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AN EXAMINATION OF TEACH FOR AMERICA'S IMPACT ON THE TEACHING  
PROFESSION, HIRING PRACTICES, AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

In the multi-faceted work of examining Teach For America (TFA), an important question that needs more complex consideration is: “What are the actual and potential effects of TFA on federal, state, and school district policies/practices surrounding teacher preparation and the education profession?” Drawing on Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) and Strategic Action Fields (SAF), I examine the historical arc of federal policies surrounding teacher preparation and educational practices. I show that TFA’s chief impacts on teacher preparation and the education profession are: (1) TFA’s impact on the teaching profession itself; (2) the impact of TFA on hiring practices; and (3) the impact of TFA on school leadership and policy through its growing alumni base. As TFA corps members generate *manufactured expertise* in educational practices and policies, the movement of corps members through the classroom and into leadership positions further reinforces TFA’s impact on the profession, hiring decisions, and future educational leaders.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	Page
FIGURES & TABLES.....	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	14
CHAPTER 3: METHODS .....	79
CHAPTER 4: DATA & FINDINGS .....	89
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS .....	123
REFERENCES .....	140
APPENDIX .....	163

## FIGURES & TABLES

### FIGURE

Figure 2.1. Components of a Strategic Action Field .....	66
Figure 2.2. Strategic Action Fields in Settlement or Contention .....	76
Figure 2.3. Traditional Regulation of Public Schools (SAF Russian Dolls Concept) .....	77
Figure 4.1. TFA’s Deficit Ideologies .....	100
Figure 5.1. Field Settlement – Suburban Context .....	132
Figure 5.2. Pre-Katrina Field Settlement – New Orleans Context .....	133
Figure 5.3. Post-Katrina Field Contention from Exogenous Shock – New Orleans Context .....	134
Figure 5.4. New Field Settlement Post-Katrina – New Orleans Context .....	135

### TABLE

Table 3.1. Districts Represented in MOU Data Collection .....	87
Table 4.1. Reported Lobbying Expenses by TFA .....	97
Table 4.2. New CMs in Chicago Public Schools (2000-2014) .....	98
Table 4.3. Annual Salary and Cumulative Costs of Staffing a Single Teaching Position, Fulton County Public Schools .....	109
Table 4.4. Estimated Finder’s Fees to TFA in Selected Regions .....	112
Table 4.5. New Orleans Teachers by Years of Experience and Estimated Total (pre- Katrina) .....	114
Table 4.6. New Orleans Teachers by Years of Experience and Estimated Total (post- Katrina) .....	114
Table 4.7. CPS Personnel and Financial Commitment to TFA’s PPI .....	120
Table 4.8. Contributions and Grants for Leadership for Educational Equity Inc .....	121
Table A.1. New Orleans Teachers by Years of Experience Before and After Katrina Salary Expenditure Estimation .....	163
Table A.2. New Orleans Teachers by Pre-Katrina Years of Experience with Post- Katrina Population – Salary Expenditure Estimation .....	163

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### I. Background of & Statement of the Problem

Teacher education and the teaching profession have a long and mired history in the United States. Dana Goldstein's book (2014) bluntly claims that teaching is the nation's most embattled profession and she is likely right in that assumption as our society readily mocks teaching as a job where *those who can, do and those who can't teach*. It is this indifference to the hard work of educators that supports claims that teaching is more technocratic where the skills can be learned quickly rather than teaching representing a legitimate profession. Central within the ideology that teaching is less than a profession and more of a technocratic skill that can be learned quickly are alternative teacher certification organizations. And while there are many alternative certification programs that afford individuals the opportunity to switch careers and become an educator, none do so as quickly as Teach For America.

Teach For America (TFA) was founded as the tangible outcome of Wendy Kopp's (1989) undergraduate thesis from Princeton University. Since its inception, TFA has placed over 50,000 corps members nationally (Teach For America, n.d.-h). Fundamental to the foundation of the organization was the mission to ameliorate the teacher shortages that existed in the late 1980s (D. Goldstein, 2014a; Kopp, 1989). Accordingly, Kopp posited "members would serve only as supplements to the normal faculty in schools experiencing shortages of certified, qualified teachers" (Kopp, 1989, p. 1). TFA has since grown from an organization purportedly concerned with filling teacher shortages into one whose mission statement is to "enlist, develop, and mobilize as many as possible of our nation's most promising future leaders to grow and strengthen the movement for educational equity and excellence" (Teach For America, n.d.-i).



And while the organization's mission statement does not include any reference to teachers or teaching, TFA seeks to accomplish its stated mission by first overseeing its corps members take up full-time teaching positions. TFA alumni are able to leave teaching and transition into the principalship, elected positions (school board, Congress, etc.), open charter schools, etc., because their two years in the classroom has provided them with educational "expertise" as a result of their first-hand experiences in the classroom. Akin to Berliner and Biddle's assertion that the "crisis" of the failed school is a "manufactured crisis," I argue here that TFA relies on its corps members to generate a *manufactured expertise* by teaching for two years so that they can then, seemingly justified, transition into leadership and policymaking positions. Throughout this process, serious questions arise – or should arise – when considering the short and long-term implications of TFA corps members and their alumni on the teaching profession and educational policy.

