report not only represented private sector involvement in public education, but also called for education reforms that continued this model. This is hardly surprising, given the assumption behind the commissioning of the report itself: businesses should play an active role not only in improving the community but,

specifically, in improving the state of public education. Moreover, Wigdortz's first partners after he left McKinsey were not teacher education organizations, but other business leaders (Blandford, 2008). Soon after, Teach First received support from New Labour, but it was not until the organization was fully incorporated and operational that a university partnership was established. Even then, when CCCUC was brought in as a training provider, the relationship was still very much a transactional one. CCCUC worked on a contract to provide teacher training services for Teach First, and, as such, functioned primarily not as shaper of the mission, but as an implementer of it.

Accordingly, not only was its voice added relatively late in the process, but when it was, it was assigned specific responsibilities to be carried out in the model upon which Teach First and its government and business partners had already largely settled. Thus, teacher educators did not have voice in the fundamental theories of education reform to which Teach First subscribed: the partnerships with corporations, the definition and recruitment of exceptional graduates, the two-year teaching commitment, and the abbreviated teacher training model.

Indeed, at the heart of the Teach First model was the idea that such exceptional teacher candidates can be found that they are able to become effective educators after only six weeks of training, significantly less time than not only degree-based teacher preparation programs in the UK, but also much less than the PGCE or GTP. In this sense, guided and formed by influences from outside teacher education, Teach First embraced a model of teacher education that placed significantly more value on the teacher candidates themselves than on the transformative power of teacher education. Thus, the recruitment

of “exceptional graduates” played a significantly greater role for Teach First than selection and admission did in other teacher education models.

Second, Teach First implicitly subscribed to the idea that teacher effectiveness could and should be measured quantitatively by student achievement on high-stakes tests. Prior to the importation of the TFA model and the establishment of business and governmental partnerships, Teach First originated in the wake of the McKinsey report (2002) and its most influential conclusion: the idea that there is an undesirable correlation between poverty and student learning, and that excellent teaching can reverse this effect, as evidenced by performance on high-stakes state exams. The report put the problem succinctly, “The numbers are fairly stark: if more than 20% of students are eligible for free school meals (FSMs) (at a particular school), then one-third of them are unlikely to achieve more than five C grades; if more than 40% of students are eligible for FSMs (at a particular school), then more than one-half of them will underachieve” (p. 22). However, through multiple regression analysis of OFSTED reports and head teacher teachers’ rating of teacher-effectiveness by a dependent variable of GCSE scores, the report found that those teachers identified as “excellent” could reverse this trend¹².

The McKinsey report used a similar logic to explain the problem and solution for London schools. The problem, the report determined, was that there were significantly fewer excellent teachers in poorer London schools than in the rest of the UK, as evidence by the poor GCSE scores of their students. The solution, then, was to find a way to bring in more excellent teachers, as defined by their ability to boost GCSE scores. The report determined that, "Even taking deprivation levels into account, 'excellent' teachers can

¹² Indeed, the conclusion that good teachers have a dramatic effect on student learning that overcomes the predictive power of other demographic factors is an idea that was previously ratified by education research

increase the percentage of pupils who gain 5+ A*-C GCSE's by 40% over what would normally be expected." Scholars have critiqued this idea as simple and circular, arguing that we learn little about teaching itself because by this reasoning (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2005b). In Chapter Seven, I attend to these arguments and the degree to which they are valid critiques of Teach First's theory of teacher education.

Essentially then, at the heart of Teach First's model of education reform, is the fundamental belief in the power of effective teaching to make a meaningful and measureable difference in student learning. However, also attached to this assumption is the idea that excellent teaching is solely defined by student performance on high stakes state exams. In fact, the report appears to make no mention of other student learning outcomes beyond GCSE scores. Teach First then, even before its official founding, already had embedded in it the idea that the problem it was addressing was evidenced by poor performance on GCSEs and that its work would be successful if those scores, particularly in regards to their correlation with poverty, were increased by the presence of effective teachers. Thus, the McKinsey report established the problem and the solution in one fell swoop. The solution to poor GCSE scores was excellent teachers; the problem is that there were not enough of them in urban schools. However, it also noted a potential path forward—the TFA model which had been implemented in America. This idea, the belief in the power of excellent teaching as defined by GCSE scores, is critiqued in Chapter 7.

It is also important to note that the McKinsey report was written decidedly from an economic view of teacher quality, in what Cochran-Smith and Fries (2010) identify as the discourse of the "Teacher Quality and the Knowledge Economy." In this discourse,

(e.g. Sanders and Rivers, 1996) .

the primary goal of schools is to create a skilled workforce that will help sustain the nation's economy. For example, the report notes that, "For London schools to be able to meet London's demand for qualified workers, schools would need to raise the percentage of students receiving five good GCSEs from the current 36% to 68% – a highly unlikely occurrence" (p. 20). However, it is equally important to note that this critical ethnography found absolutely no evidence of this perspective in any of the data collected at the 2008 Summer Institute. In terms of Teach First, this particular perspective, that the purpose of public education is to drive the nation's economy, appears to have ended with the publication of the McKinsey report, replaced, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, by a focus on the equal educational opportunity of individual children.

Synthesis

These two themes that I have identified in the history of Teach First, the devalued voice of teacher educators and the reliance on quantitative measure of academic achievement, continued to resonate in the current culture of the organization. In the following chapters, I uncover theories of preparation, practice, and justice which guided the policies and practices of Teach First. This analysis suggests that these theories were not the result of ideological debate within the organization, nor were they the result of the influence of Teach For America. Rather, the origins of these theories were the deep-rooted experiences and worldviews of those stakeholders who formed Teach First in 2002. The ways in which they framed the problems of learning, teaching, and teacher education drew upon deeply ingrained neoliberal worldviews that, in a self-fulfilling prophecy, implicitly excluded the voices of teacher educators and forced a commitment to state-defined educational outcomes that could be measured. Thus, any attempt to

uncover Teach First's theory of social justice in teacher education must be understood in this context of actors who passionately believed in the power of teaching to improve learning in urban schools, but who did so through the lenses of their own neoliberal perspectives.

Chapter Five: The Mission of Teach First

This chapter addresses the following questions: (1) What is Teach First's mission and what are the underlying assumptions about teaching and education that drive it?, and (2) Does Teach First have a mission of social justice?, As with the previous chapter, this chapter is written to address Carspecken's (1996) objective and subjective "realms."

While I interrogate the data and hypothesize underlying, unexamined assumptions, I do not challenge or critique these assumptions or the arguments that rest upon them here. Rather, it is my intention to use this chapter and Chapter Six to focus on the beliefs of Teach First staff before proceeding to critique these beliefs in terms of the emancipatory goals of critical ethnography and policy sociology. Then in Chapter Seven, I move into the "normative realm," Carspecken's final stage of ethnographic analysis.

In this chapter, I focus on Teach First's values and beliefs at the most macro-organizational level, while Chapter Six drills down to the way these beliefs have shaped teacher education at the Summer Institute itself. This chapter represents the second stage of analysis as depicted in Figure 3.1 in Chapter Three. Its organization is as follows. First, I specifically examine the relationship between Teach First and the term "social justice," which is entirely absent from Teach First curriculum, materials, and publications. In this section, I argue that the staff of Teach First believes that the organization has a mission of social justice, but has not expressed it in those terms for a number of reasons including concerns about recruitment, differences between UK and American phraseology, and the largely academic context in which the term is used. Moreover, I attend to how the staff of Teach First understand and use the phrase "social justice" to further explain this disconnect.

Second, I examine two aspects of Teach First's mission reflected in the phrases "exceptional graduates" and "leaders in all fields." I make two primary arguments in this section: (1) that much of the Teach First model is predicated on the idea of "teaching as leadership," which is embedded in the term "exceptional graduates," and (2) the second-half of the Teach First mission, "advancing education" and achieving "systemic reform" through "inspirational leaders in all fields," lacks a specific vision for reform.

Finally, I explore in more depth the most critical terms in Teach First's mission, "educational disadvantage" and "effective teachers." Each of these terms was implicitly redefined by the staff of Teach First into what were known as "The Three A's", "achievement," "aspirations," and "access." While there appeared to be significant disagreement between some senior staff as to what role each of these three outcomes should play in defining the goals of the organization, these complementary goals are aligned around a shared, fundamental understanding of the purpose of teaching and education. Specifically, "educational disadvantage" is understood as the lack of equal educational opportunities as evidenced by the strong, negative correlation between socioeconomic status and "access" (to opportunity; often linked explicitly to university matriculation), "achievement" (performance on tests), and "aspirations" (students' belief in their own agency).

The data for this chapter come from interviews with Teach First staff conducted during the summer of 2008, artifacts gathered during the same period, and artifacts taken from the Teach First website over the last two years. To protect the anonymity of the research participants, I differentiate only between "senior" and "non-senior" staff members. The major artifacts I use from the Summer Institute are PowerPoints delivered

to participants during trainings. These Powerpoints were used as an instructional tool to brief participants on the history of Teach First, its mission, its policies and practices, its future goals, and the roles they were intended to play in it.

During this chapter, I treat artifact data as cultural productions and interview data as collective representations. As discussed in Chapter Three, Eisenhart (2003) argued that “cultural productions” are made visible by the ways in which different groups are exposed to the same situation. In this case, I am examining the ways in which Teach First frames the problem of educational inequity through the terms “educational disadvantage,” “effective teachers,” “inspirational leaders,” and “systemic change.” I treat the interview data as “collective representations” of the culture of Teach First in a similar way. Eisenhart identifies “collective representations,” as the ways in which ideas of a given culture are constructed and contested as public symbols. Unlike cultural productions, collective representations are not “created” so much as found within and throughout the way a group thinks and speaks about itself. My interviews with Teach First staff drew out collective representations of Teach First by asking interviewees to think about how the organization functions and the agreed upon values which drive its policies and practices. Taken together, these cultural productions and collective representations enable the unearthing of underlying assumptions about the nature of teaching, teacher education, and social justice that undergird Teach First’s theory of social justice.

Teach First and Social Justice

Teach First, as an organization, has a very complicated relationship with the term “social justice.” On one hand, every staff member interviewed for this research agreed

that Teach First had a mission of social justice. On the other hand, however, they all also stipulated that to the best of their knowledge the term had never been used within the organization, either internally or in formal publications. As a former employee of Teach First, this is, in fact, my experience well. Like all those I interviewed, I also believe that Teach First has a mission of social justice, despite having never seen or heard the term used by Teach First any context. Indeed, this enigma is at the heart of this research: uncovering a theory of social justice for an organization that believes it is socially just, but never directly addresses issues of social justice. This section attempts to make sense of that paradox by explaining (1) why staff members so fully believe that Teach First has a mission of social justice, (2) what they understand the term “social justice” to mean, (3) why the language of social justice is never used.

These arguments are critical to the remaining analysis of this research. If the work of Teach First were entirely divorced from social justice, if it had no interest in making public education more fair or equitable, then it would be inappropriate to analyze its work in terms of theories of social justice in teacher education. However, if the organization has accepted a mission of social justice, then it is a meaningful and important task to understand the ideas behind it that drives the organization’s policies and practices.

First, there was a universal agreement among the staff I interviewed that Teach First has a mission of social justice. Although many of the staff interviewed reported that they were not very familiar with the term “social justice,” they were still fairly sure that no matter its meaning, Teach First’s mission to increase educational opportunity and

make the system more “fair” meant that it had to somehow be included within the definition. For example,

Interviewer: Are you familiar with the term social justice?

Interviewee: I couldn’t give you a definition, but I think I know what it means.

What do I mean by social justice? What do I understand by it? Fairness.

Fairness in education. Fairness in our social systems. So, health care, social welfare, it’s fairness in how everyone’s treated, but it’s also about giving everyone opportunity and access in their lives so that if you start off in one place, you don’t necessarily end up in that place. So, generations of people can move and transition, and it’s just fair...it’s a level playing field for everyone no matter where you come from.

Interviewer: Do you think Teach First has a mission of social justice?

Interviewee: Yes...the idea behind it is all about social justice, and that could happen in so many other sectors of our country. Like it could happen in health care, it could happen in welfare states, and it’s all about making sure it’s all fair.

(Interview 4)

Other staff members I interviewed were much more familiar with the term “social justice,” usually because of university coursework they had completed. They too, were equally convinced that Teach First’s mission was one of social justice. And like those who were not as familiar with the term, they too listed Teach First’s focus on fairness and providing more equal educational opportunity as the reason. Take, for example, this staff member who was familiar with the term, not just from graduate study, but from secondary school:

Interviewer: Are you familiar with the term “social justice?”

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: In what context?

Interviewee: Wow, when have I not heard of it? In what context? That’s a really hard question because I can’t pinpoint the time when I first heard the phrase. In terms of academically speaking, it would be high school...It was a very progressive school in that sense. My (former) teacher is the one that got me thinking that was the way my contributions to the cause of social justice.

Interviewer: Does Teach First have a mission that is socially just?

Interviewee: I think so. I think we just haven’t been explicit enough on what it means. I think in terms of the theory, the whole big idea of social justice of expanding opportunity and addressing education disadvantage, I mean that is definitely, I think that’s as far social justice as you’re going to get. (Interview 9)

Another staff member, one who was very familiar with social justice because of an advanced degree in education, reached a similar conclusion.

Interviewer: Are you familiar with the term social justice?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: In what context?

Interviewee: I studied it a lot in terms of my own (graduate study in education).

Interviewer: Can you give me a definition of what it means to you?

Interviewee: Absolutely. It’s going to come back to a lot of what we were talking about earlier in terms of the educational disadvantage argument, the idea that you don’t create governmental and societal systems that put people at an

inherent disadvantage based on characteristics that are out of their control and you offer them the opportunity to move themselves forward and that they have choices they can exert. That in an organization that prides itself on social justice that the people part of it see themselves as a catalyst for change bigger than themselves. And that by doing so they are empowering others, whether they be pupils, school leaders, parents, communities to accomplish something more and to have more choices.

Interviewer: Would you say Teach First has a mission of social justice?

Interviewee: Yes, I'd say so...Again, the commitment on the part of my colleagues on the part of social justice is inspiring and impressive. (Interview 5)

Thus, the data suggest that the staff of Teach First unequivocally believed that the organization has a mission of social justice because of its commitment to improving educational opportunity for all students; there were no disconfirming cases. This begs two questions. First, why is it, then, that Teach First does not use the language of social justice? And second, what conception of justice is it that Teach First pursues?

The second question is addressed later in this chapter in terms of how the organization defines “educational disadvantage,” the term that truly informs how Teach First conceptualizes its relationship to social justice. As to the first though, the staff who were interviewed suggested two possible answers: (1) “social justice” is primarily an American term, and (2) that the organization chose to use what they believed to be the more enticing language of “educational disadvantage.” First, every staff member, both American and British, suggested that one possible reason that “social justice” had not been adopted by Teach First was because the term was simply not used very much in the

U.K. As one staff member put it, “I don’t think it’s a term that’s commonly used in the U.K. I think people know what it is, but I don’t think it’s used” (Interview 4). One staff member further speculated that the reason for its more prominent use in the United States might be because of America’s history with racial conflict,

Interviewer: Why isn’t the term social justice more explicitly used by Teach First?

Interviewee: I don’t know...It’s not distinctly American, but it seems like an American obsession, I think based on the history, the history of racial injustice, of class injustice. I think only recently has immigration really been an issue for Britain, and we now have the homegrown racial and class issues but it continues to pop up because we get new waves of immigration issues that introduce new social justice issues. I wonder if that has anything to do with it. (Interview 9)

On one hand, this seems a compelling argument, or at least one that merits further consideration. However, despite the consistent claims of Teach First staff to the contrary, the literature review conducted in Chapter Two suggests that “social justice” is frequently used and carefully examined in the United Kingdom, at least in academic circles without ever mentioning the term as being borrowed from the United States (e.g. Phillips & Furlong, 2001; Brighouse, 2002; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Ball, 2003). Thus, it appears that this reason is, by itself, insufficient to explain the absence of “social justice” from Teach First’s literature.

Rather, there exists the very likely possibility that, in England, “social justice” is used primarily in academic contexts, and it has not been adopted into the language of social entrepreneurship (the creation and management of non-profits for social good) the

way it has in the United States. In fact, a number of prominent American charter schools explicitly identify “social justice” in their mission statements or goals, including, for example the Southside Family Charter School in Minneapolis, the W.E.B. Dubois Academy in Queens, and the Social Justice Academy (pilot school) in Boston. To this point, multiple Teach First staff interviewed pointed out that while TFA only occasionally uses the term “social justice” in its public materials, they had heard it used internally many times. This argument is further borne out by the fact that, “social justice” seems to be used significantly less within UK academies, the rough equivalent of American charter schools, although it appears that the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, the governing body of these schools, has used it on occasion (SSAT, 2010). Thus it seems likely that “social justice” was simply not in the language of social entrepreneurship at the time of Teach First’s founding. As one senior staff member summarizes, there was never a conscious decision to reject the language of social justice in favor of “educational disadvantage”,

Interviewer: Does Teach First ever use the phrase “social justice”?

Interviewee: Well, I don’t think those words—I don’t think it’s a conscious decision not to use those words because I don’t think no one (sic) has ever said “should we call this social justice?” and we’ve said, “no.” (Interview 2)

Thus, it appears from this evidence that for reasons relating to either context or country, “social justice” simply was not a term that was considered for use, despite staff members feeling that the organization has a mission of social justice.

However, this argument is somewhat belied by several staff members who suggested that even if they had considered the term “social justice,” it would have been

rejected in favor of language, such as “educational disadvantage” deemed more appealing to recent university graduates. As summarized in Chapter Four, it appears that Teach First’s belief that it needed to advertise corporate relationships as an enticer to recruits may have affected the exclusion of “social justice.” As one staff member put it,

I think definitely U.K. grads are a little more cynical (than American graduates). Anything that it is a bit too Peace Corps-y, I think they would find difficult to swallow, so that’s why definitely the marketing message has been as well as while you’re addressing educational disadvantage, you will be a better person for doing it. Not from an ethics point of view, but from a skills and experience point of view. So, Teach First very much does sell the joint responsibility that it’s giving something back, that it’s doing something for yourself as well. So I think if we started to sell the social justice side for the U.K. graduates to swallow, I think they would find it a bit too Ox-Famy¹³ rather than Teach First... We are a little bit more corporate, where our solution and what we’re delivering is addressing educational disadvantage and social justice, but we’re also saying you’ll get something out of this as well. (Interview 10)

As discussed in Chapter Four, it appears that over time Teach First has slowly deemphasized its corporate connections and the self-interest of the participants, a gradual transition that several staff members commented on during interviews. Indeed, during the observations conducted at the Summer Institute, I found only one instance in which the participants were presented material that emphasized their personal gain outside of the teaching profession: a PowerPoint describing how the leadership skills they gained at

¹³ Oxfam is a U.K. based confederation of charities, “dedicated to fighting poverty and related injustice around the world” (Oxfam, 2010).

Teach First would benefit them in corporate settings. However, Teach First certainly was founded on the idea that the individual gain of participants should be emphasized in the model in order to attract top graduates, and it is certainly consistent with this approach that the organization would have originally shied away from a term like social justice.

Thus, it is not clear the extent to which it simply did not occur to Teach First to ever identify its mission in terms of social justice and the extent to which it was actively rejected for the same marketing concerns as a name like “Teach For England” that emphasized altruism over personal gain. It seems most likely that both reasons played some role in the absence of “social justice”: the term was infrequently used in social entrepreneurship circles in the U.K.; and, because of Teach First’s concerns with marketing itself to the self-interest of participants, the term was not sought out and emphasized. In fact, given the way Teach First continues to deemphasize self-interest, its connections to academia through its training providers, and the cross-cultural exchanges between England and America, it seems likely that the term might eventually make its way into the language the organization uses to describe itself.

This discussion does, however, raise two interesting questions based upon each of the possible reasons for which “social justice” is absent from the language Teach First uses to describe itself. First, can an organization truly be dedicated to social justice without ever thinking to express its work in those terms? And second, could an organization work to effect social justice while actively choosing not to identify its work in those terms. I argue that the answer to both of these questions is “yes.” The answer to the first question seems relatively straight-forward; it would seem possible to fully engage in any number of activities without using the words that others employ to describe

them. For example, someone could explore a cave without ever identifying themselves as a “spelunker.”

The answer to the second question is, however, considerably more difficult. Is it possible for an organization to have a mission of social justice while *choosing* to not identify its work in those terms? Again, I argue that it is. As the Chapter Two discussion of social justice shows, the term “social justice” refers not to an official movement, or even a collection of like-minded people who embrace a similar vision for public education. Indeed, the term has been used in so many different ways that, at times, its meanings are actually competitive with one another. Accordingly, I submit that the term itself operates in two ways. First, it operates as a vague, undefined symbol for any commitment to making society more fair. Second, “social justice” can operate as a complex, nuanced understanding of what it means to reconstruct society in more equitable ways.

In my interviews with Teach First, I believe staff members responded to my use of the words “social justice” by treating it in its first sense, in its broadest meaning, as the general concern for making society fair. This explains, in part, why there was such universal agreement among the staff that Teach First had a mission of social justice; when defined in such a broad way the answer is certainly “yes.” There was no litmus test which need be applied, no ideological ramifications to be considered or resolved: trying to make society more fair meant effecting social justice. To this point, in every interview, each staff member treated this question as though the answer were self-evident.

Thus, it is my argument that Teach First does have a mission of social justice. Its staff members assert this point unequivocally, and the data collected shows that the organization has an impassioned stance on promoting some form of equity and social change in education. The charge for the remainder of this chapter will be to uncover what this guiding ideology is, as represented by the organization's mission. Then, in Chapter Seven, I explore and critique this ideology further to determine how it fits within the diverse and competitive understandings of justice as distribution and recognition.

The Mission of Teach First

Teach First's mission was both relatively simple and incredibly complex. On one hand, it was a brief, easily repeatable phrase known well to all participants and staff, "to address educational disadvantage by transforming exceptional graduates into effective, inspirational teachers and leaders in all fields." This mission was ubiquitous, found consistently throughout the website, and frequently included in publicity materials and in the PowerPoints of any Teach First event. Every staff member interviewed was able to recite the mission, usually verbatim. As one staff member put it, "I think you can ask any staff member at random, and you could ask just about any participant and potentially any Ambassador (Teach First alumni) and they could tell you what our mission is" (Interview 2). One staff member, who accidentally stumbled over the words part way through an interview, joked that he would likely be fired for having made the mistake if senior leadership ever found out (Interview 11). On the other hand, however, the way the organization interprets this simple phrase into policy and practice is deeply embedded with implicit and varied assumptions about the purpose and nature of education, teaching, and teacher education.

In this section, I examine the terms “exceptional graduates” and “effective, inspirational...leaders in all fields.” These two phrases book-ended the Teach First mission, representing who it admits to the program and what it hopes they do when they leave teaching. I reserve, until after this discussion, analysis of the term “effective, inspirational teachers” and “educational disadvantage.” These two terms frame Teach First’s entire reason for being. Yet, ironically, they were the most contested terms within the organization, and the ones which require the greatest amount of subjective analysis. Separating them out of any discussion of Teach First is difficult given the circular, self-referential way in which they were interwoven throughout the organization’s purpose, policies, and practices. However, because their meanings are so elusive and problematic, I only analyze them after I have made sense of the more visible and objective aspects of the mission. This choice allows me to marshal more data to frame the multiple ways in which “educational disadvantage” was defined within Teach First. In other words, by first examining the generally agreed upon beginning and end of Teach First’s theory of education reform, it is easier to make more sense of the contested middle. I have identified five important ideas embedded in Teach First’s definitions of “exceptional graduates” and “effective, inspirational leaders in all fields”:

1. Teach First defined “exceptional graduates,” by the degree to which teacher candidates possessed the leadership skills necessary to effectively teach in urban settings and then lead from whatever career they chose afterwards.
2. Conflating teaching skills with leadership skills justified the placing of “exceptional graduates” in urban schools and the truncated teacher education these teachers received.

3. While Teach First was founded on the belief in the power of excellent teaching, it also implicitly recognized that teachers cannot solve the problems of educational disadvantage alone.
4. Because teachers can not solve the problem of educational disadvantage alone, “leaders in all fields” meant that Teach First recognized the work of participants and Ambassadors from both inside and outside of education as contributing to the mission.
5. Teach First was purposefully very general about the forms of social change that it hopes its “leaders in all fields” would effect.

To begin, Teach First defined “exceptional graduates” as those potential teacher candidates who meet two criteria: (1) the ability to be successful teachers in the classroom, and (2) their potential to be “inspirational leaders” in whatever field they ended up working in long-term. In turn, these two qualities, including “successful teaching” were defined by the degree to which participants possessed eight “core competencies:” humility, respect and empathy, interaction, knowledge, leadership, planning and organizing, problem solving, resilience and self-evaluation. These competencies were used at “Assessment Centres,” six-hour selection events which evaluated applicants to the program. Through interviews, sample teachings, and case-study discussions, Teach First staff scored and evaluated participants using these eight competencies as their guide. Teach First chose these eight competencies after consulting with three groups of experts, both in and out of education: head teachers, business leaders, and graduate recruiters¹⁴. That these competencies appear not to be directly

¹⁴ “Graduate recruitment” is a term that appears to be used much more frequently in the UK than in the US. It refers to the private field of identifying college graduates with certain skill sets and funneling them to the

linked to pedagogical skills is significant, and it is a point that I return to when Teach First's theory of practice is critiqued in Chapter Seven.

As summarized in the previous chapter, that Teach First chose to base such a key element of their teacher education model on the input of business leaders and graduate recruiters reflects the neoliberal origins of Teach First as an organization created with the strong influence of business voices and relatively little influence of teacher educators. A senior staff member with considerable voice in the recruitment and selection process summarized why these leadership qualities are important to the Teach First mission and model,

Interviewee: We look for two things. We look for people who we think could be successful teachers in challenging schools after six weeks training and we look for people who will be long-term leaders in whatever field they go into. We've then broken that down into the eight competencies that we think are crucial. And we came up with these competencies by talking to a lot of head teachers and a lot of business leaders and graduate recruiters. And you can look at these competencies, but things like communication skills, humility, respect to others, etc. But I think broadly what we think is that people who will make great teachers are people who have had proven experiences of leadership, but they need to have pointed to something in the past when they've made something happen that wouldn't have happened without them. They also need to have shown that they can do that in a way that entails really good communication skills and in a way that was respectful, humble, empathetic, and self-reflective.

employers with whom they have contracted.

Interviewer: And those are what you associate with characteristics of good teaching as well?

Interviewee: That's right. (Interview 2)

A member of one of Teach First's training providers voices the same support for equating teaching with leadership and emphasizes the importance of using leaderships skills in working with students from disadvantaged backgrounds,

One of the reasons that I joined this program was because I do believe there's a group of pupils who do have a real disadvantage through their schooling and anything we can do counter that, and I think teaching as leadership is a crucial thing and should be recognized in a greater population and I'm biased because I'm a teacher myself but I do think that a lot of leadership skills that they're developing could work in any environment. And I think that's true, that's not just the rhetoric. So, I think absolutely those two sides of the mission I completely agree with. (Interview 6)

Thus, in the Teach First model, the qualities that define good teaching are explicitly linked to the qualities of good leaders in other fields, particularly business. And, to that end, leaders from business and education were consulted to come up with the common characteristics identified with success in both fields. These "core competencies" continue to be reflected in Teach First's policies long after recruitment. The five "core values" of Teach First, commitment, innovation, collaboration, excellence, and integrity, were a neatly condensed form of the eight competencies used to select teacher candidates (Teach First Regional Induction PowerPoint, Slide 22). Furthermore, it is clear from the way the core competencies were used that the mission conceives of "exceptional graduates"

broadly, extending its meaning well beyond those students with university preparation in education, to everyone who had strong leadership skills as evidenced in unrelated disciplines or activities.¹⁵

Second, the idea of “teaching as leadership” enabled placing “exceptional graduates” in the most challenging schools and justified the truncated teacher education they received. These competencies, or leadership skills, summarized above are certainly not antithetical to the skills and dispositions valued by other teacher education programs, including those with an explicit focus on social justice. Indeed, one would hope that every teacher education program would value competencies such as, humility, problem solving, resilience, etc. However, what differentiates Teach First from other teacher preparation programs which might value these competencies is the importance the organization ascribed to them. Although the “exceptional graduates” who joined Teach First still received teacher preparation, the organization valued these competencies to such an extent that it believed that those who had them required less teacher education than those who did not. A senior staff member summarized how this caliber of participant in Teach First affected their model of teacher education,

We only select 12 to 15 percent of the people who apply to TF. I’d say close to a hundred percent of the people that apply to TF, or let’s say 80 percent of them would probably make good teachers. And we just think only about 15 percent of them would make good teachers at challenging urban schools after six weeks training. That’s the way we come at it. I think there’s a lot of people who would

¹⁵ Teach First, like TFA, does not actively pursue students with undergraduate degrees in education. However, neither program prohibits these students from joining, and both have admitted them in the past.

make good teachers that would need different sorts of training than we're providing. (Interview 2)

Thus, because the qualities of effective teachers in urban schools have been defined, via the core competencies, in terms of leadership, recruitment takes increased importance relative to teacher preparation. Essentially, because these core competencies were, according to Teach First, what made for effective teaching, and these competencies were possessed by teacher candidates a priori to any teacher education, teacher education itself took on diminished importance. This in turn, enabled Teach First to have a truncated model of teacher education. A senior staff member puts it succinctly, "We're so selective because we think only these people can have an impact after six weeks" (Interview 10). This idea appeared to be universally held within the organization, even if it was not directly recognized as being an inherent part of the mission. For example, another staff member explained how the caliber of the participants enabled the truncated teacher education model, as well as their placement in urban schools,

In terms of our intake...I think that it's good to have high-caliber people, high achievement people, who just are willing to work really hard because of the nature of the schools in which we work and the way we train them in intense blocks of time both throughout the SI and throughout the year. I think it's important because you need that characteristic because a lot of people wouldn't stick with it otherwise. (Interview 4)

A member of one of the partner universities echoed the idea that the core competencies possessed by the exceptional graduates enables their work in the challenging environments of urban schools,

And the other thing is there are aspects to do with the core competencies, we're looking for humility, respect, and empathy, and that's vitally important because they're going into a challenging environment. They're going into an environment whereby they're going to work with others, some of whom are fantastic, and that's the other thing, let's not forget that it's about harnessing the who the go-to people are in the school. And there's that, these aren't the trail-blazers within the school. It's working alongside positively to move things forward and I don't think you can do that on your own. (Interview 6)

Implicit in Teach First's mission, then, is the idea that without the core competencies of leadership possessed by these exceptional graduates, Teach First would not be able to prepare them in just six-weeks, nor expect them to succeed in urban schools. Indeed, the leadership skills evidenced by "exceptional graduates" meant that they required less teacher education, and what teacher education they did require can be delivered in an intense, six-week format that would not be appropriate for all teacher candidates. Thus, "teaching as leadership" is at the heart of the organization's mission; it defines not only who Teach First selected, but justified the decision to send them into the most challenging schools with significantly less preparation than teachers in other employment-based teaching programs received.