In the growing body of work of examining TFA, an important question that still needs consideration is: "What are the actual and potential effects of TFA on federal, state, and school district policies/practices surrounding teacher preparation and the education profession?" As TFA corps members generate *manufactured expertise* in educational practices and policies, how does the organization and its alumni impact and influence how we train educators? In order to understand how TFA has come to have an impact on educational policy and leadership, we need to understand how TFA developed in a particular educational history. This dissertation will examine the historical context of teacher professionalization and the particular political strategies that provided a friendly context for market-driven, private interventions into public education. TFA was founded on the premise of supplying alternatively certified teachers in an effort to ameliorate the teacher shortages of the late 1980s. As outlined in Kopp's undergraduate thesis,

the organization knew that it would need to operate within the state-specific teacher preparation policies that existed at that time. While TFA once readily assimilated into federal and state policies/laws surrounding teacher preparation, the past few years have seen the organization take a proactive role of not only benefiting from shifting policies but itself working as a force for influencing federal and state policies/laws related to teacher preparation and the education profession – often circumnavigating traditional training mechanisms entirely. For example, this proactive influencing achieved a new pinnacle as the organization lobbied to extend the broad definition of “highly qualified” as an add-on to the bill ending the federal government shutdown of 2013 (V. Strauss, 2013). Additionally, the creation of and expansion of the Relay Graduate School has provided TFA the opportunity to avoid relationships with traditional colleges of education in states that require provisionally licensed teachers to actively work towards a full credential.

TFA’s mission of supplying a cadre of teachers to ameliorate the teacher shortage of the 1980s has shifted to an aim of having its corps members compete with traditionally certified teachers for open positions – though, evidence exists that positions are reserved for corps members – as well as an increased focus on facilitating the transition of alumni into school leadership and policy making decisions (D. Goldstein, 2014a).

While there are regional/geographic and content/subject areas (e.g., special education) that still suffer from teacher shortages (V. Strauss, 2015b), TFA’s rhetorical and strategic shift away from focusing only on supplying a solution to teacher shortages is likely due to the increase in teacher layoffs that began during the “Great Recession” of 2008 – all the while, TFA continued to grow. As a result of the Great Recession, states were forced to lay off teachers and/or close schools (which also resulted in a laying off of teachers) in an effort to address

massive budget reductions. However, despite the national reduction in employed teachers (thus creating a national surplus of traditionally certified educators), TFA continued to expand in both the number of corps members it supplied to school districts as well as expanding the organizing's financial support – namely through private venture philanthropic organizations (Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014).

Returning to the question of what are the actual and potential effects of TFA on federal, state, and school district policies/practices surrounding teacher preparation and the educator profession, I argue here that among TFA's chief impacts on teacher preparation and the education profession that there are three overarching impacts that warrant examination: (1) TFA's impact on the teaching profession itself; (2) the impact of TFA on hiring practices; and (3) the impact of TFA on school leadership and policy through its growing alumni base. Further, as explicated in Chapter 2, TFA has built itself by fostering the myth of the 'failed school' and the 'bad teacher' that are the result of a misunderstanding – intentionally or not – of the role that schools play in the reproduction of inequality. That is, schools in their current design operate to reproduce systemic inequalities along class and racial lines. The continuation of poverty, for example, is a product of inequities in society rather than the failure of the school and teachers to bring about equity. And while TFA's discourse is situated around an a belief that teachers can overcome the obstacles of poverty and inequality, the organization's growth is an artifact of the continued presence of unequal educational outcomes and a continual acceptance of the myth that schools are broken, responsible for poverty, and thus reforming schools and teachers will end inequality. While all teachers should strive to contribute to the mitigation of racism and economic inequality, of interest here is that TFA claims a moral high-ground when compared to

traditionally trained teachers who have seemingly failed to solve racism and poverty thereby necessitating the need for TFA.

## **II. Purpose of the Study**

This study takes up an examination of the impacts that TFA has had on teacher preparation and the education profession. The organization's impact on the teaching profession itself has manifested as not only taking advantage of a society that does not hold teaching and teachers in high regard, but the organization itself has further eroded any conception of teaching as a profession by way of its fast-entry into the classroom. Additionally, TFA's specific approach to test-prep pedagogy redefines the role of a teacher and aligns that role with market-oriented conceptions of education reform. Because the United States has all too willingly bought into the myth of the 'failed school' and the 'bad teacher' (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Kumashiro, 2012), TFA has found itself situated firmly within educational policy and practice debates while garnering significant support from the public as a better way to train teachers (Labaree, 2010). I have argued previously that one of the fundamental goals of neoliberalism in education is the full deregulation and deprofessionalization of teaching (T. J. Brewer & Cody, 2014). In alignment with other neoliberal, or market-oriented, education reforms that purport to provide greater efficiency (Apple, 2012; Ball, 2012; Giroux, 2004, 2012), neoliberal ideology insists that not only should teacher preparation be deregulated and competitive organizations be introduced, but that the teaching profession be approached in myopic definitions of learning that seek to create a common metric through commensuration (Espeland & Stevens, 1998). In the case of teachers, the practice of commensuration is evident in the push to reduce testing to common measurable outcomes such as impact on test scores through value-added measurement schemes (Harris,

2011). The goal of reducing the aims of teaching to quantifiable metrics is not only a manifestation for the quest for certainty (Baez & Boyles, 2009; Hansen, 2011; Labaree, 2012) but it provides the opportunity to commoditize education for profit. This provides the opportunity for the complex world of teaching to be reduced to the point where teachers are viewed as interchangeable cogs and, as a result, reinforces the disposition that anyone can learn to be a teacher if he or she can align with the prescriptive teaching that is required for raising test scores. The work of teachers should be characterized by creativity and autonomy and teachers ought to operate from a deep understanding of the needs of students and students' communities. TFA, comparatively, distills the complex profession of teaching into a quick series of techniques aimed at results without adequately attending to the relationships and values that support public schools.

Because TFA's approach to teacher preparation is exemplified by its fast-entry nature, the growth of TFA and claims of effectiveness warrant the question of what TFA means for the 'profession' of teaching. If policies and practices have or begin to favor alternative certification programs like TFA, it raises a serious question about what it means for teaching to be a true profession if entry into the field is not highly regulated as it is in other professions like medicine or law. The advent of loose credentialing has benefited alternative certification programs like TFA and in light of a recent increase in teacher shortages in some regions, the continued loosening of credentialing and licensure requirements for teachers may likely reshape the pool of our nation's educators. For example, TFA corps members are able to accept teaching as a low-pay and temporary job because they are able to convert the social capital of their celebrated volunteerism and manufactured expertise into more lucrative opportunities post-TFA. As a result of this reinforcement of teaching as a low paid technocratic skill, the hiring of TFA at low

salaries also represents a reinforcement of the historical conception of teaching as a feminized job.

Secondly, while the growth of TFA has resulted in an increase of critical examination and scrutiny of the organization's practice and claims and implications for teaching as a profession, one of the largest accusations of TFA and equally one of the most under-researched is the organization's impact on hiring practices at the local level. This dissertation will also examine how corps members actually get their jobs. Additionally, as hiring decisions are naturally a financial decision, it is vital to consider the costs associated with hiring corps members – especially if the hiring of a corps member is the result of positions being held exclusively for TFA. What are the financial implications surrounding the hiring of corps members?

At a time where districts are still feeling the impact of the Great Recession, it is of vital importance to examine how the hiring of TFA corps members impact finances at the local level. And while this aspect of TFA has received a lot of anecdotal attention, this dissertation will provide an empirical analysis of such impacts. Moreover, a discussion will be included about the role of TFA now and in the future as it relates to the current teacher shortage. That is, while the last two years have seen a decrease in TFA's corps member numbers, I argue that as districts become more hard pressed for teachers – especially teachers who willingly employ a teaching-to-the-test pedagogy – that TFA will likely benefit as districts seek to simultaneously increase test score numbers while hiring cheap labor. I draw on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) contracts between TFA and local school districts to highlight not only TFA's growth during the past two decades – notably during the Recession – but provide an analysis of what such growth and influence means, financially, for local school districts.

The third purpose of this dissertation is to provide an analysis of TFA's shifting mission. That is, while TFA began with the goal of attenuating the teacher shortage of the late 1980s, it has since shifted its organizational goals to focus more on influencing policy and practice by way of its alumni base. This influence takes on many shapes as alumni are hired into the principalship by way of TFA's Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI), as they enter elected offices through campaigns facilitated by TFA's Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE), or as they open their own charter schools. Specifically, I draw on MOUs to provide details on TFA's PPI as a manifestation of the organization's shifting goals while arguing that the installing of alumni as principals reinforces TFA's position in the field of teacher preparation and the organization's ability to secure hiring contracts. TFA's increased focus on producing alumni principals and alumni policymakers further entrenches TFA's role in the education reform field as alumni principals are able to oversee portions of the hiring processes and alumni policymakers move into positions where they have the political power to reinforce and expand market-oriented reforms that benefit TFA and TFA's partners.

### **III. Research Questions & Design**

This dissertation will employ critical policy analysis through the theoretical lens of Strategic Action Fields (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, 2012) and analysis of neoliberal trends in educational policy to answer the question: "What are the actual and potential effects of TFA on federal, state, and school district policies/practices surrounding teacher preparation and the education profession?" Using critical policy analysis (CPA), this dissertation will examine changes in and implications of federal, state, and school district policies to accommodate TFA.

I examine the historical arc of federal policies surrounding teacher preparation and practices – specifically policies related to alternative teacher certification – through an examination of public documents, publically available writings from TFA officials (including information on TFA’s website), and federal and state laws. Additionally, I will draw heavily on a discourse analysis of the Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) that create the contractual relationship between TFA and school districts. Specifically, the language used in the MOUs will be discussed to examine the impacts of TFA on the teaching profession and principals. The MOUs will also provide quantitative data to showcase TFA’s growth in specified regions as well as provide information on financial implications related to finder’s fees and salaries. While MOU document requests have garnered some additional documentation from districts, I have compiled ancillary documents (i.e., budgets and board meeting minutes) that will add to the portrait of TFA’s impact at the local level. I will include an analysis of federal policies related to teacher preparation (namely the No Child Left Behind Act’s “highly qualified” designation) as well as statements and documents from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE).

Using SAF, I look at the contextual nuances across varying regions. That is, I expand on and enhance the SAF framework to highlight that while there are similarities within and across the field of teacher preparation, the positioning of actors is heavily reliant upon contextual realities.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I show that TFA’s impact on teacher preparation and the teaching profession has manifested in three overarching areas: (1) ideas of teacher professionalism; (2) hiring practices; and (3) school leadership. Its prescriptive and fast-entry training, a test-prep pedagogy, the reinforcement of teaching as a feminized job, and the nature of teaching as a temporary lifecycle occupation exemplify TFA’s impact on the profession of



teaching. Impacts on hiring practices are shown as orchestrated attempts to provide long-term savings (though, representing an initial increase in upfront costs) through non-competitive contracts for staffing. And finally, TFA's impact is shown to have extensions beyond the classroom as alumni transition into leadership positions. TFA alumni transition into many different forms of school leadership, such as the principalship, and policymaking roles like school board members. The result of this transition of alumni into leadership positions likely reinforces TFA's implications of deprofessionalization through acceptance of fast-entry and low-cost employment as alumni move into decision-making positions.