The third of the six important ideas that I have identified in "exceptional graduates" and "effective, inspirational leaders in all fields" is that while Teach First was founded on the belief in the power of excellent teaching as demonstrated in the McKinsey report, it also implicitly recognized that teachers alone cannot solve the problems of

educational disadvantage. A PowerPoint from the Regional Induction¹⁶ training made this point very clearly, “It’s not fair or realistic to assume that the thousands of hardworking teachers can solve this problem on their own. Which is why we have the second part of our mission” (2008 Regional Induction PowerPoint, Slide 23). Teach First’s mission, again, is “To address educational disadvantage by transforming exceptional graduates into effective, inspirational teachers and leaders in all fields.” The “second half of the mission,” a phrase common to both TFA and Teach First, refers to the mission’s outcome of creating not only effective and inspirational teachers, but “leaders in all fields.”

When asked to expound on the meaning of the mission, every staff member identified the same two consecutive ways in which educational disadvantage was to be addressed: first, in the short term, by placing “exceptional” teachers, “who can make a real difference in the most challenged secondary schools”; and second, in the long term, “to build a new generation of leaders committed to advancing education, inside or outside of the classroom, through the Teach First Ambassador (alumni) movement” (Teach First, 2010C). Teach First’s mission, then, extended well beyond any effect that its teachers might have in the classroom. In the short term, “Participants go above and beyond in their schools to meet the needs of students to improve their education prospects and therefore opportunities in life” (Regional Induction PowerPoint, Slide 21). However, as one interviewee, a senior staff member at Teach First put it, “we’re not just a teacher placement agency, we’re looking for long-term leaders who create social change and

¹⁶ Regional Induction is a series of meetings between all participants in a given region (London, Greater Manchester, Midlands) in which they are briefed on the basics of Teach First and the Summer Institute. It is the first formal gathering of the Summer Institute that is conducted by Teach First, as opposed to one of its training providers.

systemic change” (Interview 12). By placing such high, explicit value on what Ambassadors should accomplish from outside the classroom, the organization was implicitly expecting its teachers to move on, not only from the profession of teaching, but from education altogether. In fact, without some degree of teacher attrition, it would have been impossible to achieve the second part of the mission in which, “Ambassadors unite across all sectors to form a movement to improve education prospects of disadvantaged children” (Regional Induction PowerPoint, Slide 21). The Teach First website summarized this point in greater detail,

After two years, our Ambassadors (alumni) choose either to remain in schools or move into other sectors in which they have the opportunity to use the experiences and insights they have gained in teaching to inform future decision-making in a way that will positively impact education. As of February 2009, 55% of Teach First Ambassadors remain in teaching, with 57% of these currently moving quickly into school leadership positions. Almost two-thirds of those Ambassadors who move into other sectors continue to stay involved with the Teach First mission through pupil mentoring, school governance or undertaking other school support positions. (Teach First, 2010d)

From this explanation of the second half of the mission, it is clear that Teach First placed significant value on both the participants who stay in teaching and/or school leadership positions, as well as those who move on to other careers. In this sense, then, Teach First, like TFA, was relatively immune to any argument about teacher retention. Regardless of whether teachers stayed or left, the mission could be served. Only in those cases when someone left the profession and did not work for systemic change would this aspect of

the mission falter. As of 2010, Teach First has made no effort to evaluate the effects of the second-half of the mission.

Fourth, Teach First recognized participant and Ambassador contributions from both inside and outside of education as furthering the most over-arching goals of the organization's mission. Thus, even those Ambassadors that went on to "make a difference" in fields outside of education, were still serving the mission's goal of "advancing education" or effecting "systemic change." It should be noted that while "advancing education" and "systemic change" could have distinct meanings, in the case of Teach First, the two terms appear to be used interchangeably to refer to any and all societal changes that would have a positive effect on the education of low-income urban students. Since Teach First recognized that educational disadvantage was fundamentally a broad, societal problem, systemic reform need not necessarily have occurred within education in order to "make a difference." Teach First grouped this difference-making into three different sectors: education, business, and "overall in society." "Overall in society", however, appeared to mean social entrepreneurship, as the given examples of Ambassadors working in this field all involved the creation of new charities. A senior staff member summarized this aspect of the second half of the mission thusly,

You can make a difference in education, whether that be just in the classroom for two years, or whether that's by becoming an assistant head or whatever senior position within a school. We can make a difference in business...working in the corporate world...the impact that they've had and the fact that they're still engaged with the mission now—that's the second part of the core message I was talking about. And then for the third group, which is making a difference overall

in society. So for those that don't know what to do, those that aren't sure if they want to stay in education or business, or maybe they need to find their way a little bit, but have continued to address educational disadvantage through this year is an example (sic), (an Ambassador), who started a recycling charity...he's working in (a well-known corporation) now, but before he joined, because he wasn't sure what he wanted to do, he set up his own charity about recycling. (Interview 10)

Thus, Teach First did not expect its Ambassadors to effect change or "advance education" only from within education. It appears that any effort to improve society, such as a recycling campaign, was fundamentally tied to the mission. Moreover, the mission seemed to extend beyond the UK to the entire world. One of the most celebrated Teach First Ambassadors, a member of their original corps of teachers who was frequently asked to speak at Teach First events and to participants, started a very successful charity which built and staffed schools in Uganda. That this project was routinely highlighted as an example of the second half of the mission being realized was illustrative of the fact that the domain in which Teach First envisioned that systemic change was to occur was, in fact, almost boundless. As is argued in more detail in Chapter Seven, it would seem that Teach First would benefit from outlining the possible achievements of its Ambassadors with a greater degree of specificity. For example, Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) typography of "good" citizens is a useful heuristic to organize the ways in which individuals can positively contribute to society.

Fifth, Teach First, within those domains listed previously, was very general about the form of social change that it hoped its "leaders in all fields" would effect. As one senior staff member put it, "there isn't one prescriptive way in which we're going to

solve it, it's going to be this collective movement" (Interview 10). Indeed, the above descriptions of the type of impact that Ambassadors could have in diverse fields while still serving the mission, was notably very open-ended. This was, in fact, a hallmark of the way in which Teach First described the potential impact its Ambassadors would have in working from "all sectors" of society. Another senior staff member explained each of these three fields, education, business, and society in general, in more detail, while also making it clear that Teach First has only the most general idea of the form that "advancing education" should take. First, he expounded on what Teach First envisioned for the second half of the mission, for those Ambassadors who stay in education,

One goal we have is by 2018 we want 100 of our ambassadors to become head teachers at challenging urban schools. That's one of our new goals. We think there are only 700 schools in England that meet our criteria. And I think it's a doable goal; I honestly think we're going to achieve this. Within ten years time one of out of every seven challenging schools will have a Teach First ambassador, and if we support them well and they have the right ethos and they're well supported to be successful leaders, they have great training and everything, then that will go a huge way to getting rid of this correlation (between wealth and academic achievement). I honestly think that will make a massive impact and change. (Interview 2)

In the field of education then, systemic change by Ambassadors was targeted only at the school level, and it had the same goal that the organization had for its participants, to break the link between poor academic achievement and poverty. In other words, just like Teach First teachers, those Ambassadors that moved into positions of school

leadership were charged, from Teach First's perspective, with continuing to work towards the same goals they had as teachers, but with increased power and leverage. Thus, while this goal was certainly deeply embedded within Teach First's mission, it did not appear that those Ambassadors who remained in education were expected to engage with any specific aspects of education policy which supported the negative correlation between poverty and academic achievement, so much as to work tirelessly to remove its instantiations at the school level. The first part of the mission, then, did not seem to change for those participants who remained in education as Ambassadors. Furthermore, as is argued in more detail in Chapter Seven, not only was this "systemic change" generally undefined, but there appeared to be no effort on the part of Teach First to encourage change that in any way challenged the most fundamental aspects of hegemony in society. To the degree that this change was specified, it was fully in terms of finding ways to improve the performance of disadvantaged students within the broad outlines of the current system.

In the second sector, the world of business, "advancing education" and "systemic change" seemed to be given an even broader definition including everything from simply speaking positively about Teach First to direct involvement in school governance. On one hand, those in the business world could continue to address the mission by doing work *outside* of their professional context. As a senior staff member put it,

We're helping them become school governors, mentor kids from challenging areas, to go into top universities and still relate on that micro level, making that change happen so whether mentoring their schools or governing in a way that really focuses on high achievement, or that they get a few children to go to top

universities who wouldn't otherwise go to...different things, they could continue to make an impact. (EI interview)

Thus, the ways in which Ambassadors who worked in business could “advance education” were through activities completely unrelated to their post-teaching professional lives. Moreover, these actions did not pursue goals different than the Ambassadors had as teachers, but were simply reduced in terms of the time and energy spent on them. The goals of academic achievement, increased aspirations, and university access remained the same, but were addressed through volunteerism, rather than the Ambassador's professional life. To a degree then, this was not so much Ambassadors leaving the world of education so much as being involved with it to a lesser degree. However, a senior staff member explained that Teach First also hopes these non-professional mission-related activities would have a ripple effect because of the sector in which Ambassadors worked,

We want all, even these people who are in it just a few hours a week, we want everyone to stay involved with the mission because actually that has multiplier effects. So, some of these people are working at Goldman Sachs, even if they do something a few hours a month...they'll talk to their colleagues about it, it will start breaking down barriers... It just changes perceptions and starts making people realize that these schools are places that need a lot of work. I think one of the problems I've seen is that people don't really know what goes on in these schools, not integrating into wider society, and so this will help prevent that from happening. (Interview 2)

Accordingly, the second half of Teach First’s mission, while still relatively undefined, or at least undifferentiated from the work of participants as teachers, was, at least in terms of Ambassadors in the business sector, about spreading awareness about the educational disadvantage they have experienced as teachers. Thus, “addressing educational disadvantage”, for Ambassadors in the business world, was less about actively reforming the system, and more about building a national awareness about schools that “need a lot of work.” Presumably Teach First would not have discouraged Ambassadors who took a more active role by encouraging their corporate contacts to actively engage in somehow addressing educational disadvantage, but no interviewees mentioned this as a desired goal for Ambassadors who joined the business world, nor did they give any examples of it having happened already. Instead, the data suggests that Teach First envisioned a much more passive role for its Ambassadors in business. For Ambassadors in this sector then, the second-half of the mission meant one of two things: first, engaging, to a lesser degree, with the sort of work they did before; and second, communicating with their business colleagues about the mission of Teach First. Furthermore, as noted in the discussion of Ambassadors who remained in education, “systemic change” seemed to only refer to improving student performance in the current system, not challenging the underlying cultural hegemony of state education.

Teach First was also very general about what it meant to “advance education” from the third sector, “society in general,” or social entrepreneurship. As a senior staff member summarizes, the staff of Teach First explicitly rejected the idea that they should direct what these activities were,

The second thing¹⁷ is the social entrepreneur projects we have, so what we've seen in America is a lot of, is a small number of Teach for America alumni have created some of the biggest impact, and so, let's say, just a handful have made a huge impact by creating things like the KIPP schools in America¹⁸ or YES¹⁹ academies, or all these other different social change projects, and so we want to find our handful of ambassadors who we think want to make that huge impact and give them a launch pad, not that we want to take any ownership of it. We don't want to come up with it, we don't want to own, we just want to give them mentoring, support, training so that they can make that idea a success. And they'll come up with ideas none of us would think of, but will actually make a huge impact and change. (Interview 2)

Thus, Teach First had significant hopes for those Ambassadors who engaged in social entrepreneurship, but these hopes were largely undefined. In fact, while Teach First hoped that these Ambassadors make a "huge impact," the organization did not believe that it should in anyway direct or organize this impact. Accordingly, it had very little input on what "advancing education" or "addressing educational disadvantage" should mean for participants in this field. Instead, the staff of Teach First implicitly trusted that this impact would fit with the organization's mission and not in any way be counter-productive. Teach First provided examples of what this social entrepreneurship could

¹⁷ Interviewees, while consistently referring to the same three sectors in which Ambassadors would "advance education" varied in whether they identified the business world and "society in general" as the second or third group.

¹⁸ "Knowledge is Power Program", a series of charter schools in the United States started by TFA alums. These schools are characterized by highly structured learning environments, and their explicit focus on academic achievement and increasing college access for low-income minority students. (KIPP, 2010)

¹⁹ "Youth Engaged in Service", a network of charter schools in the United States, started by TFA alums. Like KIPP, these schools are characterized by their focus on increasing college access for low-income minority students, but they also include an explicit focus on student service and social justice. (YES, 2010)

mean at a morning meeting for participants during the Summer Institute. These included the previously mentioned examples of a recycling charity, the charity which built schools in Africa, and a program which brought urban youth to work on a farm (morning meeting observation, July 23rd, 2010). These successful examples of social entrepreneurship appeared to not have any conflicting ideologies or goals with each other. However, given Teach First's passive approach to defining what the mission meant for Ambassadors in this sector, it seems possible that competing conceptions of "advancing education" could have been pursued, while still meeting Teach First's expressed goals for its Ambassadors involved in social entrepreneurship.

"Educational Disadvantage" and "Effective Teachers"

The above discussion helps clarify how Teach First conceived of much of the "who," "what," and "how" of its two-part mission, but leaves out much of the "why," or "to what end?". Indeed, the heart of what Teach First sought to accomplish ultimately hinges on how the organization defined "educational disadvantage" and the "effective teachers" who addressed it. For much of this chapter, I conflate those two terms into a single discussion of "educational disadvantage" because, by the way the mission is constructed, "effective teachers" are implicitly defined as those who address "educational disadvantage." The meaning of these terms is, obviously, of critical importance for this research since the way in which "educational disadvantage" was framed by the staff members of Teach First was ultimately reflective of how they understood the idea of justice.

Within Teach First, at the time of this research in 2008, the terms "educational disadvantage" and "effective teachers" were both subjects of significant debate within the

organization. As discussed in Chapter Two, the term “justice” can take on a multitude of meanings in education and teacher education, many of which are mutually exclusive with one another. However, this chapter will argue that while “educational disadvantage” was understood to mean many different things among staff members, there was universal agreement that educational disadvantage meant unequal educational opportunity.

Educational opportunity, in turn, was, with one exception, always defined in one of three ways, in terms of access (usually linked to university matriculation), achievement (test scores), and aspirations (students’ faith in their own personal agency in life). Although Teach First was struggling internally to define the relationships among these three ideas and educational opportunity/educational disadvantage, all three of these outcomes were actually closely aligned and consistent, drawing entirely from the same understanding that addressing educational disadvantage meant increasing student aspirations to achieve academically and access opportunities.

In this section, I examine Teach First’s four “underlying beliefs,” which were different than its mission, but help frame the meaning of the terms “educational disadvantage” and “effective teachers.” Then, I use this analysis to help inform my investigation of why “educational disadvantage” was so consistently defined as the lack of equal educational opportunity. Next, I examine the three ways in which Teach First staff identified educational opportunity: achievement, access, and aspirations. Finally, I argue that despite internal debate about the meaning of “educational opportunity” or “achievement,” there existed within Teach First a shared, fundamental understanding that the purpose of teaching and public education was to increase student aspirations to achieve academically and access opportunities.

Teach First's "Underlying Beliefs"

Teach First identified four “underlying beliefs” that help frame the meaning of the terms “educational disadvantage” and “effective teachers”:

1. All children have the same potential to achieve regardless of their socio-economic background
2. All children should have equal access to opportunities and chances in life
3. Educational success is one of the key determinants of lifelong success
4. Good teachers are leaders (Regional Induction PowerPoint, Slide 19).

These beliefs were shared with participants during Regional Induction. However, unlike the mission, it is doubtful that many staff or participants would have been able to name these beliefs with a high degree of precision. At the same time though, these ideas appear to have been deeply and consistently interwoven into the ways in which the organization framed its mission. In other words, most, if not all staff agreed with these beliefs, even if they did not express them specifically in these terms. Indeed, my analysis of artifacts, observations, and interviews did not uncover any ideas or beliefs, widespread or isolated, which would conflict with them.

The first three of these underlying beliefs listed above attended to the same fundamental idea: explaining the problem the mission addresses, “educational disadvantage.” The fourth, “Good teachers are good leaders,” reifies the earlier discussion about teaching as leadership, an idea that was subsumed throughout the organization’s mission, policies, and practices. The first three underlying beliefs delineate both what it was that the organization was attempting to address, and why it mattered. The first of these underlying beliefs, “All children have the same potential to achieve

regardless of their socio-economic background,” identified the problem in terms of the negative correlation between socio-economic status and student achievement. Given other data collected from Teach First, some of which has already been discussed in Chapter Four and most of which is discussed below, “achievement” seems to have been explicitly linked to performance on GCSE scores.

The second underlying belief, “All children have the same potential to achieve regardless of their socioeconomic background,” located the second way in which educational disadvantage presented itself: access. The data discussed below shows that by “access to opportunities and chances in life,” Teach First seemed to mean university matriculation as a precursor to whatever life choices a student might make, although there was some ambiguity on this point that is discussed below. Finally, the third belief, “Educational success is one of the key determinants of lifelong success,” weighed these outcomes, and, by extension, the mission, with the argument that the stakes are high; educational disadvantage was predictive of lifelong success. It is notable that while “aspirations” and “achievement” were represented in these “underlying beliefs,” the third way in which Teach First hopes to address educational disadvantage, “aspirations,” was not. The Teach First website summarized the scope of these beliefs, in terms of how the problem of educational disadvantage revealed itself in U.K. schools,

Statistics show:

- In 2008, one in five 11-year-olds did not reach the expected level in their English tests.

- Pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals (the key indicator of poverty in schools) have roughly half the chance of getting 5 A*-C GCSE than those not eligible for Free School Meals.
- In 2007, all 19-year-old pupils with professional parents were twice as likely to be in further education, higher education or training, than their peers' parents who were unemployed or working in routine occupations²⁰. (DCSF, 2008) (Teach First, 2010B)

The problem of educational disadvantage, then, was defined primarily quantitatively, relying heavily upon GCSE scores in particular. However, it was clear that the organization defined educational disadvantage by more than just GCSEs scores. As the third bullet point made clear, Teach First's mission was not just to raise test scores, but to increase university access among students from the poorest backgrounds. These statistics represented not only the problem of educational disadvantage, but, if Teach First were to be successful in its mission, the solution as well,

One thing can change these statistics: excellent teachers and excellent school leaders. Teach First aims to close this achievement gap by helping top graduates become excellent teachers in challenged schools, committed to leading in their classrooms and overcoming the obstacles of deprivation in order to increase the access, achievement and aspirations (sic) for the thousands of young people that lack the opportunities that many others take for granted. Long-term, our goal is to develop our Ambassadors into leaders who will create the systemic change necessary to improve these statistics in a national scale. (Teach First, 2010B).

²⁰ "Routine Occupations" is an official term used by the Office for National Statistics to refer to the lowest-levels of employment. Of the eight levels of employment, only "unemployed" ranks lower. (Office for

This argument, that teachers and school leaders were empowered to solve the problem these statistics represent, seemed to somewhat contradict the assumption behind the second half of the mission: “effective, inspirational leaders in all fields” were necessary for the systemic reform that would ultimately address educational disadvantage. Indeed, at times it appears that Teach First identified the problem of educational disadvantage solely in terms of school-based factors. This argument is more fully explored in Chapter Seven.

There are two other clear themes from these four underlying beliefs which help frame the following discussion of educational disadvantage and educational opportunity. First, it was clear that the legacy of the 2002 McKinsey report detailed in Chapter Four continued to affect the way Teach First conceived of its mission. Educational disadvantage, and the effective teaching that could remove it, continued to be quantitatively defined by what poor students could not do (GCSEs) or access (university). In fact, it is significant that of the three ways that staff identified Teach First’s hopes to promote educational opportunity, “achievement,” “access,” and “aspirations,” only “aspirations” was absent from the core beliefs. “Aspirations” was, undoubtedly, the most difficult of these three outcomes to quantify, and its omission from such a foundational document suggests that Teach First was struggling with incorporating such a qualitative idea into its mission. The idea of raising aspirations did, however, appear in trainings for Teach First participants, but appeared to be given less weight in terms of the mission, given the frequency with which achievement and access were mentioned in more summative documents.

National Statistics, 2010).

Second, although Teach First was very general about what further education it hoped students would access and what “life opportunities” this education would enable, it is clear that the organization’s core beliefs reflected normative ideas about the choices students would make. In other words, Teach First’s mission was not simply to offer exceptional teaching equally to all students, regardless of socio-economic status. Rather, for the organization to have achieved its mission, the students of its teachers had to choose to access further education and enjoy the “lifelong success” that this education availed. This distinction is of considerable importance given the discussion below about “educational opportunity.” It appears from the “core beliefs” and supporting public materials that while Teach First was focused on promoting equal educational opportunity, it also had pre-conceived notions of how that opportunity would be used. In other words, if equal educational opportunity existed, similar outcomes would be realized. As the guiding text of a slide at Regional Induction put it,

“By this we mean that prospects in life should not be determined by where you are born. We’re not saying that every child will do the same thing or take the same path, but we mean that children should have access to the same opportunities and should achieve similar outcomes regardless of socio-economic background.” (Teach First Regional Induction PowerPoint, Slide 19)

Thus, it seemed that in addition to effecting equal educational opportunity, the organization was similarly invested in pursuing equal educational “results.” Moreover, given the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the schools in which Teach First placed teachers, it was significant that the organization appreciated that they would make choices that would lead to “similar outcomes” once equal opportunity was established.

As is discussed in Chapter 7, such an idea lies at the heart of objective, distributive theories of social justice.

Equal Educational Opportunity: Achievement, Access, and Aspirations

In all eleven interviews conducted with Teach First staff, every interviewee responded to the question, “What does Teach First mean by “educational disadvantage?” with the words “increasing educational opportunity,” or with phrases to that effect, including the need to “level the playing field” or increase the “life choices” available to students. For example, one senior staff member summarized the relationship between educational disadvantage and educational opportunity thusly,

And addressing educational disadvantage to me means that there’s a problem in Britain that says if you want to know how successful a child is going to do in school, you just need to know how wealthy their parents are. So if you know how wealthy someone’s parents are, with a very high statistical significance you can tell how their test results are going to be. And I always tell them, you know, and I firmly believe, I don’t know if people really realize just how wrong that is. And that if we live in a society where everyone should have equal opportunities, and we think that people, you know, should have the ability to succeed, and I think we all would agree that education is an important, you know, enabling factor for that success. But then if we’re saying that actually it doesn’t work because whether you succeed or not in education just depends on how wealthy your parents are, then everything just falls apart at that stage. So what we’re trying to do is break that correlation and what I firmly believe, and I think the data shows, is the way to

break that correlation is to get excellent teaching, excellent leadership into the schools. (Interview 9)

The above quote is one of the more articulate and impassioned summaries of the relationship between educational disadvantage and educational opportunity, and also reinforces Teach First's reliance on quantitative measures of problem and solution, but the idea that educational disadvantage was defined by lack of opportunity was one that all staff mentioned in one form or another. Consider, for example, this staff member who did not use the "buzz words" of "educational opportunity", but described educational disadvantage to the same effect, based, in part, upon his/her personal experiences (an exception to the generally affluent nature of Teach First participants),

Educational disadvantage is not having the same choices in education and in life as someone else who maybe has more money, and parents who are more academic, and who have a better understanding of education. But my parents who are not academics, but who recognize the value of education because, they both left school at fourteen and have grafted²¹ all their life. It shouldn't be like that. And they always used to say to me when I was younger, you know, if you have an education, you can do pretty much anything you want in life. (Interview 11)

In fact, not only was "educational disadvantage" consistently defined in terms of unequal "educational opportunity," but educational opportunity was always discussed in terms of some combination of: achievement, access, and aspirations. At times, the link to these

²¹ "Grafted" is British slang for work, referring, in particular, to menial labor, or work of low prestige and salary.

three outcomes was made very directly, and it was clear that the staff member was describing the official, internally established position of Teach First. For example,

It's very, very important that we all know what we mean by it (educational disadvantage) and that we all agree on the definition. To agree on the definition for the purposes of Teach First. So my particular idea of educational disadvantage is just to do with opportunity and that because of where certain people grow up, their opportunity is limited by their experience and of just what they sort of have access to so it's sort of combination for me of access, achievement, and aspirations, but I think that to be an effective organization we actually have to sort of prioritize those three things and say what's at the top of the triangle and what are the things that support it? I think that educational disadvantage means that in some communities pupils tend to achieve higher levels, attain more than in other communities and the percentage is just all out of whack. In order to make sure they can do something with any kind of increases in achievement, you actually have to ensure that they have more access to things and you have to ensure that they have high aspirations to be able to do something with more GCSEs or better A-Levels²² or things like that. (Interview 12)

This reflected not only the organization-wide idea that educational opportunity was rooted in access, achievement, and aspirations, but also the idea, which is discussed later in this section, that Teach First was struggling to define exactly what combination of those three would lead to a firm definition of educational disadvantage. Other staff members referred to these three manifestations of educational opportunity in looser

²² A-Levels are exams taken at the end of secondary school that play a significant role in the university application process.

terms, which suggests that the ideas were deeply engrained in the organization, and not just a predefined list or repeatable phrase. In fact, it appeared that while some senior staff were quick to identify educational opportunity in this formal way, other staff only did it implicitly. For example this staff member speaks of all “Three A’s,” not as a list, but as ingrained aspects of what educational disadvantage meant,

I think disadvantage does come in the form of poverty or in the form of the lack of achievement, attainment, but I think those two things will then cause a lack of opportunity. If you don’t get the grades, you can’t go to university even if you wanted to. You, in the most part, if you’re really poor or living in poverty, you can’t go to university. There are options, but it’s about exploring options to deal with your poverty or in questing to attain in order to go to university or if it’s not for you and you want to go and work in the bank, which is great, but just you know just knowing that that’s an option and knowing how you go about doing that and training to have the skills to be able to go and do that. I think that that’s what’s missing. To me, I think that’s what educational disadvantage is and it will mean and obviously the stats would say that it comes from sort of lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and I think that that probably is true. (Interview 1)

This staff member described educational opportunity in terms of achievement (grades), access (university), and aspirations (students knowing their own options in life), but did not identify them in the formal ways in which he/she spoke about the mission or core values, two pieces of Teach First policy which are codified and publicized. In fact, in my own personal experience with the organization, I was never aware of an “official” focus on these three ideas as the idealized outcomes of educational opportunity, although, like

the staff member quote above, I would have identified the organization's understanding of educational disadvantage and educational opportunity in similar terms. It is also noteworthy that this interviewee was one of two staff members who referenced "access" outside of "university," a point which is discussed later in this chapter.

It was not until interrogating the data that I realized that the "Three A's" continued to surface again and again, in both implicit and explicit ways which roughly correlated to the position of the staff members who used them and their relationship to the Maximum Impact Project (the Teach First led initiative to measure the impact of its teachers) referenced earlier. I later confirmed that the Maximum Impact Project was the origination of these terms (personal communication, March 10, 2010), and that only those staff members who were working on the project at the time would have spoken about them in the fixed terms of the, "Three A's." This explains why some of the staff used them in a very official way, while others described them much more organically in terms of how they appreciated the meaning of Teach First's mission. Moreover, that these terms would be used in both ways suggests that the selection of these outcomes was borne out of deeply shared ideas in the culture of Teach First and that both their formal and informal use are collective representations of how the organization understood educational opportunity and educational disadvantage. In the time since this research was completed, Teach First has formalized the Three A's into official policy which is presented to staff and participants and as well know as the mission itself.