#### **IV. Significance of the Study**

While there are a growing number of studies and evaluations of TFA, the climate surrounding the commensuration of learning and a test-measurement frenzy have often limited examinations and evaluations of TFA corps members to comparing their student outcomes to the outcomes of students taught by non-TFA teachers (Clark et al., 2013b; Clark, Isenberg, Liu, Makowsky, & Zukiewicz, 2015; Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Vasquez Heilig, 2005; Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004; Glazerman, 2012; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008; Zukiewicz, Clark, & Makowsky, 2015). Other evaluations of TFA have focused on the organization's connections to the larger market-oriented education reform movement (Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014; Lahann & Reagan, 2011; Trujillo & Scott, 2014), on the retention of corps members as teachers (T. J. Brewer, 2014; M. Donaldson & Johnson, 2011), racial implications of TFA (A. Anderson, 2013a, 2013b; Barnes, Germain, & Valenzuela, 2016; White, 2016). This work aims to provide insight into TFA's impact on educational policy and practice related to teacher preparation and the subsequent educational leadership pipeline. While

TFA corps members represent a very small portion of the national pool of teachers, they nevertheless represent a large ratio of those teachers where TFA has contractual relationships with school districts.

TFA has experienced exponential growth over the past 25 years – though, that growth experienced a decline in 2014 (Rich, 2015; V. Strauss, 2014). Yet, in my estimation, the downturn in TFA’s numbers is likely temporary as the nation is now facing another teacher shortage and TFA continues to represent a uniquely fast and cheaper option for staffing vacant positions. As such, continued scrutiny and examination of TFA is needed.

## **V. Conceptual Framework**

This dissertation will draw heavily from the theoretical lens of Strategic Action Fields (SAF) (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, 2012) and conceptions of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005) as driving forces that have benefited TFA’s emergence and growth over a quarter-century. Explicated in detail in Chapter 2, SAF asserts that there are three actors in any given field: (1) incumbents; (2) challengers; and (3) the state. SAF is clear that fields are not cut and dry specifically because of the agency of individual actors and the interaction of one field with another.

An important caveat here, and an expansion of SAF that is discussed in further detail in Chapter 2, is that the interpretation of who or what group falls into each SAF category within the field of education is not always necessarily clearly defined as the context – often regional – determines which group is the incumbent and which is the challenger. While traditional colleges of education have in recent history, trained teachers, the history of teacher preparation in the United States varies greatly throughout time and across geographic regions. This reality prevents

conceiving of any particular group as fitting squarely into one of the SAF categories. However, Fligstein and McAdam's theory lends itself to understanding the fluidity and complexities surrounding any given field. That is, the theory contends that fields can be in flux and contention – and often are – and that individuals field agents' roles are shaped by and evolve according to the interactions between other actors and broader, but related, macro-fields.

SAF is useful because it provides a theoretical framework for understanding where field actors fall within the field and their relationship to the state that not only provides support for the incumbent, but provides resources and power. That is, in seeking to determine who or what retains or gains power over the field requires a tool for situating those actors in relation to one another; SAF does this as it aids in a conceptual examination of power.

## **VI. Limitations**

As with any study there are limitations. For this dissertation, while I will provide a thorough analysis of documents and public statements related to TFA's impact on teacher preparation and the teaching profession. I include an in-depth analysis of MOUs, historical quantitative data, financial analysis, and local documents from Atlanta, Chicago, New York, New Orleans, and Eastern North Carolina. These regions were chosen as a convenience-sampling given my personal connection to and knowledge of TFA's involvement in Metro-Atlanta as both a traditionally trained and licensed teacher in Georgia but also as a TFA alumni who taught in Atlanta, as well as related work in procuring MOUs in other regions (T. J. Brewer, Kretchmar, Sondel, Ishmael, & Manfra, 2016). And while these regional examples provide an insight into TFA's impact, as a result of the sampling method they are limited in providing broadly generalizable conclusions about TFA's local impact. However, as will be explicated in

great detail in Chapter 4, the language and practices in the MOUs included in this analysis are largely consistent across the regions examined. And while that does not bolster any ability to generalize outside of those regions it begins to shed more light onto the implications of TFA at the local level while laying the groundwork for future research in the area. Future research will include in-depth interviews with principals about the nature of hiring TFA corps members in addition to interviews with TFA representatives in an effort to continue to interrogate the nuances of TFA's impacts on-the-ground. Additionally, future work will examine other forms of deprofessionalization of educators beyond TFA through analyses of New Leaders.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Because school reforms and related policies surrounding teacher preparation and the education profession are rooted in the continued assumption of the ‘failed’ school and the need to establish (or reestablish) schools as the ‘great equalizer’ that prevents/ameliorates inequality, the first two sections here examine the history of inequality and schooling in the United States.

As suggested in Chapter 1, TFA has benefited from and propagated the myth of the ‘failed school,’ the ‘bad teacher,’ and the belief that the combination of the two result in the nation’s academic achievement gap which informs social inequality. According to the logic, schools ought to function as society’s leveling field where economic backgrounds are deemed irrelevant – or chalked up as ‘excuses’ (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Schools are seen as the mechanism by which social inequality can be ameliorated if the current practices are changed to support “higher expectations” for poor students rather than conceiving of the school as innately unequal in design. Yet, despite the ideology informing the reformer’s conception of schooling to end inequality, organizations like TFA explicitly reinforce inequality and deficit ideologies through pedagogical practices – a point taken up below.

I later examine TFA’s role in perpetuating inequality but I first provide a historical perspective and overview of schools and inequality in the United States for broader context. That discussion is followed by an overview of the factors that create, reinforce, and influence inequality. I then lay out how teacher preparation and the teaching profession under education reforms like NCLB and in the neoliberal era benefit from the myth of the ‘bad teacher,’ while promoting a discourse that ‘better’ teachers, by way of deregulation, will act as the silver bullet in education reform.

## I. Historical Perspectives on Schools and Inequality

To be sure, while there have been shifting perspectives on the role of schools in ameliorating or perpetuating inequality, there have been numerous continual assumptions throughout the decades on this ascribed role of schools in working towards the social reform of ending inequality – both educational inequality as well as socioeconomic inequality. The extent to which inequality exists and the school’s ability to be the instrument of reform is a strongly held belief (Rothstein, 2004). Specifically, teachers are seen, both historically and now, as the best solution for solving poverty. Goldstein points out that that even non-educators such as Jacob Riis shared this perspective. Accordingly,

like many of today’s reformers, Riis considered teachers the determining actor in whether a child escaped poverty. In his 1892 book *The Children of the Poor*, he wrote that schools are ‘our chief defense against the tenement and the flood of ignorance with which it would swamp us...it is the personal influence of the teacher that counts for most in dealing with the child. (D. Goldstein, 2014a, p. 78)

Other ideologies of schooling as the prime mechanism for societal experiments or cure for societal ills include Thomas Jefferson’s conception of schooling for general knowledge and social sorting and Horace Mann’s argument for schooling as a mechanism through which poor children would learn to respect property (Urban & Wagoner, 2009).

Of the most notable policy assumptions regarding factors related to inequality in schools is the overarching and historical debate related to notions of equality of opportunity versus equality of outcomes. As will be examined in the sections below, policy and research assumptions about this question have taken the strict position of one side of this debate over the other while others have incorporated both. From the position of equal opportunity, “[One’s] judgment about whether there is equality of educational opportunity depends at least in part upon

one's judgments about what constitutes an education" (Ennis, 1976, p. 7). For some, this judgment includes notions of individual volition to take advantage of the 'equalizing power of schools' while others adamantly contend that equality in educational opportunity exists – or will exist – when outcomes are equalized. Though, Rothstein (2004) suggests that an important result of the *Brown v Board* decision was in its highlighting the question of "If equal resources [equal opportunities] do not produce equal achievement, what will?" (Rothstein, 2004, p. 13)?

The 1960s saw an increasing focus on systemic inequality in the U.S. and notions of equal opportunity in all arenas of society. From the Civil Rights Movement, Johnson's war on poverty, and all of the legislation that followed, the 1960s was marked as the decade of social movements, counter movements, and the convergence of numerous efforts to address and solve racial and economic inequalities (Lytle, 2006). A full decade after the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v Board of Education* to desegregate schools – though desegregation was never fully realized (Orfield & Eaton, 1996) – saw the passing of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In promoting the ESEA, President Johnson reaffirmed his belief that "full educational opportunity should be our first national goal" (United States Department of Education, n.d.). Yet, despite ESEA's overarching goal of equalizing opportunities, "The schools' ability to end poverty is highly questionable given all the other social and economic factors. In part, the 1960s War on Poverty was based on human capital theory which assumes, and this still remains unproven, that investment in education will grow the economy and cause poverty to disappear" (Spring, 2011, p. 17).

Certainly the most notable research perspective of the 1960s were those found in the *Coleman Report* (Coleman et al., 1966). Funded as a part of the Civil Rights Act, Coleman and his colleagues were tasked to understand educational inequality. Coleman (1990) suggests that

prior to Section 402 of the Civil Rights Act and his seminal *Report* (Coleman et al., 1966) that followed, education researchers seeking to understand educational inequality limited their measurements of educational opportunity on tangible school-based inputs rather than the inclusion of academic outputs. The previous way of conceiving educational equality was thus situated in a concept of equality of opportunity that assumed educational equality could exist if all tangible schooling inputs (e.g., age of textbooks, building conditions, etc.) were exactly the same – a perspective seen in the Supreme Court’s assertion of “separate but equal” in *Plessy v Ferguson*. However, Coleman again concluded that “complete equality of opportunity can be reached only if all the divergent out-of-school influences vanish, a condition that would arise only in the advent of boarding schools” (Coleman, 1990, p. 5). Coleman further suggested that there was a general belief in the U.S. that the provision of free schools, a common curriculum, attending same schools, and equal geographic considerations are thought to equate to equal educational opportunity. However, he pointed out that such a belief “assumes that the existence of free schools eliminates economic sources of inequality of opportunity” (Coleman, 1990, p. 20). Ultimately, such a belief reinforced the idea that schools themselves become indifferent to student academic outcomes and any variance is not attributable to funding disparities, for example, but rather a student’s motivation to take advantage of the educational opportunity and family background characteristics. And while many researchers have accepted the conclusions outlined in the *Coleman Report*, specifically its findings that “variations in family background account for far more variation in school achievement than do variations in school characteristics” (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 218), others point out that the *Report’s* conclusions surrounding school funding reinforced the perspectives and assumptions held by conservatives who were eager to find rationales to limit investment in public sectors (Biddle & Berliner, 2002) and that the *Report*



ignored possible in-school factors (such as teacher effectiveness) that could add clarity to the question of variance in student achievement (Rothstein, 2004).

While the *Report* did not employ the more modern term “achievement gap” to serve as a proxy for inequality, it pointed out that viewing schools as the mechanism through which inequality is stymied, simultaneously requires the assumption that out-of-school factors (like family background) have little to no influence on academic outcomes. Economic background, to be sure, has a strong correlation to academic achievement (Nakhaie & Curtis, 1998; Piketty, 2014; Thorbecke & Charumilind, 2002; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Thus, reforms that seek to end economic inequalities by equalizing academic outcomes fundamentally ignore the impact that economic inequalities have on student’s abilities to perform equally. To those ends, a student’s economic background and the role of schools in perpetuating or ameliorating inequality became a central component of research in the 1970s.

The 1970s saw the publication of two central works (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Jencks et al., 1972) that reinforced some of the findings of the *Coleman Report* while further illustrating the connection between inequality and schools. Jencks, et al., argued that inequality was not a finite category; but rather, inequality was relative to the fluctuating measures of income and costs nationally. After establishing that inequality is relative, Jencks et al., found similar conclusions to that of the *Coleman Report’s* assertion that differences in schools (or attempts to equalize them) have little long-term impacts on inequality (Jencks et al., 1972, p. 16) and varying amounts of schooling had little impacts on individual performance on tests (Jencks et al., 1972, p. 53). Their conclusion was that “schools have rather modest effects on the degree of cognitive and noncognitive inequality among adults” (Jencks et al., 1972, p. 135) and “the most important determinant of educational attainment is family background” (Jencks et al., 1972, p. 158).