However, among certain senior staff, there appeared to be significant debate over the role that each of these outcomes should play in defining educational opportunity, and, by extension, educational disadvantage. The genesis of this conversation appeared to be

the Maximum Impact Project, and the logical need to define educational opportunity before beginning to measure it. One senior staff member summarized the need for this project and how it led to this debate,

I think there's a lot of internal debate over that question right now (the meaning of educational disadvantage). And I think we're making progress on that but I think it's a sign of an organization that's maturing, that we've gone from being an upstart. And the idea that we've gone from the idea of being able to place young teachers in challenging schools and being able to set them up on this journal was the new and exciting innovation in itself and now we're at the point that we need to be able to say, OK what does that actually lead to and how do we know if participants are effectively doing their job well. Because we didn't have that core criteria to know. We went by our gut to know if a participant was effective in a school setting. We used anecdotal findings to say that this participant was great because their head says that they're really energetic or their students are excited by the material. And that's great in the short term. In the long term when you're up to a thousand participants being placed across the country you're going to want more than that. You're going to want to show head teachers and communities that the presence of TF within their school not only raises the morale of their schools but also can be catalyst for greater growth in their kids. (Interview 5)

This need to be able to demonstrate that Teach First was having a positive impact drove the founding of the Maximum Impact Project, which, in turn, led to the selection and debate over the relative importance of the terms, “access,” “achievement,” and

“aspirations.” A senior staff member outlines the broad agreement that existed around these terms, as well as the relative disagreement as to the roles they should play,

We all believe it’s got to be about aspirations, it’s got to be achievement, and it’s got to be about access. I think we all agree. I think any kind of where we’re tweaking it internally is just how you break that down. Like I said, for me, it’s a triangle. For other people, maybe it’s not, maybe it’s a flat line, and it’s broken into third. So it’s more about the nuance of what that actually means...I think it’s a very healthy conversation. (Interview 12)

Thus, it appears that while there was some disagreement about the role that each of the outcomes should play in the Maximum Impact Project, and, by extension, in the mission of Teach First, there was also broad agreement that these were the outcomes that the organization valued. Another senior staff member also made this point about broad agreement, while at the same time arguing that these sort of discussions should not be seen as negative aspect of Teach First, but as fine-tuning around a shared set of values,

We do have it (educational disadvantage) defined. It’s on a continuum, it isn’t a precise definition, it’s on a continuum, and we’ve had lots of meetings which is around the ballpark of what we mean by that. And basically it’s about access, those that don’t have education are at a disadvantage, so therefore what we’re looking at is access...Ever since there’s been schools within a society, and I’m thinking back in the 19th century, there’s been debate about educational disadvantage . Since compulsory education began in England, it’s been an ongoing dialogue as to what is educational disadvantage. Basically, it’s those people that don’t have access to that which other people do. And, that’s the

principal that everybody would understand... it's all about raising expectations, it's all about building up the (students') self-esteem. It's all about achievement within the schools, it's all about raising the bar, having respect for others, and something else we often hear people say in different quarters, it's about changing the environment. So things come through. But with Teach First, it's not written down, but I don't think that's actually detracted from what's occurred over the last five years...six years (with Teach First). (Interview 3)

My interviews support this argument that, relatively speaking, there was significantly more agreement than disagreement, especially, as is discussed in Chapter Seven, when all the possibilities of what educational disadvantage and educational opportunity could mean are considered. Furthermore, the meanings ascribed to "achievement," "access," and "aspirations" were very similar. In fact, it seems that each of these terms simply referred to different, overlapping parts of the same narrative that it was hoped all pupils of Teach First teachers would have as a result of effective teaching.

In fact, the way the terms "achievement," "access," and "aspirations" were used frequently overlap in meaning with one another. So, for example, achievement was often defined in terms of how it promoted life aspirations or university access, aspirations were frequently linked to what students believed they could achieve in test scores and access in terms of universities, and university access was predicated on previous achievement and student aspirations. As the above interview data shows, all three terms were used relative to one another, not as distinct outcomes. One staff member summarizes one of these overlapping relationships succinctly, "educational disadvantage is that people, pupils, don't know what they can achieve" (Interview 1). Or, as another staff member put it,

“(addressing educational disadvantage) is about giving kids the potential to achieve and about having those opportunities which is about having the academics to get there, but also being aware of those opportunities and being inspired to seek them out” (Interview 4). A staff member and Ambassador’s thoughts on the mission of Teach First are a useful example of this thinking. Speaking about his/her own experiences in education, and his/her beliefs in what Teach First should accomplish, he/she moves seamlessly between access, achievement, and aspiration, using each of them to describe a different part of the same vision,

I’m not criticizing any of my former teachers, but I think maybe I could have done better if I’d had other teachers. I struggled in school. I was lucky enough to have supportive parents. I was lucky enough to go to a very good sixth form²³ that had very good teachers and made me raise my aspirations and move. And then essentially what made me raise my aspirations even more, was going to a university. And I was just surrounded by exceptional people who were going into The City and into prestigious jobs, and I realized I needed to actually aim higher. I’ve got into a good university, I need to raise my aspirations, but I never really had anyone when I was growing up, apart from my parents, saying “We think you’re really good.” Maybe the odd teacher, but I think the whole ethos and the whole mission of Teach First is crucial because a lot of the pupils that we work with don’t have supportive parents, or don’t have maybe a supportive teacher who encourages them to aim higher. (Interview 11)

²³ Sixth forms are schools that students attend at the end of secondary school for their final two years before moving on to university education. Many 6th forms are offered within secondary schools that also provide Year 6- Year 11 education (5th-10th grade), but others are stand-alone, competitive college-prep schools that function outside of state education. Sixth form education is not compulsory.

Thus, this suggests that the staff of Teach First conflated achievement, access, and aspirations with one another into different parts of the same fundamental understanding about what educational opportunity was and what effective teaching should promote. Put together, the three terms constructed the narrative that effective teaching resulted in increasing student aspirations about academic achievement and access to opportunities.

However, I believe that many staff members of Teach First might challenge this assertion. Indeed, the staff members of Teach First considered the organization to be embroiled in a fairly significant internal debate over the meaning of “achievement.” As a senior staff member summarized,

I would say that where we are is that we think (academics) are important, but I don't think we've come to a final conclusion on that, honestly. I think we think academics are a really important part of achievement. I think we're still trying to figure out is that all what we mean by achievement. I think where we're leaning is that we have a bit of a wider definition. (Interview 2)

As another staff member put it, “it's more about the nuance of what that actually means and making sure that and also what we mean by achievement...are we talking strictly about academic achievement or other ways to achieve?” (Interview 12). On one “side” of this debate were those staff members who felt that achievement should be defined strictly in terms of measurable academic growth. A senior staff member summarized this position,

I think we should be looking for improvement in student learning in a very concrete way. So, are they mastering whatever skills that are meant to be taught in that curriculum area? Are they improving by however many levels they are

meant to? Basically, are they at the expected level, or above? If they're below, how do we get them up? If they're just coasting at the expected level and never being pushed any further, how do we stretch them further? So really kind of concrete, measurable ways, of seeing an impact that is very much tied to academics. (Interview 5)

However, while many staff members defined “achievement” in other ways, it is my argument that these distinctions were relatively insignificant given that the competing definitions of “achievement,” those which extend its meaning beyond GCSE scores, were neatly aligned with the other two outcomes of educational opportunity: raising aspirations and access. For example, when describing these competing definitions of “achievement,” one staff member essentially just described the other possible meanings in terms of access and aspirations,

I don't think we're in 100% in agreement...I think we all believe it's about academic success...But there are elements of non-academic success that are equally valuable for a child who is entirely disengaged with education. Even getting them to come to school, that's a huge achievement, and wanting themselves to learn, well, you may not be able to measure that in terms of academic success, but that doesn't mean it's less valuable. But definitely I think the purpose of education, or one of the purposes of education, is that—the ability to have those opportunities open to you in the future. And you need to leave the formal education system in the U.K. with those range of choices, those range of opportunities. And the way that you get them is through achievement in school. (Interview 4)

Thus, while “achievement” itself may have been a problematic term, it seems that this was true only to the extent that its definition bled into the other two outcomes prioritized by Teach First as the outcomes of effective teaching. Regardless of any internal debate, “educational opportunity”, “access”, “achievement,” and “aspirations” all reflected the same understanding about the mission of Teach First: “exceptional teaching” and “addressing educational disadvantage” were defined by the degree to which Teach First participants increased student achievement and aspirations which enabled access to higher education.

Only on this last point, the definition of “access,” did this research discover any ideas which actually conflicted with one another. While Teach First artifacts and interviews discussed above consistently tied “access” to university matriculation, it appears that this was a subject about which there was some disagreement amongst the staff. For example, one staff members summarized a different vision of equal educational opportunity in which college was not the ultimate goal for all students,

I’ve been engaged in this debate over whether university access equals success-- which it doesn’t. It’s not that it doesn’t, it’s just that we’re opening doors. It’s something about being in a position to have choices in life and to be able to enact, you know, to be able to make informed judgments about the decisions you’re making and not to just be swept along with things. (Interview 7).

At the same time though, one of Teach First’s newest, most publicized initiatives was HEAPS (Higher Education Access Programme for Schools), a program designed to help students in Teach First schools transition to sixth forms and, from there, to universities. Yet Teach First never articulated that “access” meant university matriculation alone;

university attendance usually existed just as an example of successful access. In fact, in its 2009 annual report, “access” was defined as “access to opportunity,” which leaves open a number of possibilities of what that could mean for the individual student (Teach First, 2010g). However, aside from university matriculation, this research discovered no public examples of other forms that successful access to opportunity could take. This suggests that while it may not have been codified into policy, Teach First still ascribed considerable value to university access. Moreover, given Teach First’s contention that all children, “should achieve similar outcomes regardless of socio-economic background” (Regional Induction PowerPoint, Slide 22) combined with its ubiquitous insistence that children from lower socioeconomic background should have the same opportunities as children of privilege, it would appear that bourgeois ideals were represented in “access to opportunity” even if its scope extended beyond just university matriculation. Accordingly, while “access” itself may have included opportunities other than university, it was deeply engrained in the organization’s culture that it referred to those choices students would be able to make only after having raised their aspirations and achieved in school.

Synthesis

Educational disadvantage was identified by all staff members as being equated with the lack of equal educational opportunity. Educational opportunity, then, was identified both formally and informally by staff members in terms of achievement, access, and aspirations. That these outcomes were tied to equal educational opportunity suggests that Teach First was concerned not just with equal educational inputs, but equal educational results. Of these outcomes, achievement and access were frequently

mentioned in Teach First's public literature, while aspirations were not. These terms are now "official" outcomes pursued by the mission, although, during the time this ethnography was conducted they were not. However, despite this fact, all interviewed staff identified these outcomes when asked for a description of how Teach First defined educational opportunity. Furthermore, Teach First staff felt that while there was debate about the role each of these outcomes should play in defining "educational disadvantage" and "educational opportunity", that there was broad agreement about the essential meanings behind each of these two terms. My research confirmed this agreement and goes even further by suggesting that the debate over what constitutes "achievement" was really part of the same discussion about the other two outcomes linked to equal educational opportunity. Finally, as is argued in more detail in Chapter Seven, what tied these outcomes together into a coherent mission was a theory of social justice that was implicitly based on a theory of justice as distribution.

Chapter Six: Teacher Education in Teach First

This chapter answers the following research question: What is Teach First's approach to teacher preparation and what ideas and values about teacher education are embedded within it? As with the previous chapter, this chapter is written largely from what Carspecken (1996) identified as the subjective realm. From this position I make use of privileged data, interviews and observations from the 2008 Summer Institute, as well as non-public artifacts that I collected. However, I am not writing from the normative position in which the ethnographer makes valued judgments on the culture she/he is investigating. This chapter represents the third step of analysis detailed in Figure 3.1 (Chapter Three). Throughout this chapter I probe the underlying ideas about teacher education that shape the preparation participants receive. These ideas are then used in Chapter Seven to propose and critique a theory of teacher preparation to which Teach First implicitly subscribes.

In this chapter, I first provide an overview of the 2008 Summer Institute to provide a more complete picture of the events this ethnography investigates. Second, I examine Teach First's relationship to the curriculum provided by its partner universities. In this section, using interviews from both Teach First and Canterbury Christ Church (CCCU) staff, as well as artifacts from both organizations, I argue that Teach First exercised very little voice in the curriculum design of the Summer Institute. Furthermore, the organization's primary criticism of its training providers was that they did not emphasize the mission as much as they should have. In this section, I also compare Teach First to the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Graduate Teacher Program (GTP), both of which existed years before the founding of Teach First

routes and are also designed for college graduates who do not possess an undergraduate degree in education. From this analysis, I argue that Teach First's appreciates investment in the mission as the most important objective of the Summer Institute, and that the teacher education provided by partner universities differs very little in terms of content from that of other teacher preparation programs.

Third, I investigate the curriculum of Teach First's own trainings. The main argument here is Teach First's placed significant value upon building a movement dedicated to effecting the mission, as explained in Chapter Four. Moreover, this section reifies the previous argument that Teach First considered building a united, national cohort as the primary objective of the Summer Institute. Taken together, the arguments of these two sections reinforce the earlier claim that Teach First had a somewhat counterintuitive approach to teacher education. Teach First's theory of teacher education was defined more by who its teachers were and the change it was hoped that they would effect, than by the actual preparation they received.

The data used in this chapter come from artifact analysis and interviews conducted at the Summer Institute. The artifacts examined include Teach First created PowerPoints and the Training Programme Handbook and Professional Studies Handbook created by Canterbury Christ Church University. As discussed in Chapters Three and Five, these artifacts were treated as "cultural productions" which spoke to the shared values of the organizations which created them. Similarly, as also explained in both Chapters Three and Five, I analyzed interview data as "collective representations" of the Teach First culture, shared images of the organization's philosophy, practices, and values. However, unlike Chapter Five, the interviews used in this chapter include not

only those conducted with the staff of Teach First and CCCU, but also interviews with participants.

Overview of the Summer Institute

The 2008 Summer Institute was held for six weeks, from June 30th until August 8th. At this Summer Institute there were three geographic regions in which Teach First placed teachers: London, Northwest, and the Midlands. The first three weeks of the Summer Institute were held as three separate institutes in each of the three regions, and then all regions combined for three weeks of national training at CCCU. All trainings took place in university facilities. I observed only the London regional institute, which was held at City University in London. I then followed the London participants to their training in Canterbury. The 2008 Teach First cohort had 372 participants, with 252 of these assigned to London. In this cohort, 70% of participants were from prestigious Russell Group universities, including 23% of all participants graduating from either Oxford or Cambridge. 62% of participants were female, and 86% of all participants were white. No further demographic information on the cohort is available. These demographics, however, are in line with those of previous cohorts.

The structure and content of the Summer Institute varied from day to day.²⁴ However, weeks One, Four, Five, and Six followed roughly the same schedule. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, participants attended morning meetings within their region; Tuesdays and Thursdays were open during this time slot. During the day, participants attended either Professional or Subject Studies classes. The objective of

²⁴ The Summer Institute has undergone significant logistical changes since the summer of 2008, not the least of which was to move it from CCCU to the much larger Warwick University because of the increasing size of Teach First cohorts. Accordingly, all descriptions about the organization and structure of the Teach First Summer Institute should be understood as contextual to its 2008 incarnation.

Professional Studies was to help participants, “understand both the pastoral and academic role of the teacher” and to prepare participants to become “specialists in learning who can translate subject knowledge for the needs of young learner” (2008 Professional Studies Handbook, p. 5). Subject Studies, on the other hand, addressed content-specific teaching methods. Professional Studies groups were formed by grouping teachers who would be teaching at schools that were geographically close to one another within a region. Thus, teachers in Tower Hamlets (a London borough) were in Professional Studies groups with other teachers in Tower Hamlets. The curriculum for these groups of about twenty participants was horizontally aligned so that all participants in every group and region received roughly the same material. Significantly more analysis of Professional Studies follows later in this chapter.

Subject studies groups were similarly sized, but formed within regions from teachers of common content areas, irrespective of the school and borough at which they taught. Like Professional Studies, Subject Studies were horizontally aligned within content areas. Both Professional Studies and Subject Studies sessions were led by “tutors.” Tutors were veteran teachers who often had several decades of teaching experience and had retired the profession to serve as teacher educators. They were most similar to clinical faculty in American schools of education. Most tutors had experience in supporting teacher candidates in other teacher preparation programs such as the GTP or PGCE. I myself have previously served as a Professional Studies tutor for CCCU. However, in that I was young, with relatively little teaching experience (five years), and

was an American, I was very much an exception to the traditional profile of a Professional Studies tutor.²⁵

For two reasons, I primarily use data from Professional Studies, not Subject Studies, in this dissertation research. First, unlike Subject Studies which, obviously, varied significantly by content area, all participants were taught the same Professional Studies curriculum. As such, it represented the core knowledge expected of all participants. Second, the curriculum of Professional Studies addressed a number of issues that are central to my research question about Teach First's theory of social justice including: personalized learning, the professional obligations of a teacher, and working with diverse learners.

In the evenings, participants attended either Ambassador-led workshops, Teach First ceremonies (i.e. Regional Opening Ceremonies, National Opening Ceremonies, Closing Ceremonies, etc.), or Teach First led events (i.e. an inter-cohort event between the 2008 participants and the returning participants from 2007). The content of these workshops varied significantly, with relatively little oversight from Teach First, and attendance by participants was not mandatory. As such, little data is used from these observations. However, The Teach First led ceremonies and morning meetings, which were mandatory for all participants to attend, were very rich sources of data on how the organization conceptualized its mission and passed it on to participants. In representing how Teach First passes on its mission to its participants, they shed considerable light on Teach First's theory of social justice in teacher education.

²⁵ During the last two years, CCCU has begun hiring Teach First Ambassadors to serve as Professional Studies tutors at the Summer Institute, which is changing the make-up of the tutoring staff significantly.

Weeks Two and Three were Placement Week and Contrasting Schools Week, respectively. During these two weeks there were no Professional or Subject Studies classes. In Placement Week, participants spent time at the school at which they were to teach in the fall. During this time, the school was charged with acculturating participants to the school's staff, policies, and its students. It was also a time in which most participants find out exactly what they will be teaching and have a chance to meet with their school-based mentors that were to assist them throughout the year. The scope and schedule of Placement Week was primarily determined by the individual school, with little oversight or guidance from Teach First. Essentially, it was up for the school to make what it thinks is the most effective use of the time. Indeed, there were no representatives from either the training providers or Teach First at the school during this week, with the exception of a single, brief check-in to make sure that there no major problems arose. As such, while I conducted observations during this period, aside from the value that Teach First implicitly placed on Placement Week through its mere existence, there was little data that could be effectively used to probe the culture of Teach First itself.

During Week Three, participants attend Contrasting Schools Week. As described earlier in Chapter Three, this week was the only actual teaching experience that participants received during the Summer Institute. However, this experience took place not at the school at which participants would teach in the fall, but at a different school at which Teach First also placed teachers. The rationale behind this decision was twofold. First, it was thought that as novice teachers Teach First participants were likely to make many mistakes, and that it was better to make these mistakes at a different school than

their own so that they could have a fresh-start if things went poorly. Second, it allowed participants to see how another school ran, other than just their own, which helped give them perspective on different models of urban education. During this week, participants taught for somewhere between three and ten hours, and spend the rest of the time observing each other teach, attending training sessions on wide-ranging topics that were created by the individual schools, or lesson-planning for their upcoming classes.

Participants' time during Contrasting Schools Week was relatively unsupervised, and, in general, their teaching experience was not observed by staff from either Teach First or the training providers. Like Placement Week, the design of Contrasting Schools Week was largely controlled by each individual school. Aside from guaranteeing that each school provided a minimum number of hours in which participants could teach, the content and structure of this week was not controlled by either Teach First or its partner universities. Many participants were given significant, active roles to play in lesson-planning and teaching, while others often ended up doing little more than supervising field days. Accordingly, as with Placement Week, the experiences of Contrasting Schools week were so diverse that they have little utility in speaking to shared cultural experiences at the Summer Institute.

Contrasting Schools Week took place during the final week of term in English schools. Not surprisingly then, there was often a dearth of teaching opportunities as many schools had significant time devoted to games, assemblies, classroom clean-up, etc. Teach First would have preferred to have both Placement Week and Contrasting Schools Week earlier in the secondary school term so as to provide more teaching opportunities, but there was little flexibility because of the university schedule. As it was, participants

usually arrived at the Summer Institute directly from college, which prohibited Teach First starting the institute any earlier. Recently, however, Teach First has considered the possibility of running some form of summer school itself to increase the teaching opportunities available to participants.

Regardless, Teach First's lack of structure and control of both Placement Week and Contrasting Schools Week is itself significant. While participants completed sections of a reflective journal based on their experiences, these experiences and reflections were fully the purview of the training providers and are not assessed by Teach First itself. This is emblematic of what is a recurring argument in this section: Teach First delegated the vast majority of teacher education to its partner universities and made relatively few attempts to supervise or imbue its own beliefs into this curriculum. Rather, as is argued later in this chapter, to Teach First, the teacher education curriculum which mattered the most was that which instilled in participants a shared sense of purpose.

The Teach First Summer Institute was frequently described as an "intensive" experience. Participants had full days scheduled for them, from 8AM until mid-evening on most-days, and there were frequently mandatory events during the weekends as well. Participants were housed in university accommodation, and all meals were provided by Teach First on the campuses at which the Summer Institute was held. Participants were allowed to miss sessions for only the most serious of reasons, and were disciplined for tardiness, absence, or failure to complete assignments given in Professional or Subject Studies. Multiple infractions resulted in a participant being placed on the Participant Improvement Plan (PIP) which could lead to a participant being removed from the Summer Institute, and Teach First itself.

Although the Summer Institute represents the most significant portion of the teacher education that participants received, they continued to be supported by Teach First and its training providers during the school year. Both Professional Studies and Subject Studies tutors conducted site visits throughout the year in which they assisted with improving a teacher's practice. There were also six "Subject Days" which participants attended with their Subject Studies group from the Summer Institute and which were run by Subject Studies tutors. Moreover, in order to achieve QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) at the end of their first year, participants were also required to fill out a fairly significantly sized journal and complete three inquiry projects. Both the journal and assignments were assessed by the Professional and Subject Studies Tutors, and were designed in accordance with regulations from the TDA. Finally, at the end of the participants first year they returned to the Summer Institute where they shared their final inquiry project, and, if they passed (which almost all did), officially achieve QTS.

In the week following this return to the Summer Institute, participants attended a course called Foundations of Leadership. This course was originally a business skills course offered by the Tanaka School of Business at Imperial College in London. However, while the Tanaka School of Business still maintained an active role in Foundations of Leadership, the curriculum of this course was expanded in 2007 to be more inclusive of participants who intended to remain in education, rather than leave teaching for the business world or social entrepreneurship. During this course participants were explicitly taught leadership skills which they would be able to apply to whatever career they chose after becoming Ambassadors at the end of their second year.

Thus, not only during the Summer Institute, but throughout the rest of participants' teacher education, Teach First exercised very little control of the curriculum and instruction participants received.

Training Providers Curriculum

Canterbury Christ Church University was both the national training provider for Teach First, as well as the regional training provider for the London region. Although all materials described the relationship between partner universities and Teach First as a “partnership” (Training Programme Handbook, 2009) and most curricular materials bore the logos of Teach First as well as its university partners, interview data, and my own personal experience, suggested that the development of the Professional and Subject Studies curricula was “principally led by the training providers” (Interview 4). On one hand, this was a matter of policy, per the regulations of the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) regarding Initial Teacher Training (ITT) programs; Teach First was required to have a university training provider. However, even with the understanding that a university partner would deliver the curriculum, data suggest that Teach First did not played an especially active role in integrating its own values and beliefs about teaching and teacher education into the core training at the Summer Institute: Professional Studies. To this point, the strongest example of Teach First participation in curriculum design was the organization's request that the training providers include a reading on Jaime Escelante (Interview 4).

The two primary arguments of this chapter are that Teach First did not have much voice in the curriculum of Professional Studies, and, according to staff from both Teach First and CCCU, this curriculum was very similar to that of other teacher education

programs. Accordingly, in this chapter the Professional Studies curriculum is discussed largely in terms of the value Teach First ascribed to it and the ways in which it would have liked to see it improve, rather than its actual scope and sequence.

Teach First's lack of curricular voice in Professional Studies, and its lack of significant interest in gaining one, reifies the early argument that Teach First's theory of teacher education attached significantly more weight to recruiting exceptional graduates with strong leadership skills than to the actual preparation they received at the Summer Institute. However, this argument is somewhat belied by the fact that most staff interviewed reported that they wished Teach First had a larger voice in what participants learned in Professional Studies. In fact, it was a consistent theme in the data I collected during the summer of 2008 that Teach First was somewhat frustrated by this lack of control and was attempting to strengthen its voice in the design of the Professional Studies curriculum. However, this apparent paradox is resolved by understanding what it was that Teach First wanted in the curriculum: an increased emphasis on the mission. As one staff member put it,

My experience of working with the regional training partners both as a participant and as a member of staff is that they have a lot of experience in teacher education outside of Teach First. They've been in teaching for many, many years, doing Ph.D, GTPs, or whatever they're doing, so it's that their communication is probably different in the sense that they believe in teaching as a job, no matter what you're doing it for. I guess that's not creating it like a mission. I don't think they're communicating the mission in the same way. I don't think they'd sort of

be as sort of driven to the mission as someone who works for Teach First because they're so closely related for a large part with other teaching (Interview 1).

Another staff member made a similar argument, contending that the regional training providers working from a different paradigm of teacher education with goals that are distinct from those of Teach First. He/she even argued that the training providers have generally not embraced the mission in the same way that Teach First has. The below quote, while lengthy, provides a good window into what appears to have been a somewhat acrimonious relationship between Teach First and its partner universities around the content of Professional Studies in terms of its explicit instruction in the mission of Teach First,

OU: Right now we're in a situation in which I like the tutors...but I don't know that they're imbuing their Subject Studies or Professional Studies with the same action oriented message as I would. The next thing is to make it clear that there's not a separation between the content side of the Summer Institute and the mission side.

Interviewer: Do you think there's that separation right now?

OU: Yes, and it's structural in nature.

Interviewer: With the mission coming from Teach First?

OU: Us.

Interviewer: And content from partner...

OU: Training providers, yes. And they're getting better and it looks very different with each of the training providers, but I want to see them articulate as much of a sense of urgency as I feel...as my colleagues feel. And that involves

really selling them on how they need to shift their own thinking as well because they're not just doing this...they're also turning out PGCEs and GTPs and putting out educational research on the state of the system. Their entire case for existence doesn't hinge on accomplishing this mission in the same way that ours is. They have a whole lot of other stakeholders to report to.

Interviewer: So, the mission and educational disadvantage...

OU: They're emphasized frequently by us, and I think they're more referenced fleetingly by tutors and training providers. (Interview 5).

While other staff of Teach First did not speak about the relationship in quite such emphatic terms, the idea that the mission was not as integrated into Professional Studies as it should have been was a commonly held idea. Moreover, of the seventeen participants interviewed, all but two expressed a similar sentiment: the mission was only discussed by Teach First staff members, not by the members of the partner universities. This suggests that while the majority of tutors did not explicitly integrate Teach First's mission into Professional Studies, some did.

Most Teach First staff believed that the reason the mission was not emphasized by partner universities was because, as discussed earlier, the tutors had significant teacher education experience outside of Teach First. Another staff member suggested that the reason the mission was not more explicitly covered in Professional Studies was that the tutors who were responsible for its delivery were drawing upon their teacher education experiences that extended far beyond Teach First. Moreover, he/she believed that the tutors certainly supported the mission; they just choose not to emphasize it so explicitly,

I don't know how focused the curriculum is on the mission because it's so developed by tutors and I don't know how comfortable they would feel in making everything relate back to the Teach First mission because they've taught this all before to other teachers who weren't Teach First mission-oriented, but then essentially I think they all believe in it one way or another and would communicate it less explicitly through their teaching, but maybe not as "this is why we're doing this for this part of the mission... this is why we're doing it for this..." I don't think it's that interwoven. (Interview 1)

Another staff member went even further in supporting the idea that the tutors fundamentally advocated the mission. She/he allows that while they may not have always been made explicit, the "core beliefs" of the mission were present, and that questions of message coherence are inherent in any organization,

I think the core beliefs that are there are with every Summer Institute, with every mentor in schools, with every tutor that goes in, there's always the task of making sure they're on message. And I think the same could be said for any organization, the complexity of the organization doesn't lend itself to have absolute consistency, but I think given those, I think that yes, yes they are. I think the core beliefs are there and the raising of expectations, that's what everybody does, you hear it from head teacher surveys, it sings from the OFSTED (Office of Standards in Education) report, it sings from the language with which the teachers have been received with within their schools. (Interview 3).

A staff member of CCCU agreed with this assessment that while the mission may not always have been explicated, it was deeply imbedded in the Professional Studies

curriculum. In fact, he/she argued that it simply is not in the best interests of advancing the mission to continually reference it,

I think we do a lot of in context. And the context in the school (at which participants will teach). And therefore so they can develop the knowledge and understanding in a particular context, I think they're very aware of the statistics around progress in school and performance in school and that's related to geographic area and things like that...My personal thing is sometimes I think we can do overkill on those two words (educational disadvantage) and that can lead to a switch-off²⁶. I think if we keep hammering with educational disadvantage...and absolutely I think the mission is critical because it's a very clear focus, but I think in some ways if we keep calling it the same thing...it can be oh this again or this again, I don't think...I think with a concept as important as that I wouldn't want it to get tired so I think we relate it to context within schools, rather than calling it educational disadvantage. (Interview 6)

Thus it seems clear that that most Professional Studies tutors do not explicitly emphasize the mission. In fact, this is in line with my own personal experience with Teach First; the mission and values of Teach First were discussed primarily through Teach First led trainings, and hardly at all in Professional Studies. Indeed, as I argue later in this chapter, Teach First took very seriously its role in the direct, explicit instruction about the mission, and the mission was ubiquitous in the organization's formal trainings with participants.