Similar to the far-reaching solutions of the *Coleman Report*, Jencks et al., suggested that dramatic systemic changes were needed including the systematic manipulation of the environments children grow up in if equality were to be experienced on a large scale. Furthermore, the findings in Jencks et al., “implied that our national preoccupation with changing the schools was a distraction from the real issue [of systemic income inequality]” (Gilbert, 2008, p. 139).

Bowles and Gintis argued that ultimately a shift away from capitalism – replacing it with democratic socialism – was the only solution for inequality. Schools, as mechanisms for the reproduction of inequality were necessarily perpetuating stratification in an effort to provide workers and managers for the hierarchical nature of capitalism (Carnoy, 1990; C. S. Fischer et al., 2008; Marx, 1867/1987; Pacheco, 1978). Put plainly, Bowles and Gintis argued that “the history of U.S. education provides little support for the view that schools have been vehicles for the equalization of economic status or opportunity” (1976, p. 48) and that “the pattern of economic inequality is predominantly ‘set’ in the economy itself – via market and property institutions which dictate wide inequalities in income from property, in the basic social relations of corporate enterprises, and in the tendency toward uneven development, which leads to regional, sectional, racial, sexual, and ethnic disparities” (1976, p. 102).

Thus, the dominant theme in research perspectives from this decade was that schools actually do very little in the way of ameliorating inequality due to the simple fact that schools precisely serve as the mechanism through which socioeconomic stratification was reproduced, maintained, and justified – reasserted by way of hegemonic practices. Along with Bowles and Gintis, Margaret LeCompte (1978), Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1973) (1973), and Paul Willis (1977) exemplified the growing perspective that schools served as the mechanism through which

the maintenance and reproduction of social stratification was achieved. LeCompte (1978) and Willis (1977) argued that schools prepared students for future work while Bourdieu (1973) asserted that schools and the practices therein reinforced middle-class norms by providing rewards for those predisposed to align with the curriculum and practices – the end result being the alienation of those without such cultural capital, not to mention, vastly different educational opportunities by way of the types of schools attended (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). Jencks et al., also argued that “schools serve primarily as selection and certification agencies, whose job is to measure and label people, and only secondarily as socialization agencies, whose job is to change people. This implies that schools serve primarily to legitimize inequality, not to create it” (Jencks et al., 1972, p. 135).

The early 1980s saw the release of the Regan administration’s *A Nation at Risk* (ANAR) report. Claudia Strauss suggested that at “the core of the education and opportunity discourse is that good education is a necessity for economic advancement” (C. Strauss, 2012, p. 314). And, along that perspective, ANAR firmly situated schools in the position of determining American safety, political and military dominance, and most importantly, the viability of the nation’s ability to compete in the context of a global economy. The link between schooling and inequality was reinforced by the release of ANAR’s discursive links between schooling, hard work, and individual economic success – with overt ideological connections to Weber’s (Weber, 1930/1989) *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The opening lines of ANAR exemplified the perspective on school’s natural ability to provide all students – “regardless of race or class or economic status” – are granted equal opportunity through “their own efforts” (e.g., meritocracy) to experience social mobility and simultaneously promote progress in society (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Thus, ANAR reinforced the belief

that schools are and should be the mechanism by which students are given equal opportunity to succeed economically as individuals and collectively as a nation.

The 1990s saw the release of Herrnstein and Murray's *The Bell Curve* (1994) that concluded that social inequality was a direct result of differences in cognitive abilities (IQ) between racial groups. Herrnstein and Murray's ultimate conclusion was that Whites are innately smarter than Blacks (according to their findings, approximately half of all Blacks are only as smart as the lower end of the White bell curve, and approximately half of all Whites are smarter than the higher end of the Black bell curve) and this cognitive difference explains why Whites are, by in large, more affluent than impoverished Black individuals/families.

This research perspective was a move away from seeking to utilize schools as a mechanism for promoting equality as it sought to affirm centuries old beliefs about the "superiority" of Whites. However, Sacks contends that Herrnstein and Murray "touched a nerve with an increasingly neoconservative audience receptive to its basic message: Inequality of class and race in America was simply the result of the natural order of things, arising from profound heritable differences in the cognitive abilities of individuals" (Sacks, 1999, p. 33). The dominant research perspective of the previous decade was that "the factors influencing educational attainment are overwhelmingly social, not biological" (Jencks et al., 1972, p. 146) and "that the most important determinant of educational attainment is family background" (Jencks et al., 1972, pp. 158-159). Bowles and Gintis similarly showed (albeit two decades prior) that individuals with similar IQs had varying levels of educational attainment correlated with social background.

Yet, *The Bell Curve* attempted to reinforce the belief that it was an individual's IQ that was the determining factor on educational attainment and occupational success, thus ignoring evidence-based research on inequality while seeking to rationalize inequality as a result of

heritable traits whereby Whiteness was inherently superior.

In the early 2000s, the ESEA was reauthorized under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). NCLB created the first nation-wide linking of all student test scores with their school according to demographic factors unlike the randomly assigned National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test (Brill, 2011, p. 85). As a result, NCLB firmly reinforced the perspective that the greatest inequality of schooling was evidenced by a persistent “achievement gap” between test scores of White and non-White students. Subsequently, the focus on test scores reaffirmed policy and research assumptions that the scores themselves were sufficient enough to measure educational equality from an equal outcomes perspective. That perspective began to inform school practices and research practices that sought to elevate the presumed importance of test scores and a teacher’s role and responsibility towards raising scores. Ultimately this focus was a continuation of ignoring systemic inequalities of out-of-school factors. Accordingly, the 2000s saw the rapid increase of the “no excuses” paradigm that was especially exemplified by the concurrent growth of charter schools (see the following section for a more detailed analysis of the impact of “no excuses” dispositions on educational equality). Researchers contended (Greene, Forster, & Winters, 2005; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003) that good schools with good teachers were enough to overcome the ravages of poverty – a perspective that reinforced the belief that schools are (or at the very least, can) function as an equalizing mechanism. The decade of the 2000s also saw an increase in alternative teacher certification programs that have “no excuses” and an increased focus on equal educational outcomes (not opportunities) as a mainstay of ideological rhetoric and practices (T. J. Brewer, 2013, 2014; T. J. Brewer & Cody, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Barbara Torre Veltri, 2008).

The early years of the 2010s have seen a doubling down on those 2000s policies grounded on the assumption that “better” schools and “better” teachers can not only override and overcome those factors influencing inequality of educational opportunity and outcomes, but that those two components are likely the best solution for ending systemic societal inequality. Most notable was the Obama administration’s Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative that, as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), offered states the opportunity to compete for a portion of \$4.35 billion. The aim of RTTT included “closing achievement gaps” and to those ends, successful applicant states had to show efforts to increase focus on standardized tests, tracking the data associated with those tests, linking teacher evaluations and salaries to test results, and “turning around our lowest-achieving schools” (United States Department of Education, 2009). Ultimately, RTTT reinforced the widely held belief in student meritocracy, notions of hard work, and that schools (especially teachers) play a dominant role in perpetuating or ameliorating inequality. RTTT, like its NCLB predecessor, further reinforced the perspective that elevating test scores was the panacea of educational equality despite decades of research suggesting that, “educational meritocracy – test scores – contribute surprisingly little to individual economic success” (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 103).

In summation, the last handful of decades has seen both research and policy perspectives that firmly place schools into the role of “the great equalizer.” While earlier decades saw a focus on examining the impact of equal educational “opportunities,” the latter decades have shifted to focus more on equal educational “outcomes” in the quest for social equality (though, both perspectives existed throughout all of these decades). The most recent decades have seen policy and researchers assert the power of schools (and teachers) in overcoming the ailments of poverty through high-stakes testing and higher standards. As a result, considerations of out-of-school

factors and their impact(s) on educational equality have largely been relegated to a rhetorical claim of “excuse” making. The perspective that schools can provide the necessary components for ending systemic inequality affords researchers and policymakers the opportunity to ignore persistent systemic social inequalities (like poverty and racism) that are at the center of inequality. Rather than a concentrated focus on ending income inequality and racism, Joel Spring contends that, “it is politically safe to just blame the schools” (Spring, 2011, p. 18).

## **II. Factors Creating, Reinforcing, and Influencing Inequality**

I will now turn to the varying assumptions surrounding factors thought to influence inequality in educational outcomes. And while a multitude has been written on such factors, I will focus primarily on the three major factors thought to influence educational outcomes. Broadly conceptualized, those factors include teacher quality, student/family demographics, and school organization. I take up each of these in turn below.

Currently the most prevalent policy assumption thought to influence inequality in education is teacher quality. In fact, much of the current education reform policies situate, at their foundation, teacher quality as the deciding factor in whether schools successfully ameliorate by ending or fail by perpetuating inequality. Within the push for increased school accountability to close the achievement gap that reached a new pinnacle as a result of NCLB, teacher quality has certainly taken the policy spotlight on influencing factors on educational outcomes (Kumashiro, 2012).

Among other notable examples of this policy assumption is the advent of merit-pay schemes that seek to reward good teachers that elevate student outputs (thereby reducing educational inequality and thus reducing socioeconomic inequality) while serving as either an

incentive or a financially punitive mechanism to usher out ‘bad’ teachers who do not raise test scores (thereby failing to end educational and socioeconomic inequality) (Springer et al., 2010). However, while teacher quality is a mainstay of contemporary policy assumptions, it is important to note that such assumptions are not entirely new. In fact, instances of assuming teachers to be the deciding factor in influencing the equality of educational outcomes date back to the 1890s (D. Goldstein, 2014a).

Organizations like TFA – who have had an increasingly influential role in policymaking directly and through their expanding alumni network – assert that teacher quality is not only a “civil rights” issue; but, that a teacher’s ability to increase test scores is a fundamental component of teacher quality and ending poverty (T. J. Brewer, 2013, 2014; T. J. Brewer & Cody, 2014). According to Wendy Kopp, “‘education can trump poverty’ as long as a teacher accepts her responsibility as the ‘key variable’ driving student outcomes” (D. Goldstein, 2014a, p. 203). Thus, following this logic, the absence of good teachers or the presence of bad teachers, by itself, is the deciding factor contributing to educational equity or inequity. Continuing with this logic, the generational reproduction of poverty can be explained by ‘bad’ and ‘dumb’ teachers who have “low expectations” for poor students and thusly do not adhere to the assumption of the singularity of teacher quality in ending educational inequality.

Rothstein (2004) has pointed out that popular policy think-tanks like the Heritage Foundation and the Education Trust group purport that better teachers are able to close the academic achievement gap between White and Black students through a willful misinterpretation of test scores. Ultimately, teachers and teacher quality have little impact on influencing equity or inequality in educational outcomes since approximately two-thirds of variance of outcomes is attributable to out-of-school factors (Berliner, 2013; Rothstein, 2004) while teachers likely



contribute little towards the roughly one-third of variance based on in-school factors (Berliner & Glass, 2014). As such, increased focus and accountability on teacher quality – and attempts to control quality – are likely to miss the mark in helping schools end inequality all the while serving as a punitive mechanism to undermine good teachers from entering the classroom. Ultimately, evaluating teacher quality on the grounds of “equal outcomes” on standardized tests reinforces an “all-out focus on the ‘achievement gap’ [that] moves us toward short-term solutions that are unlikely to address the long-term underlying problem [of inequality caused by opportunity gaps]” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 4).