This suggests two very important ideas about Teach First's theory of teacher preparation. First, as argued earlier, Teach First's theory of teacher education seemed to

place a very high value on the competencies that teacher candidates have prior to teacher education. Indeed, it is significant that when discussing the training provided by partner universities the primary critique offered was that the importance of the mission was not well enough integrated into the content. This suggests that Teach First was either generally pleased with the rest of the content, or simply not all that concerned with it because of the diminished value it attaches to teacher education. Given the discussion in Chapter Five about how, according to Teach First, effective teachers are primarily enabled by their leadership abilities and therefore need less teacher education, it seems likely that the answer is both. In other words, in the culture of Teach First, it was easy to give blanket approval to teacher education curriculum, because it was ultimately not viewed as being all that important.

Second, it suggests that to Teach First the most vital part of the preparation that participants received during the Summer Institute was their instruction in the mission of Teach First and the formation of a national cohort of teachers dedicated to achieving it. Both interview and artifact analysis bear out this argument. To begin with, of the four aims that Teach First had for the Summer Institute, only one of them was related to actually gaining teaching skills (Training Programme Handbook, p. 22),

1. To instill in participants the high expectations needed to achieve the Teach First mission.
2. To develop the participants' understanding and experience of pedagogy and practice, systems and context.
3. To prepare participants for the leadership development journey across the two years in the classroom and as an Ambassador.

4. To lay the foundation for a strong intra-/inter-cohort network. (Training Programme Handbook, p. 22).

Thus, it seems that, to Teach First, the primary charge of the Summer Institute was not to impart teaching skills, but to form a cohort of teachers who understood and embraced a collective mission. Interviews with staff showed this as a widely held collective representation of the culture of Teach First. In fact, one senior staff member went so far as to list commitment to the mission as the most important factor in Teach First's success, "the reason it (Teach First) has been a success is because people fundamentally believe in the mission" (Interview 3). Another senior staff member went even further, passionately explaining why building a shared sense of mission was more important than any other content at the Summer Institute,

I want them (the participants) to start feeling part of the esprit de corps of Teach First. I think it's really important. What we've seen over the last six years is the most important support mechanism they have is each other and so we could spend a lot of time and money, and we do, putting together lots of training events, lots of supportive events, hiring tutors (training provider staff), and all that is necessary and really helpful. But in the end, it's their peers that are actually going to help make them the best teachers, and you know, that sort of true, that they rely on their peers. So part of the institute is that I want them within six weeks like they're working together for a common goal. I want them to understand the mission of what they've been part of, and I sort of want them to feel part of a long-term movement so on one hand, when they come out of university, we've used the term "drink the Kool-Aid" of Teach First and that they finish the summer

institute really feeling a lifetime connection with the organization and our mission. They've internalized the mission, and they feel ownership of that mission. (Interview 2)

Thus, with all the value that Teach First ascribed to building a sense of mission, it is not surprising that this would be the organization's primary focus at the Summer Institute. Later in this chapter, when exploring Teach First led curriculum at the Summer Institute, this argument is borne out even further. Moreover, it also explains why the lack of emphasis on the mission was Teach First staff member's primary critique of Professional Studies. Indeed, every teacher education experience and competency that was specifically mentioned in interviews with Teach First staff related to a sense of mission or teaching as leadership. Other aspects of the Professional Studies curriculum were never mentioned when Teach First staff members were asked about what competencies or dispositions the organization values in teaching, or the teacher education experiences designed to produce them.

This argument is further bolstered by interview data that suggests that Teach First was relatively unaware of the content of Professional Studies, and appreciated the curriculum to be very similar to that of other teacher education programs. In fact, interviews with both Teach First and CCCU staff and artifact analysis of the cultural productions in the Professional Studies curriculum largely confirm this perspective. A Teach First staff member with significant expertise in the design of the Summer Institute summarized this relationship between other "employment-based" routes into teaching and Teach First thusly,

Interviewer: Are there any ways in which the curriculum for Teach First differs from the PGCE or the GTP?

Interviewee: Well, I think the nature of the participants is self-evident. So the fact that we've got predominantly 21-23 year olds on a program which is personalized to a highly detailed selection process, highly detailed induction process, that is very different from a PGCE. But the actual ingredients as in what's needed for the program to meet QTS standards, is pretty much the same in terms of the model being Professional and Subject Studies. What is different, of course, is the fact that we've got these people coming in together and they're pushing each other along. And the only unique, really unique feature, really is that when you have two year groups coming together²⁷, that is really, phenomenally different to anything else that happens. But I think the ingredients are pretty much the same. The way it's presented is obviously very different, six weeks, and then six days throughout the year, and then the workshops and so forth. Each year there will be lessons learned and developments we go through.

(Interview 5)

This idea, that the training provided by partner universities differs very little from that which they would provide to other programs, except for its truncated nature, appeared to be commonly held within Teach First. Another staff member echoed this idea, explaining how she/he was hopeful to add more of a focus on the mission to the curriculum, as that is what fundamentally distinguished Teach First from the GTP or PGCE,

²⁷ Referring to when the preceding year's cohort returns to the Summer Institute.

I think it (the mission) is not as linked as we would want it to be in the future.

We're moving that way because at the moment. It (the Summer Institute) is quite focused on the traditional role of training provider, you know working towards gaining QTS, materials are broadly drawn from what might be delivered in other training provider routes like PGCEs. (Interview 4)

Thus, it appears that Teach First believed that the characteristic that set it apart from other teacher education programs, its mission to address educational disadvantage, was largely absent from the core curriculum of the Summer Institute. In fact, another staff member speculated that this was part of the reason that the weekend when the previous cohort returns was so popular,

I think that the reason that everyone seems to love the returners so much is partly, something to do with that, because it links straight back into what they're here for. And I'm not sure they're reminded every day in Professional Studies and Subject Studies what they're here for. (Interview 7)

However, a staff member from CCCU disputed this assessment, arguing that the mission of Teach First was deeply imbedded in the Professional Studies curriculum, and that this did, in fact, make the teacher education participants receive different than what they would get with a PGCE or GTP.

Interviewer: How does the mission make its way into the Christ Church curriculum that participants receive?

Interviewee: I think there are a number of different ways that it does. I think first of all in terms of our assignments, it's all about high expectations...creating high expectation for pupils who didn't have them before or didn't think about those

kinds of routes so I think that's an example, I think we have a focus on excellence being an excellent teacher rather than just the minimum so that's in our assessment matrix when we assess them three times per year. We grade them on good, very good, satisfactory, or cause for concern and obviously our focus is on very good...And I think it's different from other training programs in that we're looking at a specific context and a specific group of pupils and therefore we are trying to tailor the provisions for the participants for those particular pupils.

(Interview 6)

Thus, this data suggests that there were two ways in which the Teach First curriculum provided by the training partners differed from that of other training programs: high expectations and an increased focus on urban education.

The first, essentially, did not reflect any additional skills or dispositions that Teach First teachers should have, only a commitment to an increased performance level on standardized government (OFSTED and TDA) assessments. However, the same CCCU staff members explicated this second focus in more detail, arguing that other teacher education routes did not place the same emphasis on school context, and giving several specific examples of differences in the curriculum that the training providers offered to Teach First participants,

We look a lot more at the context of the school. And I think the pedagogy fits the context, so for instance, in week one we did look about data and statistics. And in a standard PGCE course, you wouldn't do that. The other thing we look at in terms of Behaviour for Learning and acknowledging challenging behaviour is different. I think the issues around disaffection we look at with a lot more detail,

and that's a relatively new thing, but we introduced it this year....what disaffection is and reengaging pupils. Because that's something that a lot of them said last year, these kids are really difficult...they don't want to learn at all. You know trying to see, how do we engage these pupils ...We've looked at the Rowntree Report²⁸ for example—it's producing some great stuff on pupil attainment and free school meals and saying this is the challenge. What do we do about it? Whereas on a PGCE course, I don't think you would cover it. Certainly you wouldn't cover it early. And I think the educational theory we look at, we look more at the motivational theory rather than some of the other theories and I think that's again that's to do with the type of pupils, and I don't want to generalize, but it's a certain type of pupils that we're working with. (Interview 6)

The interviewee quoted above had significant expertise and experience in multiple teacher education models, including the PGCE. Thus, despite the impressions of Teach First staff, it appears that there were elements of the Professional Studies Curriculum which differentiate it from other forms of English teacher education.

However, while this CCCU staff member went to great lengths to show differences between Teach First and the PGCE or GTP, it appears that these differences, are really only a matter of emphasis and prioritization, not the selection of new content based upon Teach First's mission of social justice. Indeed, the entire Professional Studies curriculum was linked to the same QTS standards and ITT regulations that applied to both the PGCE and GTP. Accordingly, when compared to these programs, the

²⁸ The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is a U.K. charity that produces research which aims to “understand the root causes of social problems, to identify ways of overcoming them, and to show how social needs can be met in practice” (Rowntree Foundation, 2010). The specific report referred to here is one which echoed the original McKinsey report, linking socio-economic status to academic achievement titled, “A review of

differences in the Professional Studies curriculum, aside from its truncated nature, appear to be made around what CCCU felt were the needs of teachers who would be working in urban schools. Thus, there was more instructional time set aside for understanding the impact of poverty on educational achievement, engaging urban pupils, and behavior management. All of these curricular areas were tied to QTS, and thus the PGCE and GTP, but emphasized by the training providers of Teach First to a greater degree.

Yet, while these prioritizations have been made with Teach First in mind, they do not reflect two of the most fundamental assumptions of the mission of Teach First described in the previous chapter: teaching as leadership and systemic reform. First, entirely absent from the curriculum was the foundation for Teach First's understanding of "effective teachers," the idea of Teaching as Leadership. Indeed, since Teach First identified this theory of teaching as a defining aspect of the organization's mission, it is very significant that the core curriculum for all participants made no reference to it at all (Professional Studies Handbook). Second, analysis of the Professional Studies Handbook shows that there was no emphasis on preparing participants to understand or effect the systemic reform for which the mission itself calls. While education policy was consistently addressed throughout the curriculum, it was always done so in a static sense of what it means for the professional lives of teachers. For example, one learning outcome is "You will have an emerging understanding of the Every Child Matters Agenda and how this and the notions of social exclusion²⁹ relate to the urban settings in which you work" (Professional Studies Handbook, p. 9) Another similarly passive approach to policy is the learning outcome which addresses the relationship between

research on the links between education and poverty."

²⁹ Social exclusion is the policy of students being removed from the mainstream for behavior reasons.

participants and state instructional policy, “You should understand the national strategies and how these should be integrated into your practice” (Professional Studies Handbook, p. 19).

It should be noted that, as argued in Chapter Four, Teach First did not have a clear vision of the systemic reform which it aims to achieve. However, one of the most fundamental ideas embedded in the Teach First mission was that participants and Ambassadors should be agents of change. This idea, however undefined, was entirely absent from Professional Studies. Instead, as summarized by the handbook, “Professional Studies is about preparing you to become effective in a range of different roles as well as class teacher, including being a team member and colleague, understanding both the pastoral³⁰ and academic role of a teacher.” Thus, the data suggest that Professional Studies represented an effort on the part of the training providers to tailor the QTS standards to the particular needs of Teach First participants based upon the context in which they would teach, but not to incorporate the larger goals of the Teach First mission.

However, this should not necessarily be read as a short-coming of the curriculum. Guiding participants to achieving QTS was the responsibility with which the training providers have been charged. Indeed, the regulations of the TDA mandate training that is in line with the ITT protocols and QTS standards. Furthermore, given the number of Teach First participants who achieve QTS, and the very high ratings that these participants receive from OFSTED during its review of Teach First, it appeared to be a task which they performed very well (OFSTED, 2008). In fact, not only did half of the participants who were evaluated receive the highest rating of “outstanding,” but OFSTED

went so far as to note that some of the teachers "were judged by inspectors to be amongst the most exceptional trainees produced by any teacher training route" (p. 4) and that the instruction they received at the Summer Institute was "a particularly successful and innovative feature" (p. 5).

Thus, the argument here is not that the training providers were failing in their task. Indeed, it appears from the OFSTED report that they were, in fact, very good at the responsibilities they had accepted. Moreover, in interviews participants regularly praised the instruction they received in Professional Studies, often at the expense of the more abstract, mission-related curricula that Teach First provided. Accordingly, rather than suggesting that the training providers had somehow failed in their work, or unnecessarily curtailed its scope, the argument here is that they appreciated the breadth of their responsibilities to be largely the same as they would be for any teacher education program, differing only in terms of the urban context in which they prepared Teach First participants to teach.

Thus, aside from the increased urban focus, there was little to suggest that Professional Studies, the core of Teach First's teacher education curriculum, was very different from other, "employment-based" teacher education routes such as the GTP or PGCE. Moreover, this similarity to other teacher education curricula seemed to be approved of by Teach First. Indeed, the only additions that Teach First seemed to want in Professional Studies related to integrating the mission more thoroughly into the curriculum. As the data in the next section will show, this was a responsibility that Teach First itself accepted through its own trainings, which emphatically and consistently emphasized all aspects of the mission.

³⁰ Social and emotional

Teach First Curriculum at the Summer Institute

As a Teach First staff member summarized earlier in this chapter, there existed at the Summer Institute a divide between what was taught by training providers and what was taught by Teach First itself. This divide, roughly speaking, was that the training providers taught a truncated teacher education curriculum that broadly resembled the GTP or PGCE, while Teach First emphasized the mission. As the mission was analysed in some detail in Chapter Four, I do not re-examine it here. Rather, what I do in this section is argue that building this sense of mission is a vital part of Teach First's theory of teacher education, emphasized in nearly every meeting and training that the organization ran itself. Moreover, there was little else that the Teach First run trainings offered, other than education about Teach First itself. Thus, the argument of this section is that the principal instruction that Teach First added to Professional Studies were trainings that pursued the formation of a national cohort by explaining to participants what it meant to be a part of Teach First.

This section is organized as follows. First, I provide an overview of why Teach First values this explicit instruction of the mission to such a great extent. Then, I describe the two principle formats in which Teach First, as opposed to its partner universities, trained its participants: ceremonies and morning meetings. Finally, I combine this analysis with previous analysis of Teach First's relationship with its training providers, to draw out those ideas that reflected a guiding, yet unexamined theory of teacher education for Teach First.

However, before I begin this analysis, it is important to note a significant data source that I am excluding. As mentioned earlier, during the evenings participants

attended workshops taught by Associate Tutors, Teach First Ambassadors who returned to work at the Summer Institute. These workshops varied significantly in content, ranging from best practices of classroom management to how to effectively use interactive whiteboards. For this discussion of Teach First led curriculum, I am excluding these workshops because they were not a common experience for participants and because they largely existed outside of the control of Teach First itself. In fact, while participants were required to attend a minimum number of workshops, Teach First made little effort to control either which ones they attended, or even to closely monitor the content of the workshops offered. These decisions were largely left to the Associate Tutors. While interview data and my own personal experience suggests these workshops were highly valued by participants, that Teach First staff exercised little voice in their curriculum, and did not even observe their execution, means that their specific content was of relatively small importance to collective representations of Teach First's theory of teacher education. In fact, while Associate Tutors were frequently praised by Teach First staff, this praise was always in relation to their ability to unite the organization across cohorts and provide examples of leadership, rather than in their ability to impart specific elements of teacher education curriculum to current participants. In fact, this reflects the major argument of this section, that Teach First valued cohort unity above specific teaching skills.

Teach First Curriculum: Importance of the Mission

It appears that above all other objectives, Teach First valued the creation of a national cohort of members of who understood what it meant to be a part of Teach First as the most important outcome of the Summer Institute. Indeed this is the same

argument as the one made earlier about how Teach First views the curriculum provided by its training providers. Here, however, this is reflected not in terms of what staff members feel is missing, but from what they chose to include in their own trainings. As a senior staff member put it earlier, he/she placed a high value on participants “drinking the Teach First Kool-Aid” (EI Interview). Another staff member echoed this idea, arguing that it was vital to Teach First’s mission that they “indoctrinate” the participants, especially since they do not receive a significant amount of talk about the mission from the tutors,

OU: (Discussing the mission) is not the role articulated to tutors....they’re not meant to indoctrinate somebody in a mission. Now, I think it’s a different debate altogether as to whether they should...

Interviewer: So you don’t use indoctrination as a pejorative here?

OU: No, not at all. No, I think for somebody to be able to push themselves to their most effective on behalf of their kids they need to be able to see that they’re part of something bigger than themselves, and that they are part of an organization that has overall momentum that they can then contribute to and it is accomplishing something exciting that they can point to and say I helped do that.

(Interview 5)

Furthermore, as another staff member argued, the participants wanted this explicit instruction in the mission, “I think participants are looking for us to give a very concrete and clear idea about what they should be striving for” (RA interview). As argued in Chapter Five, Teach First was not especially “concrete” about many aspects of the

mission, but it was remarkably consistent in bringing everything back to the mission all the same. As one participant noted, this began long before the summer institute,

Since I joined Teach First, it's made clear the very first thing. Website, kind of all of the information—congratulations, you're on Teach First, this is what we're doing. Every single stage, this is what we're doing. And I can completely see why because it means that everyone's on task and everyone knows why we're doing it, I suppose.

My observations confirmed this assessment: the mission was consistently referenced in almost every morning meeting and training event that the organization held.

The staff of Teach First worked hard to reinforce the mission even outside of official trainings. For example, during the 2008 Summer Institute, Teach First ran a contest for participants to document themselves reciting the mission in the most unusual places, one of which included a participant saying it at the beach while buried in sand up to his head (Interview 8). Interviews with multiple staff members suggest that this ubiquity was a very conscious and explicit goal for the organization. Moreover, the mission and values of Teach First were discussed not only frequently, but passionately. Indeed, the intensity which Teach First staff members attached to any discussion of the mission seemed to matter as much, if not more, than the actual content itself. In fact, as argued earlier, Teach First was often somewhat vague about how it defined critical terms such as educational disadvantage, achievement, educational opportunity, etc. However, despite this general lack of precision about these important terms, the zeal with which Teach First staff invoked the mission was both strong and consistent.

It appears from the data collected that Teach First achieved its objective of making the mission ubiquitous and powerful, perhaps to a fault. Many of the participants who I interviewed frequently complained that Teach First talked about the mission so extensively and dogmatically to the point that it was insulting,

Interviewer: You say it (the mission) has been drummed into you since you've been here.

IL: Yeah it has. And in some respects, I've heard it a couple of times talking with my colleagues and stuff, I've heard they've felt a bit patronized on the grounds that I'm amongst some of the most intelligent people I've had the pleasure of meeting, and I'm fairly sure that every single one of them is aware of the mission. Sometimes it goes too much. We've had sessions as of late where I'm thinking "we really don't need to be here." Personally as a teacher maybe the mechanics of teaching should be taught, you know what we can do being in a classroom, not the whole mission. I think at times, I understand their stand on everyone needs to be committed, and we all are, we wouldn't be here if that wasn't the case. However, don't doubt the integrity and intelligence of the people, because there are some very clever people here. The whole idea of being patronized doesn't give us much integrity either. ..sometimes it's just a bit too much.

Interviewer: Have you been getting it in Professional and Subject Studies, too?

IL: Thankfully, no...And there's never been any note or mention of this mission...it's been purely professional, purely about being a teacher.

Thus, the data suggest that while Teach First was certainly successful in incorporating the mission into all of its trainings, it may have done so to the extent that it offended some of the participants. Indeed, the above quote was consistent with what a number of other participants reported, that they greatly preferred the teacher education of Professional and Subject Studies to the “indoctrination” of Teach First led events.

However, this opinion was not shared by all the participants. Consider, for example, this participant who, while noting that Teach First discussed the mission “religiously,” was actually very motivated by its frequent, dramatic invocation,

Interviewer: How have you seen the mission represented to you so far?

EA: Quite religiously. Driven into us. Just repeated a lot. In the subregional groups that we have they repeat that a lot and how important it is. And I find it personally very inspiring and “yeah!”, and what they said is to work really relentlessly. Personally, I get very inspired when people push me, “Go on, go for it!” and that’s what it is. And then they play this music and everybody can feel the pump. And they play this very emotive video, I think that’s a big part of how they’re putting that in us.

It should be noted, however, that this interview took place near the beginning of the Summer Institute, while the preceding interview took place near the end. Thus, it seems likely that participants may have appreciated the “indoctrination” earlier in the Summer Institute, but tired of it as the weeks progressed.

Teach First Curriculum: Ceremonies

The “emotive” video mentioned in the interview quoted above was very emblematic of the type of ceremonies that Teach First ran throughout the Summer

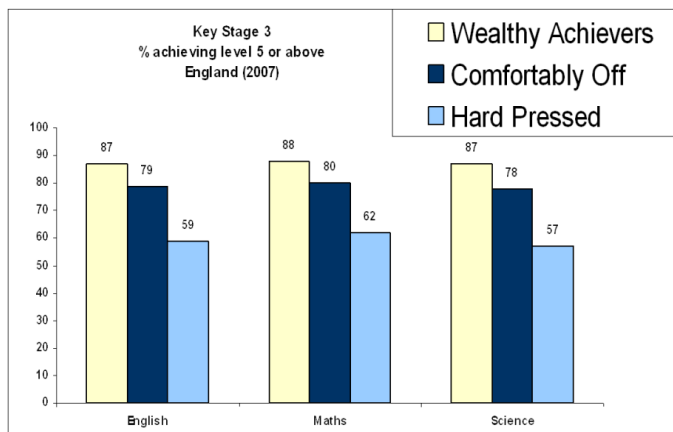
Institute: Regional Opening Ceremonies, National Opening Ceremonies, and National Closing Ceremonies. The content of these ceremonies was, without exception, Teach First itself, focusing in particular upon the mission, Teach First's values, its history, and its success. Moreover, there was never any negative or critical information in these sessions. Furthermore, as the earlier references to "drinking the Kool-Aid" and "indoctrination" imply, these ceremonies had a spirited, almost even a revivalist quality, in their self-appreciation of what the organization represented. I consider these ceremonies to be forms of teacher education because, as referenced earlier, it appears that a significant learning outcome that Teach First desired for its participants was their knowledge of and commitment to the Teach First mission.

Consider, for example, the PowerPoint which opened the Regional Opening Ceremony. In the next few paragraphs I describe the first thirty slides to provide an example of the sort of passionate, movement-building rhetoric that Teach First regularly employed in these ceremonies. I choose to write these paragraphs in the present tense to better capture the pregnant energy of the moment.

The ceremony begins in a dark auditorium. Music plays as a black screen is slowly filled with the words, "You are entering...The Teach First Experience" (Regional Induction PowerPoint Slide 6-8). As the music builds, another slide asks, "Are you sitting comfortably?"(Slide 9), and is followed by another two slides that inform participants that "This is the story of Teach First"(Slide 10), "And how we're going to make a difference"(Slide 11). After the mission is flashed on screen, another slide asks, "Why do we do it?"(Slide 13). The next two slides answer the question, "It's simple..."(Slide 14), "If you want to know how well a child will do in school..."(Slide

15), “You only need to ask one question...” (Slide 16), “How much do their parents/carers earn?” (Slide 17). The next slide, reproduced below, emphasizes this point quantitatively, displaying the test score of students from different socioeconomic statuses,

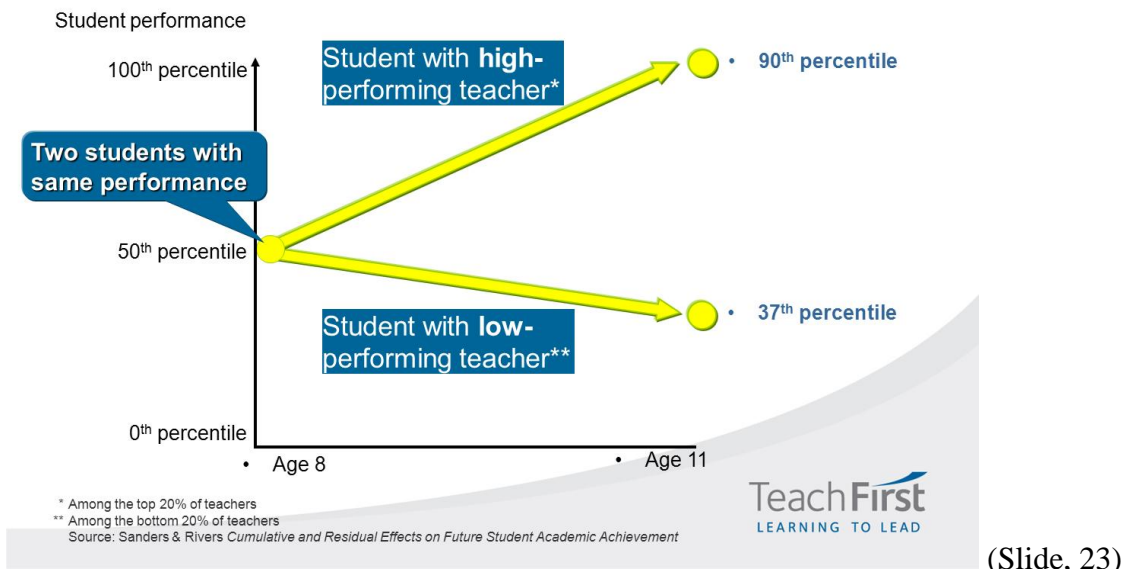
Poverty and under achievement are inherently linked at KS3



(Slide 18)

After another slide presents similar data about the link between poverty and achievement, the next slide reads, “But it doesn’t have to be this way” (Slide 20), “There is one determinant that can change this” (Slide 21), “Good Teachers” (Slide 22). Next, data similar to that found in the 2002 McKinsey, this time drawing from the 1996 study by Sanders and Rivers, informs the participants that teaching is the most important factor in increasing students’ academic performance.

Consistent quality of teaching is by far the most important factor driving performance



The next slide reads, “And that’s where you come in” (Slide 24), and it is met with significant applause. Throughout this presentation, as well as others like it, the music continues to play and Teach First participants clap and shout, applauding, in particular, any slide that mentions their joining the program.

As someone who sat through many such a presentation in both my capacity as a researcher and a Teach First/CCCU staff member, I found the atmosphere to be absolutely electric, something more akin to a rock concert than a formal ceremony. Indeed, this is absolutely the atmosphere that Teach First was trying to cultivate. When staff members referred to trying to get participants to “drink the Kool-Aid,” it is clear that these are exactly the sort of presentations they had in mind. Moreover, as presentations with this sort of weight and ethos appear multiple times throughout the Summer Institute, it is understandable why some participants voiced frustration at what they appreciated to be a patronizing tone.

The rest of the Regional Opening Ceremony, as well as the other two Teach First ceremonies, National Opening Ceremonies and National Closing Ceremonies, were all very similar in content and tone. The agenda of each was the same: an inspirational PowerPoint gave way to staff members from Teach First and the training providers who thanked the participants for the work they were about to do and reinforced the idea that the organization's goal was meaningful and achievable. An outside speaker usually gave a speech to a similar effect, including, for example, a Headteacher from a Teach First school who praised the quality and character of the participants placed at his school (Regional Opening Ceremonies). The ceremonies also usually featured "Participant/Ambassador Diaries," a device borrowed from TFA's similarly constructed ceremonies. In this section of the ceremony, five or six participants or Ambassadors shared pre-written, first-person accounts of their experience in Teach First or the Summer Institute. For example, at National Closing Ceremonies, the diary readers were participants who summarized the transformational experience of the Summer Institute and their excitement/trepidation about beginning careers as teachers.

Taken as a whole, the Teach First ceremonies reflected the themes previously identified in Chapter Five as being embedded within the mission. However, unlike morning meetings which were much more explicit about these points, these ceremonies reflected these ideas in more implicit, rhetorically motivating ways. These included, for example, the dramatic graphs of student learning correlated with poverty that were copied above from Regional Opening Ceremonies and the opening slides of the National Opening Ceremonies which told participants, "The mission is clear...Poverty equals underachievement...A seemingly unbreakable chain...The problem is great...The

solution not simple...But a solution does exist...And you are a part of it” (Slides 18-24).

Similarly, these ceremonies also highlighted the second half of the mission in which Ambassadors addressed educational disadvantage “from all sectors.” For example, in consecutive slides, the PowerPoint presentation from the Regional Opening Ceremonies summarized Ambassador contributions in the three areas identified by Teach First Staff in Chapter Four: education, business, and social entrepreneurship,

Inside the classroom

- 50% of Ambassadors currently remain in teaching setting the standard as excellent classroom practitioners
- Over 50% of them are in leadership positions with over 50 Heads of Year or Heads of Department
- 8 are Assistant and Deputy Heads after only four or five years of teaching!
- And two are about to begin the *Future Leaders* urban school headship programme



TeachFirst
LEARNING TO LEAD

Outside the classroom

- Working for Teach First and partnership countries through Teach For All
- Mentoring students through our Higher Education Access Programme for Schools
- Becoming urban school governors
- As mission-focused social entrepreneurs
- As policy makers



TeachFirst
LEARNING TO LEAD

In fact, every aspect of the mission identified in Chapter Four was implicitly present in each of these ceremonies, from the conflation of exceptional teachers with “teaching as leadership” to the links between educational disadvantage and opportunity with aspirations, achievement, and access. Furthermore, this research found no outlying messages about the mission in these ceremonies, let alone conflicting ones. Rather, the ceremonies were remarkably consistent with how the staff of Teach First understood and presented the organization’s mission both internally and in its public documents. These ceremonies, then, operated principally as a catalyst for the mission, highly aligned with its tenets, in which participants were engaged with the problem of educational disadvantage and told that their leadership qualities made them part of the solution.

Teach First Curriculum: Morning Meetings

The second form of Teach First-led teacher education that I identified were morning meetings. Like the three ceremonies described above, these morning meetings seemed to have the principal objectives of instructing participants in the history, values, and mission of Teach First. However, unlike the ceremonies, these meetings were significantly more detailed and lacked the same energetic, almost raucous, quality. Rather, these were more reserved, detailed presentations about Teach First. Yet, despite being significantly more detailed, they did not address any teacher education content aside from instruction in Teach First itself. Morning Meetings, held every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, in weeks one, four, five, and six also served as Teach First's and the partner universities' primary means of conveying logistical information about the Summer Institute (there were no morning meeting during Placement Week and Contrasting Schools Week because participants needed to leave the Summer Institute so early in order arrive in time for the start of school).

Much of the agenda for these meetings was logistical detail, some of it provided by the training providers, but the remaining parts shed insight into what Teach First believed needs to be added to Professional Studies as the core curriculum of the Summer Institute. These subjects were: working with urban students, examples of Ambassador success, Teaching as Leadership, and the future of Teach First. I argue that the messages around all four of these topics are instantiations of the mission as teacher education curriculum, in which the desired outcome of each session was that participants were “indoctrinated” into the way Teach First conceptualized “exceptional disadvantage” and “effective teaching.” More importantly, as such, it reinforced the idea that Teach First's

theory of teacher education valued participants' knowledge of the mission as much, if not more, than it did the acquisition of discreet teaching skills and dispositions.

To begin, Teach First's messaging at the Summer Institute around working with urban students was one that fits neatly with the argument advanced in Chapter Five, that the staff of Teach First believed equal educational opportunity should mean the same things to all students. For example, the morning meeting for July 2nd asks participants to reflect on a "Pupil Panel" that they observed at the previous meeting. This Pupil Panel featured students from schools at which Teach First placed teachers talking about what they valued in a teacher and the sort of instruction to which they best responded. Below is the list of reflective questions that Teach First asked the participants following the pupil panel,

1. What did you learn from the pupil panel?
2. Did anything they say surprise you? Why?
3. How did the pupil's opinions of what makes a good teacher compare to your own? How similar/different were they?
4. The pupil panel gave a chance for pupils to have their voice heard. With this in mind what do you think you can do as a teacher to engage and invest pupils in their own learning? (July 2nd PowerPoint, Slide 2)

While the Pupil Panel was designed to encourage teachers to listen to what students wanted from their teachers, it is clear from these questions that this was not done to advance student voice in the curriculum, but to teach Teach First participants the best ways to engage and motivate these students towards high performance in the state-generated curriculum. Students were not asked about the knowledge or experiences that

they could bring to the classroom, but the types of instruction that would best invest them in the academic achievement assessed by the GCSEs. This is reflective of a key argument made about the mission in Chapter Five: Teach First's understanding of equal educational opportunity was defined by finding ways to get poor students to achieve at the same level as their more wealthy peers. As a Teach First staff member summarized, being "inclusive" means that, "every pupil in front of you can access the curriculum that you're teaching from at the level that they are working at in order to progress at a rate that is appropriate for them" (MI interview).

Thus, it is very consistent with Teach First's understanding of equal educational opportunity that the ultimate goal of the pupil panel would be for participants to glean strategies not for increasing student voice in the classroom, but for "engaging and investing" them in the national curriculum and exams that Teach First accepts as the arbiter of student learning and classroom success. However, it is significant that Teach First did not describe any of these strategies to the participants. In fact, the learning objective of the meeting seemed to be that participants recognized the importance of finding ways to improve the achievement of all students, not that they actually learn these instructional strategies themselves. Those strategies, presumably, were left to the training providers to impart.

Second, the morning meetings which addressed examples of Ambassador success and summarized the Maximum Impact Project were similarly focused on imparting aspects of the mission to participants. In this case, they reinforced the previously established argument that Teach First defined educational opportunity through quantifiable increases in achievement, aspirations, and access. For example, the July 5th

PowerPoint which summarized the results of the Teach First Awards Ceremony described in Chapter One made clear that “effective teachers” were those that were able “to make an impact on pupil learning and try to overcome the achievement gap” (Slide 3). The award winners included teachers who, “ensured pupil success in the classroom above and beyond what is normally expected,” “improved pupils' life opportunities,” and did not “(make) excuses for pushing his kids to make the grade and open up more life opportunities” (Slide 7). The achievements of the teachers who won the awards were summarized, but what they actually did in the classroom was explained in very little detail, and no attempt was made to pass on to the participants the tools which enabled these successes. For example, one of the award winners created a course to increase student aspirations, but the focus was not on how she did it or what the course actually taught students, but about the hard work it represented in working to improve student aspiration,

Getting 90% of Year 10³¹ entered for a new course Preparation For Working Life. This involved teaching them all; getting 3 pieces of coursework in and marked for 150 students in the year; running numerous after school classes for them; creating the entire programme of study; supplementing this with outside guests from Speaker's Bank and local businesses; running the honour roll list each half-term to keep motivation up! (Slide 6)

Accordingly, this meeting attended to what these accomplishments represented in terms of the mission, rather than how they were achieved or even what they meant in terms of student learning. Thus, they suggest that the curricular objective for the meeting was not for participants to understand how to make these gains with students, but that participants

understand that these goals of increasing achievement, aspirations, and access were the ones which all Teach First teachers should accept as the their classroom responsibility. Thus, as with the Pupil Panel, it was the mission itself that appeared to be the primary teacher education curriculum of these sessions, with specific instructional strategies left to the training providers.

The third curricular subject of morning meetings was Teaching as Leadership. In fact, this was the lone subject in the morning meetings where the teacher education curriculum appeared to have objectives that extended beyond emphasizing the mission and values of Teach First to the skills and competencies that Teach First believed its participants should have. However, as with the previous two topics, this subject was also closely aligned with the assumptions of the Teach First mission. As discussed previously, the foundation of Teach First’s understanding is the idea that “effective teachers” are those who use their leadership skills to advance student learning. However, while Teach First clearly values the leadership skills that made its participants “exceptional graduates,” it also sought to improve on these skills. After all, the tagline in the ubiquitous Teach First logo (included on the previous PowerPoint slides) is “Learning to Lead.”

As mentioned earlier, this leadership training was completely absent from the Professional Studies curriculum. This further ratifies the argument advanced by many Teach First staff that the Professional Studies curriculum was essentially a condensed version of a PGCE or GTP, not a curriculum designed specifically for Teach First, since “teaching as leadership” was such a defining assumption of Teach First’s theory of teaching. However, despite this commitment to teaching as leadership, Teach First did

³¹ 9th grade

not actual provide participants instruction in what these teaching skills were. To this point, there were two morning meetings that emphasized the importance of teaching as leadership, and only one of these two actually attempted to impart any skills to the participants, the morning meeting of July 30th. The other, the meeting of July 23rd, only summarized the importance of teaching as leadership and explained that participants would gain these leadership skills through their classroom experience. Indeed, the objectives for this session were, “to explore our attitudes towards leadership” and “to analyse the difference conceptions of leadership, considering values, purpose and competencies.” The participants were given a list of twenty-one leadership skills (including teamwork, critical thinking, adaptability, etc.), developed from a survey of the Times Top 100 Graduate Employers and informed that they would “develop over 80% of these skills in (their) first year alone” (Slide 4).

The lone example of participants receiving training in Teaching as Leadership appears to be the morning meeting of July 30th, in which participants were instructed about how to set goals for themselves as teachers and then coach themselves to achieve them. Thus, while participants certainly received ongoing teacher education throughout the year from both Teach First and its training providers, and they attended a course titled Foundations of Leadership between their first and second years of teaching, this analysis suggests that teaching as leadership, while at the heart of Teach First’s theory of teaching, did not significantly make its way into Teach First’s theory of teacher education at the Summer Institute. Rather, as with the other aspects of the mission represented in morning meetings, Teach First primarily prized participant knowledge of and belief in teaching as leadership as the teacher education outcomes to be achieved during these

sessions. According to Teach First's theory of teacher education, then, the leadership skills which underscore the effectiveness of "teaching as leadership" appear to be either possessed by participants a prior to the Summer Institute through their identification as "exceptional graduates," or learned on the job once they enter in the classroom.

The final curricular area that I identified in the morning meetings was the future of Teach First. Unlike the other three areas previously discussed (Ambassador successes, working with urban students, and teaching as leadership), this curricular area was completely divorced from any assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning, having only to do with the ways in which the mission was shaping the future of Teach First. It is thus, not surprisingly, further evidence of the extent to which Teach First valued (1) participants' knowledge of the mission and (2) participants feeling strong affiliation and membership in the organization. Indeed, like the three ceremonies of the Summer Institute, meetings which emphasized the future directions of Teach First appeared to place a premium on making participants feel aware of and invested in the long-term growth of the organization.

Accordingly, morning meetings which focused on the future of Teach First emphasized the ways in which the mission the participants had accepted was being pursued by senior staff. For example, the July 25th meeting outlined the five "visions" for the future of Teach First that will enable realization of the mission. These visions, which serve as further evidence for the passionate, yet somewhat general way in which Teach First conceived of fighting educational disadvantage were summarized in the following slide,

Overview of visions for Teach First 2008-2012

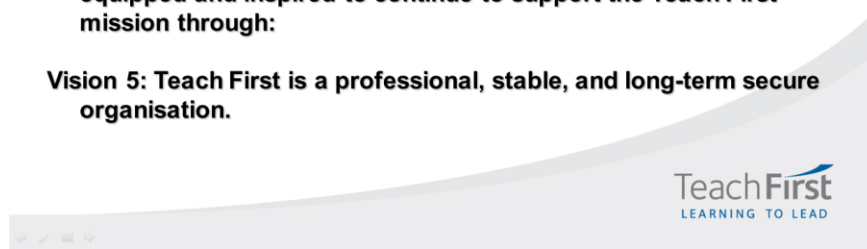
Vision 1: Teach First achieves sustainable growth in its intake and programme while improving consistency and quality.

Vision 2: Teach First is a one of the most highly effective graduate leadership development programme in the UK

Vision 3: Through Vision 2, Teach First teachers maximize their impact on their pupils' educational achievement and aspirations

Vision 4: Teach First Ambassadors in all fields are mobilised, equipped and inspired to continue to support the Teach First mission through:

Vision 5: Teach First is a professional, stable, and long-term secure organisation.

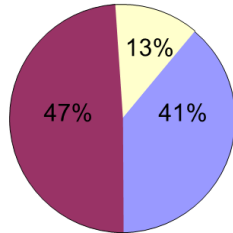


(Slide 12)

Although these visions lend further credence to the earlier arguments in Chapter Five about Teach First's mission, what is important for this particular argument is not so much what the visions were, as the fact that with very limited time available for teacher education, Teach First chose to devote an entire hour to sharing future policy directions with its new participants. In fact, in this same meeting, senior staff shared with participants the criteria they used in deciding whether a region was a good match for Teach First expansion, as well as detailed financial breakdowns of how Teach First was

funded and where it spent this money,

Teach First operating income
(1 September 2007 to 31 August 2008)

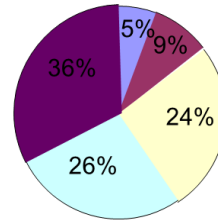


- Business & foundations supporters
- Government support
- Recruitment fees from schools

Total = £3.161 million

- £1,470K from businesses, foundations or individuals
- £400K from the DCSF for expansion support
- £1,291K from schools which hire Teach First teachers (£3100 fee for year 1; £3100 fee for year 2 / teacher)

Teach First operating expenses
(1 September 2007 to 31 August 2008)



Total = £3.093 million

Ambassadors	£159K
External Relations	£266K
Operations	£737K
Recruitment & Assessment	£815K
Participant Training & Support (including Leadership)	£1,117K

NOTE: 58% of Total Expenses is on Staffing costs



(Slide 17)

Thus, this fourth area of the Teach First led curriculum suggests that the organization placed an extremely high value on participants feeling ownership of the organization. Furthermore, this data also implies that the staff of Teach First felt compelled to justify their decisions to the participants. The level of detail included in these meetings, as well as the significant time devoted to them, stand as testament to the idea that Teach First's theory of teacher education was ultimately driven by the idea that participants must leave the Summer Institute identifying themselves not as individual teachers, but members in a national movement to address educational disadvantage. Taken together, these four curricular areas of the morning meetings served as collective representations of Teach First's self-referential theory of teacher preparation. While the morning meetings were significantly more staid than the ceremonies, they were based on the same fundamental, somewhat circular, unexpressed assumption: the mission of Teach First was best served

by teacher education that built knowledge of the mission and a shared belief in its importance. This idea drove not only Teach First's own curriculum, but its relationship to the teacher education curriculum of its training providers as well.

In the following chapter, I take this fundamental idea of equating mission-education with teacher education and use it to propose an underlying theory of teacher preparation for Teach First. I also use data from this chapter, and Chapter Five, to articulate theories of justice and practice. Then, from these theories, and using Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework, I draw out an overarching theory of social justice in teacher education for Teach First.

Chapter Seven: Teach First's Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice

In this chapter I answer the following research questions: (1) What was Teach First's implicit theory of social justice in teacher education?; and, (2) What are its political, ideological, and economic assumptions about social justice, education, and teacher education? To answer the first question, I use Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework for a theory of social justice in teacher education. To answer the second, I am guided by Ball's (1990) three theoretical strategies for problematizing the discourse of education policy. These two steps represent the final parts of my data analysis depicted in Figure 3.1. The organization of this chapter is as follows. First, using data analyzed in the previous three chapters, I uncover and propose sub-theories of practice, preparation, and justice for Teach First. Next, I combine all three into an overarching theory of teacher education for social justice for Teach First using Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework. These sections are the final sections written within Carspecken's (1996) objective and subjective realms described in Chapter Four. Then, I move into the normative realm, using Ball's policy sociology framework to critique this theory of teacher education for social justice from three perspectives: political, economic, and ideological. I link each of these three "theoretical strategies" to the three sets of critiques I identified in Chapter Two: critiques of distributive justice, critiques of neoliberalism, and critical approaches to teacher education.

The overall argument of this this chapter is twofold. First, Teach First had an under-conceptualized theory of practice that lacked clear images of what "effective teachers" do. Second, Teach First's theory of justice was monistic and objective,

reinforced neoliberal hegemony, and failed to challenge the inequitable social structures which created educational disadvantage in the first place.

Uncovering Teach First's Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice

In order to uncover Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice, I employ Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework, discussed in Chapter Two. As described in Chapter Three, her work serves as more than just the framework through which she advances her own theory of teacher education for social justice. It serves as the framework for *any* theory of teacher education for social justice. Just as Cochran-Smith conceptualizes her theory as resting upon the answers to questions of practice, preparation, and justice, I submit that every overarching theory of teacher education for social justice necessarily contains within it some formulation of each of these three theories.

In other words, it is my contention that it is impossible to pursue teacher education for social justice without drawing upon underlying ideas about practice, preparation, and justice, even if these are implicit. At the point that an organization accepts a mission of "social justice," however it is defined, and then sets about preparing teachers to effect it, it has implicitly subscribed to theories of preparation, practice, and justice. These ideas may not be consistent, or even coherent. However, in those cases, I believe this is another example of the utility of Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework: highlighting those elements of theories of teacher education that are contradictory or self-referential. In fact, as I argue in this chapter, using her framework exposes that Teach First's theory of practice was circularly defined in terms of its theory of justice. This in turn exposes an important area of critique: Teach First's under-conceptualization of the

practices of effective teachers. Thus, Cochran-Smith's framework serves as a useful tool to both draw out and critique unexpressed theories of teacher education for social justice that drive policy and practice.

Teach First and a Theory of Justice

In the following section, I argue that Teach First's theory of justice was based entirely on a theory of justice as distribution, with no evidence of justice as recognition or association. In order to make this claim, I first provide and discuss a visual representation of Teach First's theory of justice, as I have conceived it. Then, I compare this theory to Rawls' theory of distributive justice. This is not to argue that the philosophy of Rawls encompasses all the strains of distributive justice, i.e., egalitarianism, desert-based principles, utilitarianism, or libertarianism (see Fleischacker, 2005 and Roemer, 1998, for recent comprehensive treatments of the variety and scope of theories of distributive justice). Rather, my argument is that Teach First's theory of social justice in teacher education closely resembled Rawls' theory of justice, and is therefore useful in explicating this theory and formally distinguishing it from theories of justice as recognition.

Cochran-Smith (2010) identifies a sub-theory of justice as one that "that makes explicit (the theory's) ultimate goals and considers the relationships of competing conceptions of justice" (p. 2). Her argument is that any theory of teacher education for social justice must ultimately rely upon a theory of justice. Furthermore, I submit that while every theory of justice will not engage with "competing conceptions of justice," the failure to do so is not an absence of a theory of justice, but a failure of that theory to assume the requisite complexity that teacher education for social justice deserves. In

fact, this is a failure of not only of most of the field of teacher education for social justice, as I showed in Chapter Two, but of Teach First as well.

Based on the analysis of data in the preceding chapters, I propose the following visual representation of Teach First's theory of justice:

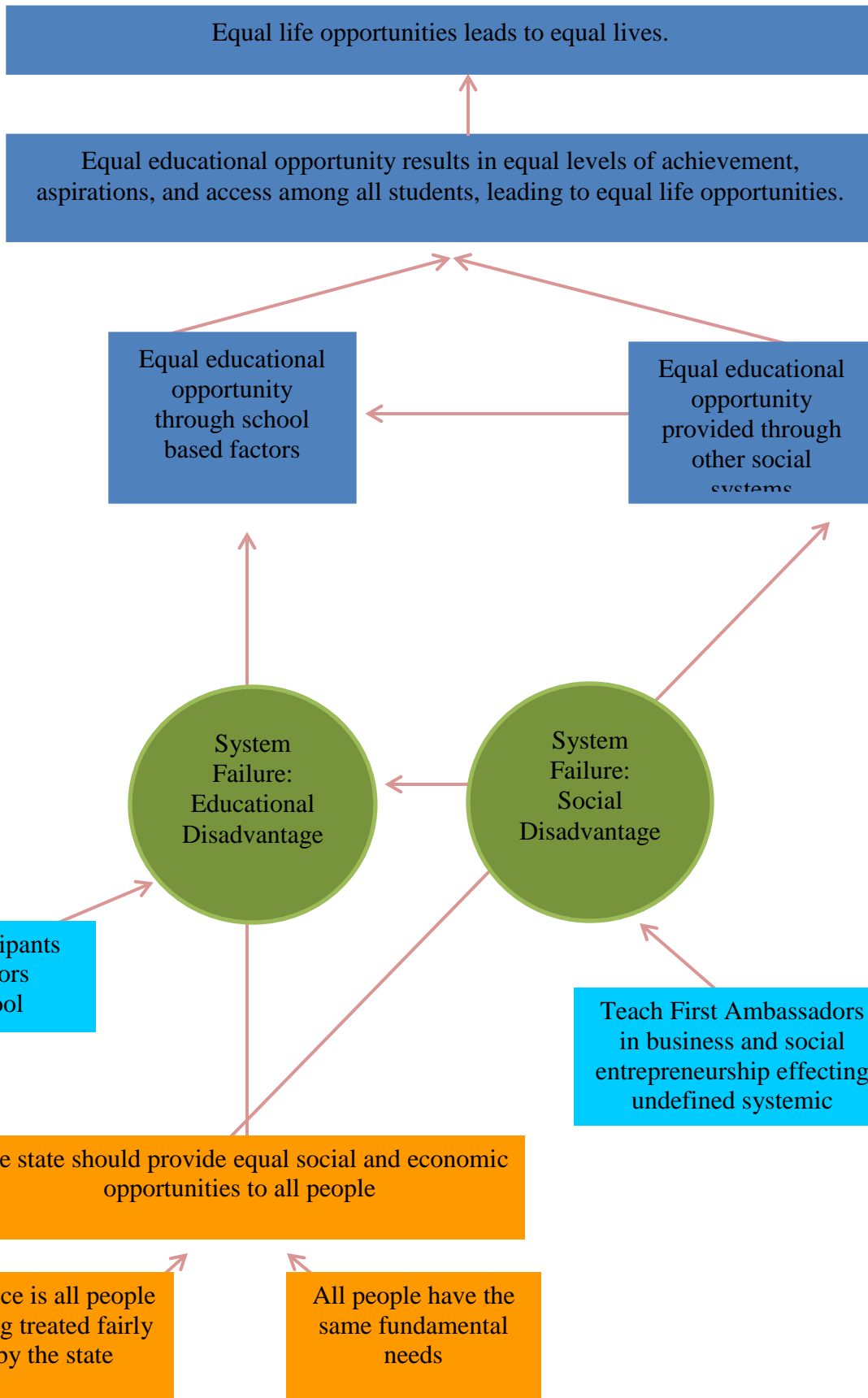


Figure 7.1: Teach First's Theory of Justice

This figure is designed to show how a number of underlying ideas about justice and education shaped Teach First's mission, policies, and practices. Each of these ideas has been explicated in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. The figure should be read from bottom to top, with each ascending level of ideas driving the ones above them, as indicated through the arrows. I have used different colors to represent different aspects of Teach First's theory of justice. The orange boxes represent fundamental assumptions about the needs of citizens and their social contract with the state. The green boxes represent the points at which this social contract is broken via systemic failure, the points at which injustices occur. Light blue boxes represent Teach First's role in correcting injustice. Dark blue boxes represent Teach First's idealized vision for a just society. Accordingly, this theory and this figure represent not only a vision of justice, but also a vision of injustice. Moreover, it also includes, at the broadest levels, the way the staff of Teach First envisioned how the organization addressed injustice. These ways draw upon the other two sub-theories of practice and preparation examined later in this chapter.

In order to explain Teach First's theory of justice, I begin with the unexamined assumptions about the state and the individual and then follow them through to their ideal, but unrealized, conclusion: equal life opportunities for all people. To begin, two unexamined assumptions that were deeply embedded in the organization's mission are (1) people in general have the same fundamental needs and (2) it is the job of the state to meet those needs equally. These two ideas compelled a third assumption, (3) the state should meet these needs equally, to all people, in the form of social and economic opportunities. I have identified these ideas based primarily on the data analyzed in Chapter Five, which investigated Teach First's mission.

To the first point, the idea that all people have the same fundamental needs, every piece of interview data sang with a spirit of not just egalitarianism, but sameness. Throughout all the data collected for this ethnography, there was not just the basic idea that people should be treated equally, but a more fundamental, classically liberal idea, that people actually *are* equal³². This distinction is a pivotal one for it implies that people should not just be treated fairly, but that “fairness” itself means enabling people to be the same. Consider the following quote from a Teach First staff member who, in explaining how Teach First has a mission of social justice, revealed a firm belief that if it were not for injustice, people would be equal:

Ok, social justice is around the desire to ensure that everybody, irrespective of background, irrespective of creed, irrespective of financial situation, irrespective of what school they attend, all those things, that they have the opportunity to become equal...and it is about opportunity, it's equality about opportunity. It's the opportunity to be equal, not equal opportunity. Opportunity to be equal...That, in terms of social justice, that's been missing from a number of different parts of our communities. And I think the difference between the haves and the have-nots over the last twenty-five thirty years has grown wider. And there are now ghettos where the social injustice is so evident, and I think it's ghettoization. I find it ghettoization. (Interview 2)

³² “Classically liberal,” in this context, refers to the 17th and 18th century philosophers who first advanced the political philosophy of liberalism (i.e. Locke, Rousseau, Hobbes, Smith, etc.) and the political leaders who seized upon their ideas (i.e. the American Founding Fathers, French Revolutionaries, etc.) The emancipation called for by liberal philosophy was limited to white (and, sometimes, land-owning) males, and also lacked any conceptualization of equality being anything other than sameness. This idea, while certainly worthy of critique, was historically revolutionary, despite its limited application.

This interview was hardly an outlier. Indeed, at the heart of all the data collected was the assumption that every student had the same fundamental needs, was due the same opportunities, and, once they had access to these opportunities, would follow along the same, “successful” path in society. Remember, for example, the PowerPoint for Regional Opening Ceremonies, which I described in Chapter Six. This told participants that they could change the lives of disadvantaged youth by giving them the same life opportunities available to their wealthier peers. Thus, in Teach First’s theory of justice, social good itself was treated as an unambiguous, uncritiqued construct to which every person should have equal access. Indeed, “the three A’s”, aspirations, achievement, and access, which represented the successful remediation of educational disadvantage were not differentiated, or problematized at all. Instead, they were treated as neutral, objective measures of a successful education. They, like the students who were due them, were the same. Teach First’s mission and the 2002 McKinsey report that was its foundation were defined around finding a way to break the negative correlation between poverty and achievement. As I have shown, Teach First was very committed to measuring outputs, not only achievement, but aspirations and access (through the Maximum Impact Project). This makes it clear that Teach First was fundamentally committed not just to equality of opportunity, but equality itself. According to this theory, then, equality was reached when achievement, access, and aspirations were uncorrelated with poverty.

Therefore, a fundamental idea that undergirded Teach First’s theory of justice was a view of diversity as deficit: if it were not for the historical inequity that had produced a broken social system, all people would be able to take the same steps forwards towards the same social goods. Thus, from this perspective, any significant deviation from the

paths to sameness represented a systemic failure. It is my argument here that Teach First conflated equity with equality to the extent that there was no meaningful difference between the terms: treating people equitably was creating social systems that promote equality (e.g. Cochran-Smith&Fries, 2010). This conflation is the first step in Teach First's theory of justice, and both propels and necessitates the rest of the theory as the logical completion for enabling sameness.

Combined with this idea of sameness was the idea that the state should treat its citizens fairly, the second idea at the base of Teach First's theory of justice. While "fairness" is a term with a various meanings, the idea that the government should be "fair" lies at the core of all democratic thinking and is hardly unique to Teach First. However, when this idea is combined with the previous discussion of sameness, it creates a policy mandate that defines fairness as the state's responsibility for providing its citizens with the requisite opportunities to be equal. In Teach First's theory of justice, depicted above, there would ideally have been two direct lines leading from this mandate to equal educational opportunity provided through both school and non-school based factors. These, in turn would lead to equal life opportunities, which in turn would lead to equality.

These lines, however, were interrupted by educational and social disadvantage, indicated by the green circles in the center of the diagram. Moreover, these systems have an interacting effect. As the Teach First literature summarized in Chapter Five was quick to point out, "teachers alone" can not solve the problem of educational disadvantage. Thus, as the arrow linking social disadvantage to educational disadvantage indicates, both school-based and non-school based factors were understood to have

created educational disadvantage. However, Teach First, as the data in Chapter Five also show, was very vague about what constitutes educational and social disadvantage. Thus, while Teach First was founded on the idea that a problem exists in schools, that this problem was evidenced by differing levels of achievement, access, and aspirations, and that the problem could be rectified by good teaching and systemic reform, it did not define either the school-based or social system problems which caused educational disadvantage. Accordingly, while both school based and system wide reform lay at the heart of Teach First's theory of justice, the organization was unclear as to what exactly it was that these reforms were supposed to do. This circular relationship is explored in more detail in the discussion of Teach First's theory of practice, later in this chapter.

Putting aside, for the moment, the circular and undefined nature of its solutions to educational disadvantage, Teach First's charge, as represented by the orange boxes, was to correct both of these systems through the two part-mission described in Chapter Five: creating "effective teachers" and "inspirational leaders in all fields." The purpose of these solutions was to set right what once went wrong and ensure that the state's social contract to promote equality amongst its citizenry was achieved through educational opportunity. According to this theory, from equal educational opportunity, enabled by other undefined equal social opportunity, citizens/students would be able to access equal life opportunities. Furthermore, since this entire theory of justice rests upon the idea that all people had the same fundamental needs, once equal life opportunities were provided, the end result would have been equality itself.

Indeed, this idea of justice as equality was ubiquitous in the data analyzed in Chapters Four and Five, not simply in what was present, but also in what was absent.

There were no interviews, observations, or artifacts that ever suggested that the ultimate goals of social justice were to reform society itself. Instead, the goals of justice were always defined in terms of addressing deficit: bringing to poor students those same opportunities available to affluent ones. The idea that poor students, a population which in England, as in the U.S., is disproportionately constituted of minority races, would learn to create and access new, more equitable forms of opportunity was entirely absent. Thus, Teach First's theory of justice appears to have been one of refining access and distribution to the status quo, and it did not attend to questions of hegemony written into the fabric of social order: "institutional discrimination in society and schools" and "school and community patterns of inequity" (Sleeter, 2009, p. 617).

Furthermore, Teach First's theory of justice appeared not to value political participation, drawing from an idea of fairness defined only in terms of social and economic mobility instead. There was no evidence that the organization's mission, policies, or practices considered justice to be the creation of a citizenry that are "active, involved participants in democracy" (Michelli & Kaiser, 2005, p. viii). However, the value attached to the social and economic empowerment of all students was ubiquitous in the way the staff of Teach First thought about justice. Thus, it seems that the staff of Teach First defined success and, by extension, justice, as the increased economic and social mobility of poor students within current social structures. While their commitment to social change was passionate, it was not radical, and it drew upon a theory of justice that was based solely on redistributing existing opportunity more fairly in order to produce a more equal citizenry.

Teach First's Theory of Justice in terms of Rawls (1971)

It is my argument that Teach First's theory of justice drew wholly from the idea of justice as distribution. Theories of distributive justice, as summarized in Chapter Two, are defined by three shared characteristics: egalitarianism, monism, and objectivity. Moreover, I argue that not only is Teach First's theory of justice based on the idea of justice as distribution, but that it specifically draws from a Rawlsian understanding of distributive justice. In the following section, I revisit Rawls' theory of justice in terms of Teach First for two reasons. First, this treatment further explains how Teach First's theory of justice is derived from liberal, egalitarian thought. Second, by describing Teach First's theory of justice in terms of its distributive properties, it is easier to make the link to the body of literature summarized in Chapter Two that critiques justice as distribution. These critiques are applied during the final section of this chapter using Ball's 1990 theoretical strategies of policy sociology.

Rawls' theory of justice was explained in more detail in Chapter Two, but it is useful to briefly revisit here before discussing it in terms of Teach First's theory of justice. In Rawls' theory of justice, and in contrast to simple utilitarianism (the greatest good for the greatest number), distributive justice takes the form of "justice as fairness": "justice" is the fairest process by which to distribute social resources. Rawls submits that the basis for designing any theory of justice, and, by extension, any political system that incorporates these principles, should be "the original position." From the original position, an impossibility in reality but the idealized point from which to try to think about issues of justice, one operates under a "veil of ignorance." Rawls contends that only under this veil will principles of justice that are the most fair be chosen, for only from this vantage point can it be ensured that "no one is advantaged or disadvantaged

by...the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances” (p. 12). From this position, Rawls generates two principles of justice as fairness. First, each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. And second, social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that a) they are to be of the greatest benefit to the least-advantaged members of society, and b) offices and positions are open to everyone under conditions of equality of opportunity (p. 303).

Teach First and the Original Position

The idea of formulating a theory of justice from the original position presupposes that there exists an ideal state from which “fair,” deontological principles of justice can be devised. It is thus the epitome of what Gewritz and Cribb (2002) identify as a monistic and objective theory of justice in that the original position is the same for all persons and would lead all persons to the same rational choices. Such an idea neatly dismisses all potential for coexisting and conflicting theories of representation, allowing for only one properly conceived theory of justice. Teach First operated from a similar epistemology. As I have identified it, one of the foundational assumptions of Teach First’s theory of justice was “all people have the same fundamental needs.” Although no Teach First staff member, nor piece of Teach First literature, discussed the organization in terms of political philosophy, its theory of social justice in teacher education operated from a similar world-view to the foundation for Rawls’ theory. In this paradigm there are certain desirable goals that are equally valuable to all people. As the theory progressed and these goals were defined in terms of educational opportunity, they retained the

qualities of objectiveness and sameness. The same neutral goals applied to all people, regardless of class, race, or ethnicity: aspirations, achievement, and access.

This theory therefore embraced a similarly monistic and objective theory of justice that operated from a position similar to that of Rawls' original position, and did not admit theories of justice as recognition. It was fully committed to what North (2006) identifies as “sameness,” paying little mind to “difference,” except in a negative sense in its imperfect variation from an idealized homogeneity in education and life opportunities.

Teach First and Rawls' Two Principles of Justice

From the original position, Rawls (1971) generated two principles of justice that, taken together, reflect the same political assumptions as Teach First's theory of justice. The first principle asserts that all citizens have the right to the same set of liberties, to the extent that they do not infringe upon those liberties of others. A hallmark of classic liberalism, this self-limiting conception of rights is, in its egalitarianism, certainly reflective of Teach First's commitment to equality. Yet because it is specifically referring to conceptions of liberty (i.e freedom of speech, freedom of expression, etc.) and not the equitable distribution of resources, it is tangential to Teach First's theory of justice in education reform. In other words, while it draws from a similar conception of justice as the one in Teach First's theory of justice, it focuses it on a different set of implications: what the rights a government must protect, rather than the services and opportunities it should provide.

Rawls' second principle of justice, however, resonates with the most fundamental assumptions of Teach First's theory of justice. Commonly known as “the difference principle,” it has two-parts, asserting that social inequalities should be structured in such

a way that they a) benefit the least advantaged persons in society and b) reflect equal opportunity. In other words, the difference principle calls for a true, justice-based meritocracy in which inequalities in reward ultimately serve the good of those less able to compete: those who can best provide for others are rewarded for their work accordingly. In practical terms, full professors at schools of education, all of whom have significant expertise and influence, are due a greater distribution of resources than graduate students still struggling to find their academic voice.

These principles mirror two fundamental aspects of Teach First's theory of justice: the redistribution of social resources to benefit those who are least advantaged and the pursuit of equal educational opportunity. Reflective of the first part of Rawls' second principle of justice as fairness, Teach First was committed to taking what it appreciates as valued resources, "exceptional graduates" who were highly sought after and could have had lucrative careers in other fields, and committing them to improve the educational outcomes of the most disadvantaged students. This is the essence of Rawls' "difference principle." As Rawls summarizes, "In justice as fairness men agree to share one another's fate" (p. 102). Such a statement accurately describes Teach First's theory as well. Specifically, in my visual depiction of it, this can be seen in the triangles which represent corrective systemic action on the part of its participants and Ambassadors to work towards its vision of justice.

The second part of Rawls' "difference principle" argues that not only should the more able work to the advantage of the less able, but that the ultimate goal of this work should be the creation of equal opportunity. Obviously, this resonates significantly with Teach First's theory of justice as it fundamentally rested upon the idea that the state

should provide equal life opportunities to all students and that equal educational opportunity enables this. In fact, without exception, the staff of Teach First defined educational disadvantage as the lack of equal educational opportunity, and its commitment to this idea was ubiquitous throughout all the data collected in this research.

Thus, it is my argument that Teach First's theory of justice was not only based on the idea of justice at distribution, but also very closely resembled the specific theory of distributive justice advanced by Rawls (1971). However, while Rawls's theory was advanced in great detail with considerable nuance, warrants, and perspective, Teach First's theory existed unexamined, subsumed within and throughout its materials, policies, and practices. The fact that it was invisible and implicit makes it no less real or important. Indeed, as the data in the previous chapter has shown, Teach First's mission and policies were remarkably aligned around the same fundamental ideas about social justice. Yet because it was so implicit and required this research to explicate it, linking it to the work of Rawls provides an opportunity to better critique by marshaling the conceptual research that challenges the assumptions of distributive justice. After exploring Teach First's sub-theories of practice and preparation, I return to critique this theory using Ball's (1990) political strategy of policy sociology which I use to focus the critiques of distributive justice summarized in Chapter Two.

Teach First and a Theory of Practice

The second of Cochran-Smith's (2010) sub-theories in her framework for a theory of teacher education for social justice is a "theory of practice." She defines the scope of this theory as one, "that characterizes the activity of teaching, the nature of teachers' work, and the knowledge, strategies and values that inform teachers' efforts for social

justice.” It is the fundamental argument of this section that Teach First did not really have a theory of practice. Or, to be more specific, Teach First had a theory of practice, but it was so conflated with its theory of justice that it had very little to distinguish it in its own right. In other words, there was little sense of what specific elements of teaching enabled the outcomes about which the organization cared so passionately. As is discussed in the normative realm section that follows later in this chapter, this is a significant problem for Teach First’s overall theory of teacher education for social justice, one which is exposed by the use of Cochran-Smith’s (2010) framework. However, it is a very important distinction that while I argue that Teach First lacked a theory of practice, this is not true of the training providers who, as described in Chapter Six, developed and implemented the teacher education curriculum at the Summer Institute. Indeed, the data show that the training providers did in fact have a theory of practice, but it is one about which Teach First seemed relatively uninformed.

Based on data analyzed primarily in Chapter Five, I propose the following visual depiction of Teach First’s theory of practice:

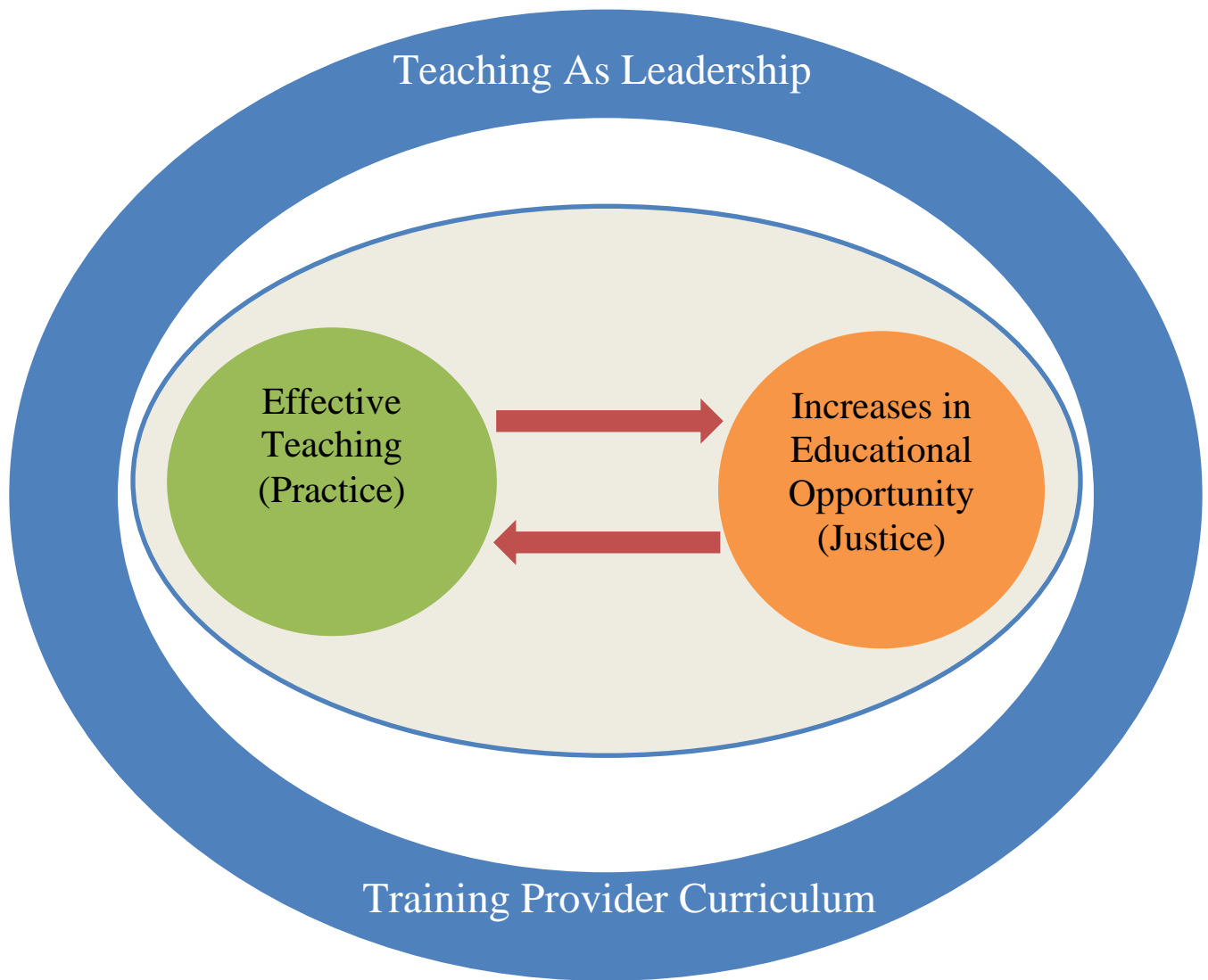


Figure 7.2 Teach First's Theory of Practice

In the figure above, my goal is to represent two closely related ideas. First, as indicated by the reflexive arrows between effective teaching and equal educational opportunity, my analysis suggests that there was a very circular, self-referential relationship between these two ideas in Teach First's theory of practice. In other words, effective teaching was defined as that which produces equal educational opportunity, and equal educational opportunity was achieved, at least in terms of school-based factors, by effective teaching. On its face, this argument is not circular. But in order for it to be meaningful in a way that meets the standards of a theory of practice, "effective teaching" must be defined in terms of the specific types of practices that bring about equal educational opportunity, rather than just equated with it outright. The data analyzed in Chapters Five and Six showed no appreciation by the staff of Teach First of any of the specific practices that the organization believed were necessary to effect its mission of justice.

To the contrary, it was a frequent point made by the Teach First staff whom I interviewed that the organization did *not* have a set idea about what constituted effective teaching practices. In fact, many staff even celebrated this fact as a strength of the program because it allowed the organization to take full advantage of the caliber and creativity of the participants they recruited. As a senior staff member put it,

I think we're recruiting the right people, that if we're training them right, that if we're supporting them right, and if we're sort of focusing them on the mission right, even though they may come up with different ideas, that (teaching) is really up to them. We'll see what works best. (Interview 3)

Thus, it seems that this absence of a theory of practice to link effective teaching with equal educational opportunity (which in turn is defined in terms of achievement,

aspirations, and access), was, to Teach First not a liability, but a strength that allowed the organization to capitalize on the skills of the participants it recruited.

However, despite this commonly held idea that Teach First did not and should not have a clear idea of what effective teaching looked like, there were two recurring images of “practice” in the data: “teaching as leadership” and the teaching skills included in the curriculum provided by partner universities. However, my analysis suggests that neither of these images of practice is linked to “the activity of teaching, the nature of teachers’ work, and the knowledge, strategies and values that inform teachers’ efforts for social justice” (Cochran-Smith, 2010). While both of these images nominally fulfill the idea of “practice,” they are each, for their own reasons, insufficiently developed to make a substantive link between “effective teaching” and “equal educational opportunity.” Accordingly, I have represented them on the periphery of the figure, where they do not inform the link between effective teaching and equal educational opportunity.

As summarized in Chapter Six, “teaching as leadership” was a frequently discussed idea, but was only once linked to any teaching practices, the morning meeting which instructed participants in coaching themselves to achieving goals. Indeed, as argued in Chapter Six, teaching as leadership largely functioned as a criterion by which to select participants rather than as an approach to teaching imbued with effective practices. It is important to note, however, that teaching as leadership has been developed considerably since this research took place. Currently, for both Teach First and TFA, it is considerably more detailed and much more of a driving force in terms of both teacher preparation and what constitutes effective teaching practice.³³ However, when

³³ Much of this direction has come via the research of Steven Farr (2010), a TFA alumnus and currently Chief Knowledge Officer with TFA, who recently published “Teaching as Leadership: The Highly Effective

this data was collected, teaching as leadership, for Teach First, existed more as an idea than as a guiding set of principles, and it therefore did not provide a link between effective teaching and equal educational opportunity.

The curriculum provided by Teach First's partner universities also failed to provide this link. However, in this case, it was not that the Professional Studies curriculum lacked well-developed images of effective teaching practices. Indeed, the curriculum presented very clear ideas about the types of teaching practices that participants should use in their classroom. Teach First, however, played a very small role in the design and implementation of this curriculum. As the data in Chapter Six show, the staff of Teach First had relatively little interest and/or knowledge of what this curriculum was, other than to critique it for the degree to which it did not emphasize the organization's mission. This critique, while important to Teach First's theory of teacher preparation discussed below, was not itself an image of teaching practice. Thus, while there certainly was a theory of practice embedded in the curriculum of the Summer Institute, it is a theory that belonged to some combination of the partner universities who developed the curriculum and the governmental agencies (the TDA and OFSTED) that developed the regulations for Initial Teacher Training and Qualified to Teach Status that guided the scope and sequence of the curriculum.

Furthermore, the staff of Teach First consistently mentioned that aside from its truncated nature, they were unaware of any differences between the teacher education curriculum provided by partner universities and the PGCE or GTP. And, since it was this

Teacher's Guide to Closing the Achievement Gap." The teaching practices in this book, which include practices such as backwards mapping, use of student achievement data, and relationship building with children's families and "influencers," have been largely adopted into TFA's curriculum and are beginning to make their way into Teach First's teacher education curriculum as well.

curriculum that was primarily responsible for educating participants in teaching practices, this means that either Teach First did not have a theory of teaching practice represented in this curriculum, or that its theory of practice was the same as that of the other prominent employment-based teacher training programs in England. As discussed in Chapter Six, Teach First's hands-off approach to the teacher education curriculum, and its implicit devaluation of the importance of the Professional Studies curriculum relative to knowledge and belief in the mission, suggest that it was most likely the former.

Thus, Teach First's theory of practice was circularly defined by the outputs of its theory of justice, lacking conceptions of the nature of teaching and the teaching strategies which lead to equal educational opportunity. Teaching as leadership and the Professional Studies curriculum each failed to expand this relationship. Teaching as leadership failed to make this link because it never informed teaching practices, and the Professional Studies curriculum failed to do so because it was designed and implemented by partner universities without significant value attached to it by the staff of Teach First.

Teach First and a Theory of Teacher Preparation

The third of Cochran-Smith's (2010) sub-theories in her framework for a theory of teacher education for social justice is a "theory of teacher preparation." She defines the scope of this theory as one that "focuses on how teachers learn to teach for justice, the structures that support their learning over time, and the outcomes that are appropriate for preparation programs with social justice goals" (p. 2). In the following section, I attempt to uncover this theory using the data analyzed in Chapter Six.

Teach First's own teacher education curriculum and its relationship with the curriculum provided by its partner universities suggested a theory of teacher preparation

that was based largely on building a unified cohort with a deep and passionate understanding of the organization’s mission. Furthermore, when combined with the theory of practice discussed above, this theory also appeared to rest upon the assumption that the leadership skills that enable effective teachers existed in “exceptional graduates” a priori to teacher education and could not be acquired through teacher education. Thus, my analysis leads me to suggest Figure 6.1, a visual representation of Teach First’s theory of teacher preparation:

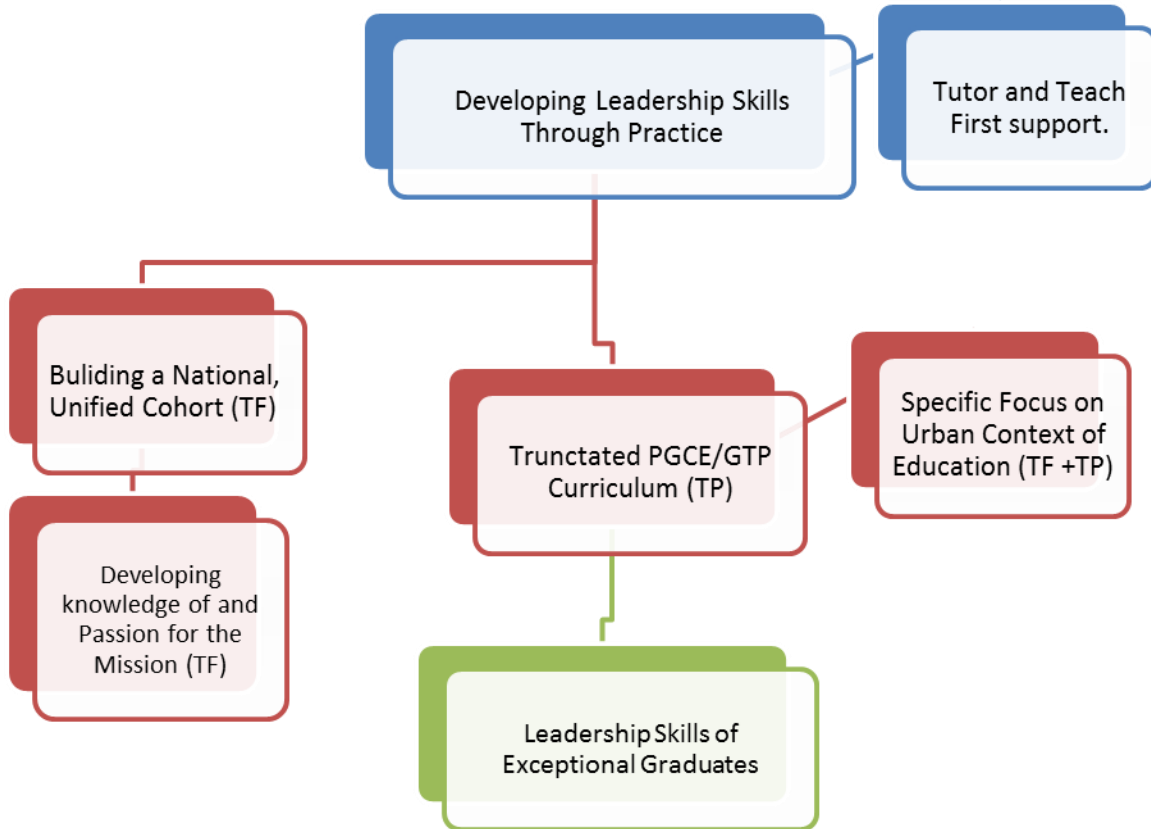


Figure 7.3 Teach First’s Theory of Teacher Preparation

In the above figure, green boxes represent what participants possess before the Summer Institute, red boxes represent what occurs at the Summer Institute, and blue boxes represent what occurs after the Summer Institute. (TF) refers to Teach First and (TP) to the training providers. As the figure shows, underlying Teach First's entire theory of preparation was the idea that this model of teacher education was not appropriate for all teacher candidates. In fact, as argued in Chapter Five, Teach First went to great lengths to suggest that what enabled both the truncated teacher education, as well as the placement in urban schools, were the leadership skills that its participants brought to Teach First, a priori to any actual teacher education.

In terms of the Summer Institute itself, both interview and artifact analysis suggested that the core curriculum for participants had very little that separated it from a condensed a form of the GTP or PGCE. Indeed, per the ITT regulations of the TTA, Teach First's training providers had to work to help participants achieve QTS via codified standards and competencies. Interviews suggested that what little there was that did distinguish this curriculum from the PGCE and GTP was the specific focus on urban education. This focus was provided by both the staff of the training providers, as well as by Teach First itself via morning meetings, workshops, and the experiences participants had during Contrasting Schools Week and Placement Schools Week.

Running parallel to this urban-focused PGCE/GTP curriculum were Teach First's efforts to build its participants' knowledge of and passion for the organization's mission. Then, according to this theory, from this shared sense of mission, a national, unified cohort of teachers would develop. Participants were to view themselves not as individual teachers, but as members of a movement to eliminate educational disadvantage. As

summarized in Chapter 6, this was, to many Teach First staff members, the most important part of the Summer Institute. Indeed, it was staff members' primary critique of Professional Studies that there was not enough of a focus on the mission, and it was the curricular area to which Teach First devoted the majority of its ceremonies and morning meetings. To this point, Teach First went to great lengths to be transparent about why and how the organization functions in order to encourage all participants to feel ownership of it. Moreover, as multiple senior staff stated in interviews, this shared sense of mission not only enabled effective teaching in the classroom, but also the continued efforts to reform the system once participants become Ambassadors.

Finally, this theory rests upon the idea that effective teaching is defined by good leadership, and good leadership skills are gained through teaching. According to this theory of teacher preparation, while all teachers gain leadership skills from classroom experience, only a select few already possess the leadership skills to make a difference in two years, while at the same continuing to improve these skills through the experience of teaching. This theory of preparation also relies on the further development of leadership skills at the Foundations of Leadership training that participants attend after their first year of teaching, the work done by training providers through classroom visits, as well as six training days grouped by subject area throughout the year.

Ultimately though, this theory was very counterintuitive in that it was a theory of teacher preparation that implicitly devalued teacher preparation. In fact, its entire justification rests on the idea that a certain type of exceptional teacher candidate requires very little teacher preparation. Moreover, while Teach First certainly values the training provided by its partner universities, interviews with staff suggest that they placed a

significantly higher value on the parallel, Teach First-led trainings that focused on fluency in and adherence to the mission. The data analyzed in this chapter suggest that Teach First played a very small role in shaping the Professional and Subject Studies curriculum and that the only changes they would like to have made to it are related to the way it referenced the mission. On one hand, this could suggest that the staff of Teach First were relatively pleased with the rest of the curriculum, that it effectively expressed the organization's theory of practice. However, the data analyzed in Chapter Five suggested that Teach First's theory of practice is geared around the idea of teaching as leadership, a theory that is not found in the curriculum of the training providers. Thus, it seems much more accurate to say that while Teach First appreciated the importance of teacher preparation focused around classroom practice, its theory of teacher preparation was driven more by the idea that exceptional graduates, who already had good leadership skills, needed to be mobilized and unified into a national cohort.

Combining the Three Sub-Theories

Taken together these three sub-theories of justice, practice, and preparation form Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice depicted in figure 7.4.

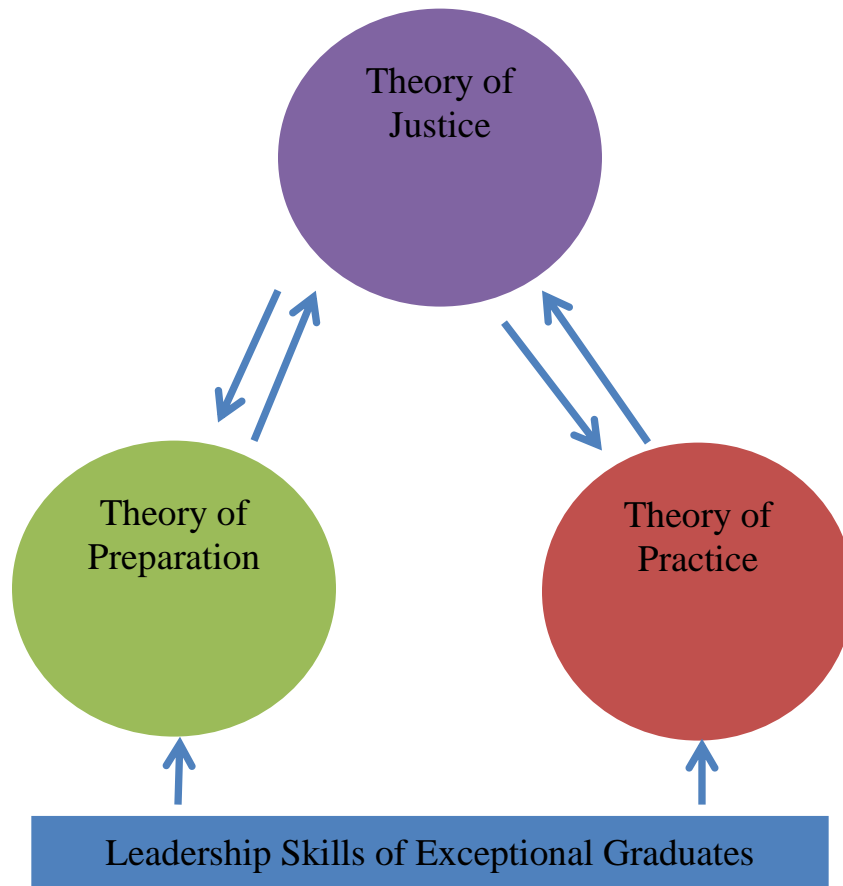


Figure 7.4 Teacher First's Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice

As this figure shows, this over-arching theory of teacher education for social justice was characterized by a profound commitment to justice as distribution which, in turn, circularly defined the theories of practice and preparation designed to effect it. While Cochran-Smith (2010) argued that each of these sub-theories would be imbued with the ideas of the others, in the case of Teach First's theory of teacher education for social

justice, the ideas in these theories do not just complement one another, but circularly define themselves.

Significantly, this circularity existed only between the theories of justice and preparation and justice and practice. Accordingly, as represented in the above figure, there was little connection between a theory of practice and a theory of preparation. I have previously discussed the conflation of justice and practice, but a similar process occurred with Teach First's theory of preparation. Like the theory of practice, it too lacked clear images of what effective teachers should do in the classroom. In their place was the theory of justice. Instead of placing value in preparing teachers for practice, Teach First believed in preparing its teachers only with a sense of justice, the knowledge and belief in the organization's mission. Thus, in the figure above, I have shown that the theories of teacher preparation and practice did not communicate with one another, except through the theory of justice by which they were each already defined.

However, it is important to note that while I identify this as circular, self-referential logic, I believe that it is also internally consistent. This circularity comes only from the application of Cochran-Smith's (2010) framework. The analysis that comes from this framework opens up important ways to critique Teach First's theory of social justice for what it lacks, but it does not mean that this theory was itself a logical fallacy. Rather, because of the assumptions that Teach First made about its participants and the nature of teaching as leadership, it was removed from the burden of having distinct sub-theories of practice and preparation. Indeed, the quality of these participants was the lynchpin of this entire theory because it diminished the need for distinct theories of teacher preparation and practice and allowed them to both be defined by a theory of

justice. According to both of these theories, these graduates required less instruction in teaching practices because of their ability to develop these skills themselves. Thus, Teach First's faith in its own rigorous and focused recruitment process was a crucial assumption in this entire theory³⁴. Because these participants were carefully assessed for outstanding capacity in the eight core competencies of humility, respect and empathy, interaction, knowledge, leadership, planning and organizing, problem solving, resilience and self-evaluation, a theory of teacher education for social justice which would not be appropriate for other teacher candidates was made logical for Teach First. From Teach First's perspective, guided by the assumptions of teaching as leadership and their belief in the validity of the selection process, the participants needed only to be bonded together into a national cohort and given the opportunity to make a difference.

Critiquing Teach First's Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice

To further critique Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice as I have identified it in this chapter, I employ Ball's (1990) three theoretical strategies of policy sociology. This represents the final stage of data analysis, as depicted in figure 3.1. Ball's extensive empirical research on British public education, particularly around neoliberal reforms involving school choice, corporatization, and marketization (e.g. 1994, 2000, 2007) has attempted to problematize education policy in terms of its "effects on social justice and what it means to be educated" (2006b, p. 277). He has done this by analyzing education policy through three theoretical strategies, ideological (what/whose beliefs are validated), political (how is social order constructed), and economic (how is

³⁴ This research makes no argument as to whether Teach First's recruitment and selection process produces participants who possess these eight core competencies. The data required to make such an argument was not gathered. Rather, the focus remains on what this belief represents in terms of a theory of teacher education for social justice, not on how well it was acted upon.

education funded and who gains from it) (1990, p. 10). Ball's research, and his use of these strategies, is primarily characterized by examining the effects of hegemonic education policy on marginalized populations. My use of his conceptual work embraces the same critical and emancipatory goals for research and education, but turns them not on those affected by policy, but by the initiators of it. While Ball was clear about the questions each of these strategies should ask, he was not prescriptive about the critical frameworks through which they should be answered.

Thus, in the following section, I take these three theoretical strategies of Ball (1990) and combine them with the three sets of critiques I generated in Chapter Two. These critiques focused on three distinct, yet overlapping fields: distributive justice, teacher education, and neoliberalism. It is both appropriate and useful to link each of these three sets of critiques to one of his three theoretical strategies. Doing so allows me to marshal Ball's over-arching critical framework of policy sociology to organize what become mid-level critiques of diverse fields which all touch upon an important aspect of Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice. First, I combine his economic theoretical strategy, which asks how education is funded and who benefits from it, with critiques of neoliberalism. Second, I combine his political strategy, which asks how social order is constructed, with critiques of distributive justice. Finally, I combine his ideological strategy, which asks what/whose beliefs are validated by policy, with critical approaches to teacher education. The below figure summarizes this analytical strategy,

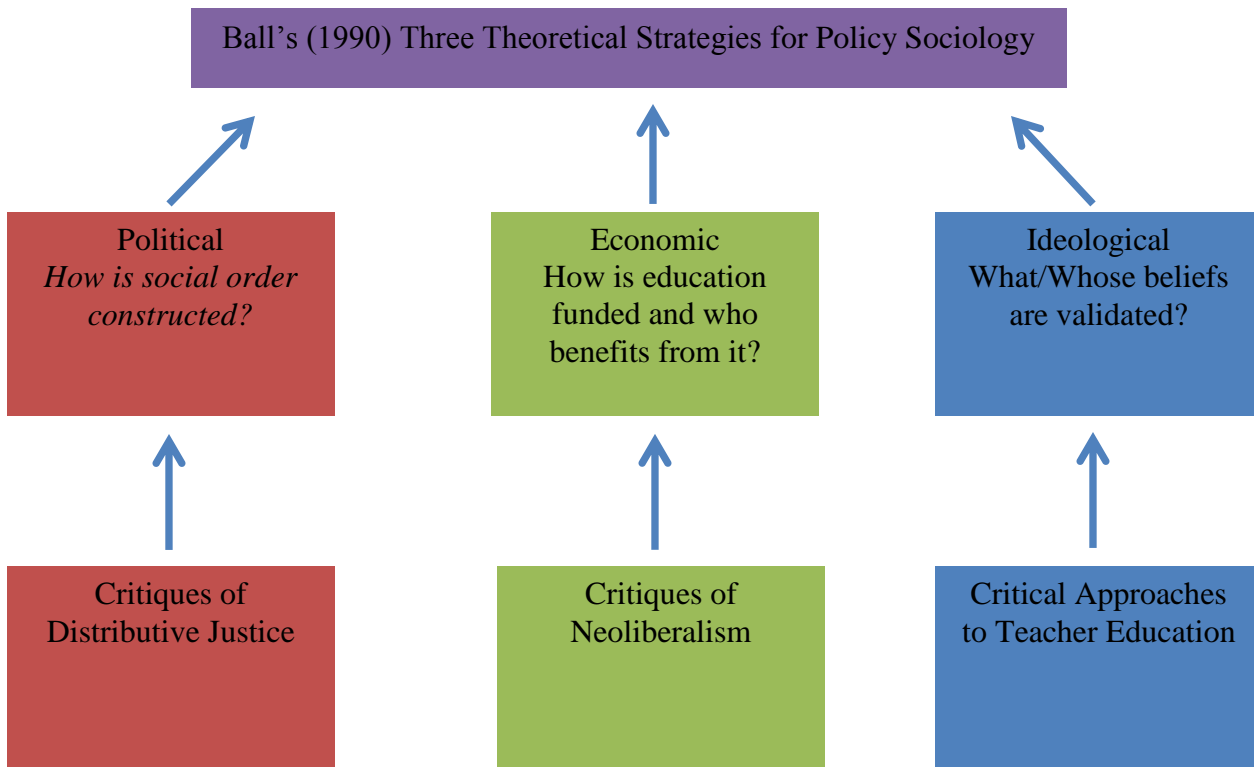


Figure 7.5 Critiquing Teach First's Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice via Ball (1990)

Ideological Critiques of Teach First's Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice

Using Ball's theoretical strategy of investigating the ideological effects of education policy, I employ the critical approaches to teacher education that I identified in the review of the literature in Chapter Two. These approaches probe the beliefs that teacher education programs advance, either implicitly or explicitly, and are thus an appropriate means by which to answer the policy sociology question of "Whose/What beliefs are validated?" in Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice.

I begin with a brief summary of these critiques identified in Chapter 2. Critical approaches to teacher education have questioned whose knowledge is represented in curriculum (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2004; King, 2008) and contend that social justice requires recognizing diverse epistemologies and integrating them into programs of teacher education (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 2009; Sleeter, 2009). Doing so means that teacher education programs must critique whose knowledge is represented in public education curricula, recognizing diverse epistemologies, and valuing the knowledge and experiences of diverse populations. Moreover it submits that teacher education programs must have curricular and programmatic structures that both develop the ability of teachers to implement these dispositions through classroom practice. Furthermore, it challenges the field of teacher education with working not towards equality, but equity. This means that teacher education must recognize its capacity and responsibility to play a role in economically and politically empowering marginalized populations. .

As discussed in the section on Teach First's theory of practice, there were very few teaching skills of any kind that Teach First prized. I argued that this was endemic of a circular logic in which Teach First defined effective teachers as those who increased outcomes, and those who increased outcomes were identified as effective teachers. This type of thinking, while not contradictory, is also not particularly useful because it fails to explore the valuable skills that teachers need to learn in order to advance student learning. The staff of Teach First are not the first to think in such a way. In her AERA presidential address, Cochran-Smith (2005b), critiques this idea as submitted by Hanushek (2002), who explained that, "I use a simple definition of teacher quality: good

teachers are ones who get large gains in student achievement for their classes; bad teachers are just the opposite” (p. 3),

His definition of teacher quality...is simple and circular: Teacher quality is test score gains, and, conversely, test score gains are evidence of teacher quality (see Figure 3). In definitions like this one, it is clear that “teacher quality” is assumed to reflect an amorphous “something,” but that something is captured only in test scores. At the end of the day, then, teacher quality remains a black box—we do not know what effective teachers do, know, believe, or build on, nor do we know the conditions that make this possible. (Cochran-Smith, 2005b, p. 6-7)

Thus, the specific problem with Teach First’s circular definition of effective teachers was that it did not inform the best practices of teacher education. Indeed, it challenged the entire idea of teacher education because it suggested that only the what (outcomes) and who (teachers) matter, not the how and why. This thinking would be troubling for any organization involved in education, but was particularly ill-founded for Teach First since it was, fundamentally, a teacher education organization. Trying to understand, communicate, and instill best teaching practices should have been a core element of the mission, yet it is one which was entirely absent. Teach First’s justification for this approach was its faith in the leadership abilities of its participants. However, even if this assumption is granted, it would still seem useful to study the best practices of these teachers. Doing so would have allowed the knowledge base of “teaching as leadership” to develop and become a meaningful resource for each new cohort of Teach First participants. Given this lack of commitment to understanding and communicating teaching practice of any kind, it goes without saying that Teach First’s teacher education

curriculum was not imbued with teaching practices which recognize and value diversity within the classroom.

However, more fundamentally, the data suggest that Teach First was an organization that was committed to equality, not equity. In Teach First's theory of justice, because people were viewed as fundamentally the same, they should, in an ideal social system, also be equal. Such an assumption denies the entire idea that diversity is something to be valued, rather than treated as a problem to be solved. The evidence for this argument is best seen through what was absent in the organization than what was present. I found no evidence that Teach First placed any value on any school student knowledge or experience except when it prevented or enabled their progress towards "the three A's." In all cases, Teach First staff members identified diversity in a way that was fundamentally deficit-based. Specifically, the diversity that students brought to the classroom was only useful to the extent that it enabled access to the standards. Furthermore, students' knowledge, values, and experiences were viewed as a problem if they presented barriers to these same standards. At no point was justice discussed in terms of implicitly valuing what students bring to the classroom, teaching students about the hegemonic bias contained within the state curriculum and corresponding high-stakes tests, or the moral imperative to co-construct knowledge with students. Indeed, because of Teach First's commitment to sameness it implicitly denied the fundamental principles of multicultural teacher education summarized in Chapter Two. The teacher education curriculum provided by Teach First promoted a standard, objective way of thinking about teaching and learning that failed to attend to the cultural knowledge of diverse

populations and makes no attempt to undo the “overwhelming presence of whiteness” (Sleeter, 2001b) implicit in public education.

Given the degree to which the staff of Teach First valued the idea of individuals being empowered with “choice,” I expect that the staff members of Teach First would passionately disagree with the idea that the organization’s teacher education curriculum valued “sameness.” Indeed, the idea that justice is the enabling of individual “choice” seemed deeply embedded within the organizational culture and trainings at the Summer Institute: all students should be empowered to choose their own lives, emancipated by the high quality education that participants provide. However, my analysis suggests that that these “choices” were only those choices available within a currently inequitable system-- the choices that currently belong to more privileged students. Furthermore, even the justice related issues around which there appeared to be the most disagreement, were still remarkably similar in terms of their belief in the fundamental sameness of all students. For example, while there was significant disagreement around the definition of educational opportunity (achievement versus aspirations versus access), it was always accepted that the problem was that some students had this opportunity while others did not. In this sense, despite the rhetoric of choice, Teach First’s theory of teacher preparation was fundamentally based around equality: the idea that all students should have the same choices and effective teachers are those who help provide students with them.

This contention appears to be a paradox, but it is not. It is only a paradox if one assumes that there are a finite number of “choices” available and those that currently exist are equitable rather than being culturally privileged. While the staff of Teach First

passionately believed in some form of systemic reform, they did not seem to suggest that current choices available to students needed to be made more equitable. To return to the previous example of the definition of equal educational opportunity (achievement, aspirations, and access) there was never the suggestion that the social structure that enabled these three outcomes (GCSES, A-Levels, sixth forms, higher education admissions, etc.) were themselves part of the problem of educational disadvantage. Indeed, there was never any mention of institutional racism or classism, no argument for the need to critique and analyze the social order for the invisible biases that create educational disadvantage, no argument that justice means increasing the ability of marginalized populations to participate in democracy. Rather, justice, to Teach First, was empowering students to navigate society, not empowering them to change it. And, by extension, systemic reform meant improving this navigation, not reforming the inequitable structures which created the need for Teach First in the first place.

At the same time though, this passionate commitment to teaching poor students to navigate the current social system also suggests that the staff of Teach First cared a great deal about economically empowering marginalized populations. Indeed, at the heart of the theory of justice described earlier was the idea that all people should have the same social and economic mobility. Educational opportunity, the ultimate justice-goal embedded in the mission, was defined in terms of “the three A’s.” These outputs, achievement, aspirations, and access, were those that would be indicative of poor students enjoying economic freedom and choice through higher test scores, university access, and belief in their own social mobility. These messages were ubiquitous in the Teach First produced curriculum at the Summer Institute, and it was always made clear to

participants that they were agents of social change with a mission to promote equal life opportunities. This suggests that Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice, despite implicitly reifying fundamental social inequities by its lack of critique, also promotes an ideology that is fundamentally justice driven and egalitarian.

However, the policies of Teach First failed to promote democratic participation and social critique as an outcome for the students with whom its teachers work, and in a very similar way, it also discouraged these outcomes within the organization itself. The sub-theory of teacher preparation identified earlier in this chapter relied heavily upon the idea that every participant would fully buy into the mission. Indeed, this buy-in was pursued fervently; not only was lack of mission instruction the single critique of Professional Studies, but multiple staff members spoke glowingly about getting participants to become "indoctrinated" and to "drink the Kool-Aid." Thus, while Teach First actively encouraged participants to be knowledgeable and involved in the organization's practices (i.e. the morning meeting which discussed finances, future plans, etc.) it did so with the caveat that a fundamental, shared belief in the mission is a non-negotiable, essential part of being a participant in Teach First. The one exception to this ideology is the Staff Participant Liaison Committee (SPLIC). However, while SPLIC served to represent the interest of the participants to the staff of Teach First, the data analyzed suggests that it did not deal with fundamental questions about what the mission was or what it should have meant in terms of teaching practice and preparation.

One on hand, this was certainly an area of Teach First's practice that is worthy of critique. It suggested an ideology of conformity and acquiescence rather than critique and agency. Yet at the same time, as participants and staff pointed out, Teach First has

been very successful precisely *because* it produced a cadre of like-thinking teachers and Ambassadors who share the same vision for education reform. Other data bear this point out, given the consistency with which staff and participants described the mission of Teach First and the lack of outlying opinions on fundamental questions about the ends towards which Teach First was working. This shared commitment is something to be prized and even valued in teacher education. While the idea of supplanting critique with conformity is not desirable, mobilizing teachers towards common goals is.

Using Ball's (1990) ideological strategy to interpret the data, it is clear that the beliefs that were valued and validated by Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice were counter-intuitive and problematic. The strengths of this ideology were that Teach First mobilized a cohesive group of teachers towards a shared commitment to economically empowering poor students. However, the flaws of this ideology are that, despite the second-half of the mission, this theory fundamentally supported the status quo, valued equality over equity, suggested that diversity was deficit, and submitted that inequalities are inherently unjust. It is an ideology that in trying to hone the status quo to perfection, rather than fundamentally challenging the values inherent in it, fell well short of the "revolutionary pedagogy" (McLaren&Farhmandpur, 2001) that teacher education for social justice should be.

Economic Critique of Teach First's Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice

Using Ball's (1990) theoretical strategy of investigating the economic characteristics of education policy, I employ the critiques of neoliberalism that I identified in the review of the literature in Chapter Two. These critiques probe the policy sociology questions of "How is education paid for and who benefits from it?" in Teach

First's theory of teacher education for social justice. These critiques are important to discuss in terms of Teach First because, as discussed in Chapters One and Four, Teach First was an organization that was characterized by a number of neoliberal ideas including its objective understanding of education, its relationships with the corporate worlds and support of private sector involvement in public education, its faith in quantitative metrics to assess outcomes, and its implicit support of deregulated teacher education. Furthermore, as neoliberalism is fundamentally an economic theory of resource distribution as well as a frequent source of critique in policy sociology, particularly by Ball (e.g. 2003, 2006A, 2006B), it make sense to use these critiques as a means to focus the questions asked by this theoretical strategy. It is my argument that while Teach First is not impervious to these critiques, it withstands them better than most neoliberal education policies because of its explicit, authentic commitment to empowering marginalized populations through the creation of a social movement to address educational disadvantage.

To begin, it is useful to summarize the critiques of neoliberalism identified in Chapter Two. These critiques hold that the democratic ideal is fundamentally communal, not an individualistic arena in which actors compete against one another for private gain. Neoliberal policies redefine citizenship in terms of self-interest, as opposed to public need, and discourage dialogue and cooperation by pitting people against one another in competition (e.g. Apple, 1998, Giroux, 2002; Chomsky, 2002). Furthermore neoliberal education policies advocate for an explicitly political education, one in which students are taught to critically engage with governance rather than act as passive consumers/competitors who merely respond to policy. Moreover, critics of

neoliberalism also argue that it sustains and promotes capitalism's exploitive class conflict by reproducing power relations through the accumulation of wealth.

Accordingly, neoliberal education policies ensure that class and race disparities will reproduce themselves because the privileged are better equipped to compete over scarce resources: the best teachers and the best schools, who in turn have a vested interest in competing for the best students (e.g. Apple, 2001, McLaren, 2001, Olssen and Peters, 2006).

I have previously characterized Teach First as a neoliberal organization. While I think this is a fair and apt characterization, there are elements of the organization's theory of teacher education for social justice which conflicted with the basic tenets of neoliberalism. A notable one of these was its fundamentally communal nature. Indeed, as argued in Chapter Six, Teach First valued a shared commitment to addressing educational disadvantage almost to a fault, raising its organizational importance above even the participants' acquisition of teaching skills. Furthermore, the ultimate goal of the organization was to build a nationwide movement to improve educational opportunity by having Ambassadors work in all sectors to effect it. Such an idea, while underdefined and worthy of critique itself (see the political critique which concludes this chapter), is fundamentally based upon the communal idea that, as Rawls puts it, "justice means that men agree to share one another's fate" (1971, pg. 102).

Such an idea directly conflicts with neoliberal thought. Neoliberalism valorizes individual competition and is fundamentally opposed to collective action and that disrupts market principles. Indeed, this is precisely why Weiner (2007) identifies the weakening of teachers unions as one of the most prominent and powerful current

neoliberal trends in American education reform. Teach First, however, was nothing if not communal. In fact, given its lack of theorizing in terms of teaching practice and preparation, it was almost nothing *but* communal.

Emilie Reagan and I (Lahann&Reagan, in press) have argued that TFA is a “progressive neoliberal” organization because of the way it embraces many aspects of neoliberalism (i.e. corporate partnerships, deregulation, quantitative analysis of educational outcomes), but violates the market principles upon which neoliberalism is based. The same was true for Teach First. The idea of building a social movement to address educational disadvantage not only disrupted market principles by asking people to bond together towards a shared goal, but it changed the role of the individual from a consumer/competitor to a citizen who accepted responsibility for the well-being of others. Furthermore, Teach First, as discussed earlier, was committed to improving the economic mobility of poor students. This idea, discussed previously using Ball’s (1990) ideological strategy was ubiquitous in Teach First’s publications, trainings, and was mentioned in nearly every interview with staff members. In that it was a defining goal of the organization to disrupt power relations by enabling marginalized populations to navigate social systems, it answers this critique well. Accordingly, I submit that Teach First should be considered a progressive neoliberal organization that was based on a belief in collective action rather than individual competition.

However, Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice implicitly reified the current neoliberal system of inequity and hegemony by failing to challenge it. The social change the organization hoped to effect was centered around improving educational opportunity in terms of achievement, aspirations, and access in the current

neoliberal context. Achievement meant progress toward state standards assessed through high stakes exams. Access referred to being able to navigate and compete in social systems to matriculate into higher education or gain employment. And “aspirations” were defined as students’ belief in their own agency to realize “access” and “achievement.” Thus, Teach First’s mission was, essentially, to prepare students to succeed in a neoliberal, capitalist society. By failing to challenge the assumptions of this society itself, Teach First implicitly supported the competitive economic structure which created winners and losers in the first place. Addressing educational disadvantage should mean more than providing equal access to the status quo; it should necessitate preparing teachers to lead their students to be democratically empowered and critically aware of the hegemonic power of neoliberal policy.

Teach First ratified neoliberalism, and thus reproduced the current system of power, in more ways than just its mission. Its very existence was an argument of neoliberalism in that it was a product of the deregulated teacher education reforms in England during the last twenty years. Moreover, like privately sponsored academies, many of which have close relationships with Teach First, Teach First celebrated its business relationship and had an expressed commitment to finding new and better ways to merge the private and public spheres in education. Indeed, even its founding document, the 2002 McKinsey report, was representative of this idea. This report, which essentially proposed Teach First, was the product of London First and Business in the Community, two business organizations, seeking to become more active in education reform. Furthermore, the second half of the organization’s mission, “to address educational disadvantage through inspirational leaders in all fields” called for

Ambassadors to continue to work for education reform through positions in the private sector, including both business and social entrepreneurship, which further contributes to what Hatcher (2006) identifies as the “reagenting” of the state’s responsibility to educate its citizens.

This reagenting of public education not only contributes to a competitive, economic system of education in which actors work against each other for the best quantitative results, but it also comingles the corporate agenda with the public good. As recent economic history has taught us, those two are hardly the same thing. As countless scholars have argued, business logic is ill-suited for public education because of the ways in which it orientates the curriculum around capitalistic values. Business involvement in education, as Larry Cuban (2007) puts it, threatens “(1) the narrowing of broad civic purposes of schooling to mere preparation of workers, (2) the growth of a one-best-school model that has the singular goal of steering every child to college, and (3) the belief that only what can be counted is worthwhile in judging success” (p.13). Indeed, as this ethnographic research has shown, each of these three visions for education was deeply vested in Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice.

Thus, as a progressive neoliberal organization, Teach First had a complicated relationship with neoliberalism. Its entire mission was dedicated to undoing the effects of neoliberalism, while its continued existence and success helped to entrench and advance the economic structures that created them. While it may have passionately strove to provide equal educational opportunity to students, its reliance on neoliberal thought and method meant that it ultimately would reify capitalism’s normative, competitive playing field in education. On such a playing field, students, teachers, and schools are forced to

strive against each other, rather than work with one another. Unless this economic system of education is addressed through deep systemic reform, inequity is inherent and immutable. Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice not only failed to challenge neoliberalism, but actually served to strengthen it even further by its implicit argument that educational disadvantage can be addressed without altering the current economic structure of public education.

Political/Justice Critique of Teach First's Theory of Teacher Education for Social Justice

Using Ball's (1990) theoretical strategy of investigating the political characteristics of education policy, I employ the critiques of distributive justice that I identified in the review of the literature in Chapter Two. Ultimately, any normative idea of how social order should be constructed draws upon some idea of political justice. To suggest that people should organize themselves in any particular way is to build upon assumptions concerning liberty, property, rights, and privileges. In turn, these assumptions define a theory of political justice. Thus, in order to understand how Teach First's theory of teacher education suggests the construction of social order per Ball's political theoretical strategy, it is imperative to understand the implications of Teach First's theory of justice as distribution.

Critiques of distributive justice have taken issue with its monistic and objective qualities which suggest that there can ever be a single unifying theory of justice that can explain the fair way in which social order should be constructed. In contrast, scholars who advocate for pluralistic theories of justice argue that the entire idea of fairness is itself subjective. In other words, this critique points out that what might be fair to one set

of people is not necessarily fair to another. Subjective theories of justice as recognition demand an understanding of justice as pluralistic. At the point that a theory of justice recognizes its own subjective validity, it implicitly licenses the validity of other, similarly subjective theories. Any theory of justice as recognition that does not also recognize the validity of other subjective theories of justice is internally inconsistent and contradictory. However, objective theories of justice, while open to the charges of this critique, are not flawed on their own terms because their epistemology demands a singular world view.

Furthermore, critics of distributive justice charge that its objective and monistic qualities reify dominant culture and silences theories of justice as recognition which would define justice in terms of the values and experiences of marginalized populations (e.g. Boyles et al, 2009). By defining educational opportunity in terms of access to dominant culture, distributive justice necessarily engages in cultural imperialism (Howe, 2007). This repression, in turn, directly conflicts with the emancipatory goals that should be imbricated in social justice. Instead of challenging the values of the status quo, distributive justice serves to entrench them even further by suggesting that inequity is defined solely by unequal access to the resources of the status quo.

Identifying Teach First's theory as both objective and distributive, which was done earlier in this chapter, was a relatively straightforward task. It was almost self-evident that Teach First defined justice in terms of objective, neutral, equally valuable resources and opportunity, not the politics of diversity and recognition. Accordingly, because objective theories of justice are inherently monistic, it would seem that Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice, like other theories of justice as distribution inherently rejects the validity of any other theories of justice.

The data bear this point out. While the staff of Teach First continually referred to the need to refine and hone the way they defined ideas such as educational disadvantage, equal opportunity, and achievement, no one ever described these ideas as being subjective or relative to their own experiences in education reform. In other words, while the staff recognized that the ideas themselves required more thought and development, no one ever suggested that anyone might reasonably propose other worthy goals for public education and teacher education. Rather, these ideas, while still not fully developed, were always considered as a universal ideal. As just one example, consider the way in which this staff member discusses the importance of the Teach First mission,

And addressing educational disadvantage to me means that there's a problem in Britain that says if you want to know how successful a child is going to do in school, you just need to know how wealthy their parents are. So if you know how wealthy someone's parents are, with a very high statistical significance you can tell how their test results are going to be. And I always tell them, you know, and I firmly believe, I don't know if people really realize just how wrong that is. And that if we live in a society where everyone should have equal opportunities, and we think that people, you know, should have the ability to succeed, and I think we all would agree that education is an important, you know, enabling factor for that success. But then if we're saying that actually it doesn't work because whether you succeed or not in education just depends on how wealthy your parents are, then everything just falls apart at that stage. (Interview 3)

While this staff member regularly used the first person, it seems equally clear that he/she believed these beliefs were objectively correct. In other words, it was not just his/her

opinion that everyone should “have equal opportunities;” from his/her perspective this normative statement was objectively true. Put simply, anyone who might have disagreed would have been wrong.

This sense of being not only righteous, but objectively right, permeates the data collected on Teach First. Terms like “core values,” “The Three A’s,” even “educational disadvantage,” all represented attempts to translate the goals of education into practice, but were never presented in such a way that it suggested that Teach First believed it was operating from a subjective set of values. Accordingly, Teach First seemed to dismiss a priori the idea that there might be another valid theory of justice that could drive education policy.

Thus, in addition to attempting to redistribute resources and opportunity more justly, Teach First was also promoting a subjective, normalized understanding of justice as neutral and objective, implicitly silencing other theories of social justice in the process. Teach First never exalted the dominant culture reflected in its theory of justice by the national standards through which equal educational opportunity was defined. Nor did it ever explicitly suggest that knowledge of dominant culture is more valuable or important than that of less politically powerful cultures. Rather, the data suggest that Teach First simply never questioned the culture it was implicitly promoting by its sense of justice. Indeed, as has been summarized earlier in this chapter, it appears that Teach First treated the most fundamental aspects of how society is organized as fixed, neutral, and permanent, rather than socially constructed and, in a heterogeneous population, inherently imperialistic.

Thus, Ball's political strategy of questioning how social order is constructed, when focused with critiques of distributive justice, shows that Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice implicitly excluded other theories of social justice and reified the bourgeois knowledge and values represented in the neoliberal status quo. Because this theory was entirely distributive, without any value ascribed to the assumptions that drive theories of justice as recognition, it ultimately served to reinforce the cultural hegemony of the current social order. Instead of taking issue with questions of voice and dominance, this distributive theory of justice concerned itself only with access and navigation. Yet, as discussed in Chapter Two, some outcomes valued by theories of distributive justice are not mutually exclusive with outcome of theories of justice as recognition. As is discussed in this dissertation's final section, the ultimate goal of Teach First should be to incorporate goals that fundamentally challenge the status quo into its current theory of social justice which only led students to succeed within it.

Chapter Eight: Implications for Practice, Policy, and Research

In this final chapter, I consider the implications of this study for practice, policy, and research. First, I reflect on what this research suggests about practice in teacher education programs, including Teach First in particular and teacher education programs with social justice goals in general. Next, I turn to implications for teacher education policy in the United States and in England. Finally, I consider implications for research related to teacher education for social justice.

Implications for Practice: Teach First

The three critiques—neoliberalism, critical teacher education, and distributive justice—that I employed via Ball’s (1990) policy sociology approach, reveal two major short-comings in Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice. However each is correctable in such a way that would strengthen the program without sacrificing the core mission to which the staff of Teach First was so passionately committed. First, Teach First should consider the teaching actions of “effective teachers,” which would constitute a theory of practice, and then make these an explicit, valued part of its teacher education curriculum. Second, Teach First should define and expand what it means by “systemic change” to include radical challenges to the neoliberal socio-political structures that enabled the educational disadvantage that its mission addressed.

As this research showed, Teach First’s theory of practice was circularly defined in terms of the justice that it hoped to effect: “effective teachers” were those who produced equal educational opportunity. Teach First itself had little interest in the teaching practices that promoted educational opportunity, and, by extension, little interest in the teaching practices that participants learned at the Summer Institute. However, the high

marks that the organization has received from OFSTED (2007), exemplary reports from head teachers, and overwhelming demand on the part of schools for more Teach First participants suggest that by and large its teachers are doing a high quality of work that is valued both by external observers and practitioners in the field.

This also suggests that Teach First's training providers are doing their jobs very well, too. In fact, since these universities have such a defining role in the design and implementation of Teach First's teacher education curriculum, it would seem that the logical first step would be for Teach First to take a more active interest in the high quality of work that its partner universities are doing. Rather than just critiquing the work of the training providers in terms simply of the degree to which the Teach First mission is or is not present in trainings, Teach First leaders should seek to understand what it is about these trainings, or the support participants receive throughout the year, that are helping lead to classroom success. The data analyzed in Chapters Five and Six suggest that the idea of "teaching as leadership" has, to some extent, led Teach First to implicitly devalue theories of practice and preparation because of the weight it ascribes to the leadership skills of the participants it recruits. However, positive reports from head teachers and OFSTED (2008) suggest that there are still effective practices which participants are using, practices promoted by Teach First's training providers, even if they are enabled because of the leadership skills of the teachers. These practices should be researched, explicated, and shared.

As shown by my critique of Teach First's theory of practice in Chapter Seven, there is real value to understanding what effective practice is, to cracking the black box of teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2007). These practices are more than just technical

transactions that produce desired outcomes. As Cochran-Smith (2010) points out, a theory of practice is deeply imbricated within a theory of justice, as well. For the staff of Teach First to ignore and at times even celebrate this lack of knowledge of practice, as many interviewees did, is to ignore a tremendous opportunity not only to improve the organization's own teacher education curriculum, but also to share more broadly the justice-producing practices in which all teachers should engage. As discussed below, the "Three A's" should remain an important piece of Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice, and the staff of Teach First should explore those practices its teachers are using that are proving the most valuable in promoting educational opportunity, as they have defined it. Moreover, even "teaching as leadership" suggests that there are discreet teaching skills informed by leadership skills across all fields. Like the effective practices promoted by the training providers, these leadership/teaching skills should be conceptualized and studied.

If Teach First is, as I posit, a progressive neoliberal organization that is committed to community and country over individual gain, then it must seek to understand what it is that its teachers are doing well. Doing so would allow the organization to contribute to a meaningful, public conversation about quality teaching in urban schools, one which values both the inputs and outputs of effective teaching and promotes better teacher education practices throughout all teacher preparation programs.

Second, the staff of Teach First should specify and broaden their understanding of what they mean by "systemic change" effected by "inspirational leaders in all fields." As my critiques showed, Teach First is working both for and against the justice needs of marginalized populations. On one hand, it is dedicated to improving their access to the

status quo. On the other hand, however, the organization inherently reinforces the hegemonic neoliberal systems that produce educational disadvantage while doing very little to promote the idea of diversity as anything other than deficit. Teach First's Ambassadors are charged with the task of systemic change, but, as my analyses show, this systemic change appears to be understood in the context of redistributing the resources of the status quo, not fundamentally challenging what has value in the first place. None of my data suggest that the staff of Teach First have ever recognized that the status quo itself is hegemonic in the white, bourgeois knowledge and skills that it values. No training or curriculum instructed participants to do anything other than improve student access to the cultural resources that currently have value to social and economic mobility. At no point has Teach First called on its participants and Ambassadors to engage in the "revolutionary pedagogy" (McLaren & Farhmandpur, 2001) that real equity would require.

One of the most important points to make here is that Teach First could do all of this without changing its essential mission and without diminishing the importance of the Three A's. That is, Teach First could strive to provide not equal educational opportunity, but equitable educational opportunity, and it should explicitly charge its Ambassadors with this responsibility. There are currently Ambassadors who are challenging and critiquing education policy for the ways in which it normalizes the curriculum with neoliberal and bourgeois values (e.g., Audsley & Lahann, 2009; McInerney, 2010; Townsend, 2010), but their efforts are not celebrated or endorsed by Teach First itself, at least not on the level of Ambassadors who have assumed positions of school leadership or social entrepreneurship. These Ambassadors, who are challenging the system by

interrogating public policy through individual blogs and short online pieces, are functioning as critical public intellectuals, but their efforts exist outside of Teach First, rather than as a logical extension of the organization's mission. Teach First could embrace these more revolutionary points of view and highlight them in the same way they do the contributions from other Ambassadors. Doing so would require a radical recasting of the Teach First mission, but in ways which expand its theory of justice rather than conflict with it.

To this point, Boyles et al (2009) point out that distributive justice and social justice overlap in important ways—that distributive justice is an important, if not essential aspect of any theory of social justice. In the case of Teach First this means that it can retain much of its distributive theory of justice while still working to make society more equitable. Teaching students to navigate a privileged, unjust system is in no way mutually exclusive with working to fix that system. Combining distributive justice and justice as recognition in this way is not self-defeating, hypocritical, or contradictory. It would seem very possible for Teach First to have the long-term goal of truly reforming society while at the same time working to enable students to succeed in the status quo. Just because Teach First was born out of neoliberal policies does not mean that it has to continue to serve their advancement. Indeed, my characterization of it as a “progressive neoliberal” organization suggests that it has already moved beyond the callous, competitive, and individualistic neoliberal policies that ushered in its founding. However, Teach First will not be in a position to embark on such a mission unless it redefines itself in terms of equity, not equality. Doing so would mean that Teach First would need to

confront the ways in which it promotes a neoliberal social order, accepting that a meritocracy founded on unfair premises is no meritocracy at all.

There is no data to suggest that Teach First is considering such a fundamental shift in its mission, but I believe that such a change could be made without sacrificing those elements of the mission that define the organization. Indeed, the data show that Teach First overflows with a passionate, egalitarian spirit that desperately seeks to improve the lives of marginalized populations. This energy and commitment must be focused in more critical ways if educational disadvantage is to be truly addressed.

Implications for Practice: Teacher Education for Social Justice

In addition to the implications of this study for how Teach First could radically change its theory of teacher education for social justice, there are also two important implications more generally for teacher education programs with social justice goals. First, like Teach First, all teacher educators must recognize that school-based factors alone will not solve the problem of educational disadvantage and that many of their teacher candidates will not stay in the classroom for most of their professional lives. Accordingly, they should actively prepare teacher candidates to effect meaningful systemic change outside the classroom. Second, Teach First recognizes and capitalizes on the communal spirit that is inherent in both teaching and education. Teacher educators should work to ensure that this sense of shared mission exists in all teacher education programs that work to effect social justice.

To begin, Teach First's mission recognizes that broad, systemic reform is necessary to address educational disadvantage, and this mission is clearly communicated to participants. While I have argued that "systemic reform" is both under-defined and too

narrowly conceptualized, the fact remains that Teach First explicitly values the work of Ambassadors outside of education that contribute to educational opportunity. This idea is an important one that should be included in the curriculum of all teacher education programs with a goal of social justice because of the high likelihood that teacher candidates will end up in professions outside of education.

Demographic data overwhelmingly illustrate that each successive generation, from Gen X, to Gen Y, to the Millennials, has an increased expectation that they will change careers multiple times over the course of their lives (Martin&Tulgan, 2001). This trend certainly extends into education, where in both the United States and England, less than half of all graduates of teaching programs are still teaching after five years (NEA, 2006; House of Commons, 2004). And as Ingersol's (2002) highly cited study has shown, it is even more difficult to retain teachers in urban schools. Susan Moore Johnson and her colleagues (e.g., Peske et al, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Baldacci et al, 2006) at The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers have contributed a significant body of research to this issue, noting that the nature of the teaching profession is changing and that the current generation of teachers approach their work "tentatively" and "conditionally" (2001). They conclude that retaining the current generation of teachers will be significantly more difficult than retaining teachers from generations past. This is not just due to changes in the work environment; current twenty-somethings are simply much more likely to switch careers multiple times before reaching their final profession. Indeed, recent sociological and psychological research (e.g. Arnett, 2004) has posited that there a new stage of adolescence termed "emerging adulthood" that has developed over the last thirty years. According to this theory, over the last few

generations young people are not reaching the major milestones of adulthood, including career choice, until much later in life.

On one hand, Teach First contributes to this “problem” by the very nature of its model and its expectation that Ambassadors will work in fields other than education. Yet, meaningful education reform requires addressing more than just school-based factors; it requires reform efforts targeted outside of education into the basic social systems that support a democracy: housing, healthcare, poverty, etc. Furthermore, since teachers are leaving the classroom for both professional and generational reasons, it seems prudent, and in the best interests of social justice, to instruct teacher candidates in the work that they can do to advance equity and equality in education from outside the profession. Teach First should continue to develop, refine, and expand what it means by “systemic change,” but it should be applauded for preparing its participants to effect it, regardless of what field they end up working in. Schools of education with a mission of social justice should accept a similar responsibility and expand their curriculum to preparing students to make a difference in education, even if they do not work in it.

Second, Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice recognized and capitalized on the inherently communal nature of education. In an editorial in the *Journal of Teacher Education*, titled “Sometimes It’s *Not* about the Money,” Cochran Smith (2003) took issue with those reformists that she identified as “marketeters”—policy wonks who prize competition and believe that neoliberal reforms that reward and punish the individual make for ideal education policy. Instead of individual gain, she suggested that many people entered into and stayed in teaching for reasons other than money: learning, caring, and saving the world. All three of these aspects of teaching are

inherently communal; they require interaction with another person, or people, in order to have meaning. In other words, their primary rewards are the extent to which they have an impact on others. The data analyzed in Chapter Six show that Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice recognized this (although, as Chapter Four summarizes, it did not do so originally), and that the organization worked very hard to use it as a powerful curricular tool. Not only were participants constantly reminded that they were doing this work for someone else (underprivileged students), but they were also regularly reminded that they were doing it *together*, as part of a continuing movement of teachers and Ambassadors who were equally dedicated to addressing educational disadvantage.

Both of these ideas were ubiquitous in the data collected on Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice, and they should have resonance with all teacher education programs with a goal of social justice. While participants frequently lamented the fact that Teach First promoted the mission with such fervor, it was also abundantly clear that they identified themselves not just as teachers, but as Teach First teachers. Indeed, as many participants pointed out, it was part of what appealed to them about Teach First in the first place, a defining aspect that set it apart from other teacher preparation programs such as the GTP and the PGCE. This group membership represented a shared commitment to learning, caring, and saving the world, and it served to focus every teacher education experience that they had at the Summer Institute.

In a piece we called "Critiquing the Critiques," Cochran-Smith et al (2009) describe the ideological attacks under which teacher education for social justice currently finds itself. To combat these critiques, we suggested that teacher educators for social

justice must be prepared to explicate and defend the goals of social justice inherent in teaching and public education. Our rebuttal to attacks on the inherent mission of social justice in public education was,

Teaching is rightfully defined as helping to alleviate the inequities that curtail the freedom of all participants in our society to gain a quality education. This goal is integral to the very idea of learning to teach. In short, something like the sentiments regarding the preservation of human life in modern day versions of the Hippocratic Oath to which prospective doctors in nearly all medical schools ascribe, teaching for social justice is not an option, but a crucial and fundamental part of teaching. (pp. 636-7)

The data on Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice suggest that Teach First has a similar appreciation for the importance of its participants understanding not only what they are doing, but *why*. This is a facet of Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice which can, and should, be emulated by all teacher preparation programs that strive towards socially just ends. Indeed, the best advance and defense of teacher education for social justice will always be a cadre of public intellectuals who understand that teaching is not just a profession, but a social act in which women and men "agree to share each other's fate" (Rawls, 1971, p. 102). Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice too narrowly defined this fate in terms of the equal distribution of resources within the neoliberal status quo, but it should be commended for its efforts to build, train, and unite a movement of likeminded teachers who share the same fundamental commitment to making the world more fair. These participants and Ambassadors are explicitly prepared to defend and advance that commitment as the

appropriate goal of all public education, and that will always be in the best interests of social justice, no matter how it is defined.

Implications for Teacher Education Policy

As was argued in Chapter Four, there are two aspects of the Teach First model that distinguished it from the UK's other common approaches to teacher education, the PGCE and the GTP programs: its mission and its focus on "exceptional graduates." These two aspects of the model, and the degree to which they have enabled a culture of urgency, pride, and dedication, have significant implications for teacher education policy makers, both in the U.K. and America.

First, my study of Teach First suggests that policy makers should accept that "teacher education" and "social justice" are not two terms that may sometimes be linked with one another by progressive educators and academics, but two ideas whose meanings are fully imbricated in one another. As we argued in our defense of critiques on teacher education for social justice, teacher education lacks meaning without social justice. And, conversely, social justice can not be effected without teacher education (Cochran-Smith et al, 2009). I have argued that Teach First's theory of teacher education for social justice lacks nuance and depth, that it entrenches the status quo while seeking to change it. However, despite these flaws, this ethnography of Teach First also suggests that teacher education can be publically communicated as a necessary step in a social movement to eliminate educational disadvantage. In fact, as the circular theory of practice critiqued in this research shows, Teach First was defined more by its mission than it was any particular theory of teaching or teacher education. That this mission would resonate so profoundly with recent graduates and stakeholders in public education, higher education,

business, and government suggests that teacher education in England can be successfully framed in terms of social justice. In other words, the discourse of teacher education can be about social justice, not about the global economy or neoconservative values (Cochran-Smith and Fries, 2010).

This is no small point. The British neoliberal teacher education reforms of the last twenty years have been driven by narratives of efficiency and accountability, not social justice or systemic change. That Teach First has been so successful at using this particular mission to recruit “exceptional graduates” into its ranks is proof that there exist vast numbers of young people who are looking to teaching as a way to enter a social movement that redresses social inequities. Indeed, as the data in Chapter Four summarized, it appears that even Teach First itself was surprised by this widespread sentiment.

In July, 2010, the new Conservative government in the UK announced that it would fund Teach First an additional £150 million, despite the fact that the government was in a period of austerity with large budget cuts throughout most social programs. Rather than just continuing to fund Teach First, policy makers should recognize that Teach First stumbled upon a very significant revelation: young people want to make a difference. All teacher education programs should be framed in these terms, not just Teach First. The TDA should recognize that Teach First is not just a teacher training program (in truth, it was barely that), but an organization that succeeds because it provides a way for those graduates who feel a sense of civic duty to contribute to a greater good. Accordingly, the government should make explicit the inherently political nature of education and teacher education and call upon all teacher education programs to

commit themselves to addressing educational disadvantage. Teach First's mission to improve the education of marginalized populations should not be a niche market in the landscape of teacher education; it should be a commonly held standard towards which all teachers and teacher educators must work.

Second, Teach First has marketed itself not just in terms of the fight against educational disadvantage, but as a prestigious way to work for social good. Indeed, as Milner (2010) points out, this element of prestige has been an important factor in TFA's success as well. Both examples suggest that local, state and federal policy makers must continue to find ways to elevate the profession of teaching to a more prestigious level than the one at which it currently resides. The data collected during this research, as well as my own personal experience as a corps member in TFA and employee of Teach First, suggest that Teach First participants would not have considered joining the program were it not for the fact that it continued to rank near the top of the Times' (2009) list of top graduate employers. Accordingly, as in the U.S. (e.g., Ingersoll&Smith, 2003), it is clear that UK policy-makers must work to raise the prestige of teaching if they are to be able to attract and retain effective teachers (Hoyle, 2001). More fundamentally, although it is not a focus of this study, teaching should not require pathways that are baldly elitist in order to be considered a prestigious profession. This research does not suggest solutions to this problem of teaching prestige, but it clearly shows that a large number of potential teachers are never considering the profession because they do not appreciate it as prestigious or meaningful unless they enter it through TFA or Teach First. Policy makers must find ways to capitalize on this interest and find ways to invest the profession with prestige, regardless of the teacher education pathway that provided entry to it.

More fundamentally, Teach First was an example of a progressive partnership between non-profits, higher education, business, and government. As argued throughout this research, these partnerships are very worthy of critique, particularly in the ways in which they normalize justice and advance culturally loaded visions of educational opportunity. However, despite these critiques, my analysis of this data shows that Teach First has successfully linked stakeholders from multiple public and private spheres to advance its mission of eliminating educational disadvantage.

In this regard, Teach First is an example of what Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) identify as “The Fourth Way of Educational Change.” Briefly, the first three ways of educational reform were state support of professional autonomy (First Way), marketized reforms and standardization (Second Way), and a failed “Third Way” (a hybrid of state intervention and free-market policies, see Hill, 2001a) that attempted to combine the best of the first two. Using examples of education reform from Canada, Finland, the United States, and the United Kingdom, Hargreaves and Shirley argue that there exists an emerging “Fourth Way” of educational reform. This “Fourth Way” takes the middle ground of Third Way reforms, but does so with transparency, collaboration, inclusive visions, and public engagement. In the Fourth Way of educational change, neoliberal reforms which bridge the public and private spheres are healed through partnerships that move beyond the callous accountability of high-stakes data and into empowering positive relationships around shared visions for public education. Teach First, for all of its faults, represents a step in that direction by the ways in which it took advantage of neoliberal teacher education policy to forge partnerships that enabled its mission of social justice.

Indeed, this is collaborative, communal quality is precisely why I identified it as a progressive neoliberal organization in Chapter Seven.

Policymakers at all levels should continue to seek out education reform that is emblematic of Fourth Way philosophy. As Hargreaves and Shirley put it, education reform should bring together “government policy, professional involvement, and public engagement around an inspiring social and educational vision of prosperity, opportunity, and creativity” (p. 71). While I submit that Teach First’s “vision” was insufficiently developed and culturally normalizing, I also believe that in its singular commitment to equality it serves as an example of education reform driven by democratic values. Policy makers must seek to refine these visions to admit theories of justice as recognition, but a crucial first step in this Fourth Way, one that Teach First exemplifies, is the unequivocal commitment to what Hargreaves and Shirley call a “service and sacrifice in a commonwealth of hope” (p. vii). Optimism and altruism are inherent in teaching, and policy should work to ensure that they are inherent in teacher education as well.

Implication for Research on Teacher Education for Social Justice

This study has two primary implications for research on teacher education for social justice. First, research is needed that explicates the ways in which justice is conceptualized and pursued in teacher education programs that claim a mission of social justice. Second, teacher education researchers must recognize that distributive justice, while worthy of critique, is still a form of social justice, and the people who pursue it are no less committed to working for social good than those who operate from a theory of justice as recognition.

As summarized in Chapter Two, and argued by Cochran-Smith (2010), the term “social justice” is under-conceptualized and defined in teacher education. Zeichner (2004) argues that nearly every teacher education program makes some claim on social justice. Furthermore, as Boyles et al (2010) argue, even many conservative thinkers like E.H. Hirsch (2002) have recently claimed the term to describe their work. I believe that in many cases these claims are appropriate because they *are* based on a theory of justice, even though the theory, a normalizing, objective, and monistic distributive one, is distasteful to most progressive educators. This conflation of “distributive justice” and “social justice” represents a real threat to educators and teacher educators who appreciate social justice to draw more upon equity, than equality. If social justice becomes synonymous with distributive justice, then it makes it all the more difficult for educators with more equitable understandings of social justice to make their case because that intellectual territory has already been claimed and reframed. Consider, for example, the way in which No Child Left Behind successfully appropriated the language of civil rights and equality and applied it to policies which were competitive and divisive—policies which betrayed the entire ethos of the civil rights movement whose legacy it claimed (Crawford, 2007).

Teach First, as noted in Chapter Five, does not describe itself in terms of social justice. However, in recent years, TFA has begun to use the term in its literature. It is entirely possible that in the coming years, Teach First may choose to do so as well. If it does, and assuming that Teach First’s theory of teacher education for social justice does not change dramatically in the meantime, this will continue to exacerbate the problem that Boyles et al (2010) described in which social justice and distributive justice meld

into one another in the public eye. When this occurs, the pluralistic goals of justice as recognition are marginalized and, perhaps more importantly, the discourse required to advocate for them becomes so obfuscated that even distinguishing distributive justice as just one form of social justice can become challenging.

For these reasons, this research clearly implies that researchers of teacher education for social justice must always define the theory of justice from which they are working. This should be an essential, prerequisite step of any empirical or conceptual work in the field. Just as a literature review serves to locate research within a broader context, so does a clear, reasoned explanation of what is meant by “social justice” and how it relates to other conceptions of justice used by policy makers and researchers. In the same way that a literature review is a mandatory aspect of all research, so should be this explication of the term “social justice.” When this does not happen, teachers, researchers, and policy-makers, are left to navigate through a sea of competing ideas, all of which go by the same name, with only inductive clues to differentiate them from one another. This research, using Cochran-Smith’s (2010) framework, serves as an example of how conceptions of justice can be uncovered through critical ethnography, but further research is needed. The community of researchers who investigate teacher education for social justice must strive for transparency and clarity. Teacher education for social justice is under attack, and these attacks are all the more difficult to repel when theoretical positions are elusive and goals are ambiguous.

Finally, this study also implies that researchers of teacher education for social justice must appreciate that alternative-route teacher education programs like TFA and Teach First are not antithetical to social justice. In fact, as this research has shown, not

only did leaders of Teach First consciously work for towards socially just goals, but their entire theory of education reform drew upon a fairly intricate theory of justice. This theory of justice was certainly not without its shortcomings, but it informed a theory of teacher education for social justice all the same. And, as has also been argued, aspects of distributive justice are not necessarily antithetical to the goals of justice as recognition. Accordingly, teacher education programs that draw upon theories of distributive justice must be admitted to conversations about teacher education for social justice, rather than being treated as an aberration or an anomaly. Behind theories of both justice as distribution and justice as recognition is a commitment to making society more fair, to empowering marginalized populations. This common commitment must be recognized by researchers of teacher education for social justice.

If programs like Teach First are not recognized for their commitment to social justice, then both honest dialogue and the pursuit of social justice suffer. Given the overwhelming evidence presented in this study showing that Teach First was committed to social justice, it would be disingenuous to treat the program as a form of teacher education that falls outside the scope of teacher education for social justice. Perhaps more importantly, it would be a strategic mistake in the pursuit of social justice to treat Teach First, or TFA for that matter, as anything else. As has been summarized in this research, Teach First has become a remarkably successful program enjoying support in the U.K. from all three major political parties, the media, and, unlike TFA, even teachers unions and higher education. As such, it represents an outstanding opportunity to advance the conversation about teacher education for social justice in the discourse of policy-makers and the public. If researchers were to treat Teach First as an instantiation

of teacher education for social justice, then they could capitalize on the program's popularity to make the absolutely vital claim that *all* teacher education should pursue social justice. If Teach First were studied in these terms, rather than solely in terms of its neoliberal characteristics or gains in achievement (as the forthcoming study will do), then the cause of teacher education for social justice would take a major step forward. As this study has shown, Teach First represented a major commitment to social justice on the part of the staff and over a thousand Ambassadors and participants. This commitment must be refined and critiqued, but, all the same, it is a commitment to social good through teaching and teacher education, and it is an opportunity to advance the cause of social justice.

If Teach First, and programs like it, were to be studied in these terms by researchers of teacher education for social justice then it would also enable a more nuanced understanding of what social justice can and should mean in teacher education. Precisely because Teach First derived from such a distributive theory of justice means that it exists as an example par excellence of what distributive justice means in teacher education. Such an example would not only be useful in driving forward the conversation about theories of justice as distribution and recognition in teacher education, but in finding the common ideas about justice that can unite all educators who believe that the fundamental purpose of public education is to erase historical inequities. In an era of teacher education dominated by discourses of the market and the global knowledge economy (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2010), it can only serve the cause of social justice to recognize this common commitment to fairness and social good when given the chance. To do anything less, for researchers to study Teach First in terms other than social justice,

would be to further divide a movement that, unfortunately, needs all the help that it can get.

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Appendix A: Consent to Participate in Interview Research (Teach First Participants)

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to investigate Teach First's theory of social justice in education and the effects it has on the training participants receive at the 2008 Summer Institute. This study attempts to understand how a business-based model of teacher education conceives of social justice and how this conception shapes the ways in which it prepares teachers to work with disadvantaged students. You have been randomly chosen out all TF participants for participation in this research study.

Procedures:

I would like to interview two times in order to elicit your thoughts and insights about the mission of Teach First, the design and implementation of the Summer Institute, and the effects it has had on your conceptions of teaching and the purpose of state education. The first interview will be within the first week of the Summer Institute, and the second will be at the end of the Summer Institute. The interview will last less than one hour and will take place during the Summer Institute at a time and place that is most convenient for you. I would like to audiotape the interview, so that I may later transcribe it.

Risks:

To the best of my knowledge, the role you will be taking in this study has no more risk of harm to you than what you would experience in everyday life as professional. You may decline to answer any specific questions and/or end the interview at any time.

Benefits:

You will not receive any direct benefit from being in this research study; however, you may find the results interesting on both a personal and professional level.

Costs:

There are no costs involved in this study.

Compensation:

You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Withdrawal from the study:

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice.

Confidentiality:

1. Your real name will not be used at any point during information collection or in the written report. Instead, you and any other person and place names, with the exceptions of "Teach First", "London", "Manchester," "The Midlands", and

- “Canterbury”, will be given pseudonyms that will be used in all verbal and written records and reports.
2. You will be given a copy of all sections of the research which deal with information you provided in your interviews. You will be given the option to remove any part which you feel is either inaccurately quoted, or which you fear could lead to your identification and/or any negative personal or professional consequence.
 3. This informed consent document, with your name on it, will be stored in a locked room in the researcher's accommodations, and no one but one but him will have access to the cabinet.
 4. Audio tapes will not be used for any purpose other than for generating transcriptions for this study. They will be destroyed immediately after being transcribed. A digital record of pseudonyms will be kept as a password-protected file on a computer which is itself protected by a separate password. No one but the researcher will have access to it.

Questions:

Questions about the research and your rights as a participant should be directed to Randall Lahann at lahann@bc.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, please call Boston College Office of Human Research Participant Protection at 617-552-4778.

Copy of Consent Form:

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Certification

I have read and I believe I understand this document. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and they have been answered satisfactorily. I have been given a copy of this document for my personal records.

_____ **I am consenting to participate in this study.**

_____ **I agree to have my interviews and observations audio taped**

Signatures

Printed Name of Research

Participant _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix B: Consent to Participate in Research (Teach First Staff and Members of Partner Universities)

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to investigate Teach First's theory of social justice in education and the effects it has on the training participants receive at the 2008 Summer Institute. This study attempts to understand how a business-based model of teacher education conceives of social justice and how this conception shapes the ways in which it prepares teachers to work with disadvantaged students. You have been chosen for participation in this research study because of your knowledge of TF's mission, policies, and practices.

Procedures:

I would like to interview you one time in order to elicit your thoughts and insights about the mission of Teach First, and the design and implementation of the Summer Institute. The interview will last less than one hour and will take place during the Summer Institute at a time and place that is most convenient for you. I would like to audiotape the interview, so that I may later transcribe it.

Risks:

To the best of my knowledge, the role you will be taking in this study has no more risk of harm to you than what you would experience in everyday life as professional. You may decline to answer any specific questions and/or end the interview at any time.

Benefits:

You will not receive any direct benefit from being in this research study; however, you may find the results interesting on both a personal and professional level.

Costs:

There are no costs involved in this study.

Compensation:

You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Withdrawal from the study:

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice.

Confidentiality:

Your real name will not be used at any point during information collection or in the written report. Instead, you and any other person and place names, with the exceptions of

“Teach First”, “London”, “Manchester,” “The Midlands”, and “Canterbury”, will be given pseudonyms that will be used in all verbal and written records and reports.

You will be given a copy of all sections of the research which deal with information you provided in your interview. You will be given the option to remove any part which you feel is either inaccurately quoted, or which you fear could lead to your identification and/or any negative personal or professional consequence.

This informed consent document, with your name on it, will be stored in a locked room in the researcher's accommodations, and no one but one but him will have access to the cabinet.

Audio tapes will not be used for any purpose other than for generating transcriptions for this study. They will be destroyed immediately after being transcribed. A digital record of pseudonyms will be kept as a password-protected file on a computer which is itself protected by a separate password. No one but the researcher will have access to it.

Questions:

Questions about the research and your rights as a participant should be directed to Randall Lahann at lahann@bc.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, please call Boston College Office of Human Research Participant Protection at 617-552-4778.

Copy of Consent Form:

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Certification

I have read and I believe I understand this document. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and they have been answered satisfactorily. I have been given a copy of this document for my personal records.

_____ **I am consenting to participate in this study.**

_____ **I agree to have my interviews and observations audio taped**

Signatures

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Nature of Teach First

1. What are the goals of TF?
2. How does it pursue them?
3. Do you agree with these goals?
4. Do you think its successful in achieving them?
5. How are these goals represented by the training at the SI?
6. What, if anything, would you like to see the organization do differently?

Goals of Public Education:

7. What do you think should be the goals of state education?
8. Can you give some examples of how you intend to pursue those goals in your classroom? (Alternate for TF Staff/University Partners: Can you give some examples of how TF teachers pursue those goals in their classrooms?)
9. What role do you think the private sector should play in state education?
10. What are your thoughts on the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust?
11. What about the Third Way as a political philosophy?

Conception of Social Justice:

12. TF defines its mission in terms of addressing educational disadvantage. What do you think “educational disadvantage” means in terms of TF?
13. Does it mean something different for you?
14. How familiar are you with the term “social justice”?
15. In what contexts have you heard it used?
16. What do you think social justice means in the context of state education?
17. Do you think schools should pursue “social justice” as an outcome?
18. Give some examples of what you think it means to teach for social justice. (Alternate for TF Staff/University Partners: Can you give examples of TF participants teaching for social justice?)
19. Do you think teaching for social justice involves political bias?
20. Should teachers try to eliminate any political elements of their teaching?
21. Do you think TF should have a role in affecting social justice?
22. If so, what is it?
23. Do you think it is successful?