Aside from teacher quality, a student’s socioeconomic (SES) status is historically the most prominently considered factor (though, as will be explicated below, the SES factor is also closely related to racial factors in U.S. history). As examined in the section above, family SES is the leading factor when predicting all forms of social and economic inequality in the U.S. – including educational opportunity and educational outcomes.

Yet, while unequal educational outcomes/outputs have historically been used to justify SES stratification in the US under the guise of meritocracy and equally held up as a rationale for why individuals do not have equal opportunity, it has become increasingly popular to refer to considerations of the impact of SES on educational outcomes as “excuses” (Carter, 2000; Farr, 2010; Kopp & Farr, 2011; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Predominately seen in the rhetoric and practices of many charter schools, speeches from almost every Secretary of Education in the last two decades, and in a new wave of alternatively certified teachers, considerations of poverty’s impact on a student’s educational opportunities and subsequent educational outcomes have been classified as “making excuses” – even going so far to label the Coleman Report as the root cause of teacher excuses (Farr, 2010). Ultimately, the discourse of “no excuses” employs a

decades old assertion that one must simply pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. In this regard, schools once again become the mechanism by, and through, which students are purportedly afforded the opportunity to gain merit and then cash in on the spoils of hard work. The converse, then, is that those students who fail by some academic measure are to blame for either “making excuses” and/or not working “hard enough.” The end result reinforces an ideology of meritocracy, seemingly equal opportunity for all, and as Jencks, et al., (1972) asserted, legitimizing inequality. In an effort to promote a “no excuses” mantra surrounding SES, education reform policies seek to elevate student and teacher accountability from the foundational belief that high expectations from teachers alone can override poverty and SES inequality. Yet, evidence suggests that “the influence of social class characteristics is probably so powerful that schools cannot overcome it, no matter how well trained are their teachers and no matter how well designed are their instructional programs and climates” (Rothstein, 2004, p. 5). Further, “the spatial concentration of affluence and poverty in rich and poor school districts raises the odds that affluent children will receive a superior education and that poor children will get inferior schooling, virtually guaranteeing the intergenerational transmission of class position” (Massey, 2007, p. 197).

Rothstein further points out that children from lower SES deciles are exposed to “more lead poisoning, more asthma, poorer nutrition, less adequate pediatric care, more exposure to smoke, and a host of other problems” (Rothstein, 2004, p. 3) when compared to students from higher SES deciles. Indeed, when measuring student educational outcomes, it becomes clear that the leading factor in determining and predicting educational outcomes rests almost singularly with a student’s SES. That is, regardless of where students score on early tests, SES factors have such a powerful influence on results that, over time, higher scoring students from low SES

families are surpassed by their initially lower scoring but higher SES peers (Feinstein, 2003, p. 85).

With connections to the argument set forth by Bowles and Gintis and also Paul Willis' work reinforces the evidence that a schools' function is to reproduce class stratification – in the case of Willis' young men who reproduced their class by way of opposition of the cultures of the ruling elite, the provision of an equal education for them would have caused menial labor employers to “strugg[le] to press [the boys] into meaningless work” (Willis, 1977, p. 177). That is, work that is associated with low wages and the working class and creates the necessary alienation between the worker and their work (Marx, 1844/2010).

While the effects of poverty and lower SES can create similar barriers to equal educational opportunities and outcomes for those who experience such factors, racial inequality often exacerbates those effects of SES. Namely, race is a dominant factor alone but is often correlated with SES factors in the US given the nation's abhorrent history of racial relations between Whites and non-Whites. That is, a Black student, for example, is far more likely to experience poverty in the U.S. than a White student and subsequently attend a school that receives less financing than a predominately White school (Irons, 2002; Jencks et al., 1972; Lareau, 2003). As a result, while racial factors are important considerations, they can become magnified through the experience of economic inequality. For example, “in recent decades, [B]lacks have experienced substantially less upward intergenerational mobility and substantially more downward intergenerational mobility than [W]hites” (Mazumder, 2014, p. 2). Pauline Lipman contends, that the “correlation between poverty and low-academic performance, school completion, and other education indicators [is] well-documented, as is the relationship between race/ethnicity and educational outcomes” (Lipman, 2011, p. 79), even within efforts to improve

opportunity based on “mixed-income” schooling, the actual “subtext is race” (Lipman, 2011, p. 75).

With respect to the question of equal opportunity or equal results, much policy attention is given to the latter that seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of schooling based on standardized test score results. And what those results reveal is a persistent “achievement gap” between White students and Black students (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Yet, as Ladson-Billings points out, the phrase “achievement gap” assumes, again, that schooling and schools represent a zero-sum game and serve as the great equalizer. However, as Ladson-Billings shows, non-White students are at a historical (and present) disadvantage because of our national education “debt” – stemming from the historical debt of slavery and a practice of providing Black students with less education than Whites (Jencks et al., 1972) – which, in turn, creates a generational opportunity gap for non-White students (Ladson-Billings, 2006, 2013). Moreover, Ladson-Billings (Ladson-Billings, 2013) suggests that viewing educational achievement from the “achievement” point of view skews the perception of researchers, including James Coleman (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 4), into beliefs that there is something inherently wrong with non-White families – that is, deficit ideologies (Ahlquist, Gorski, & Montano, 2011; A. Anderson, 2013b; Delpit, 2009; Knoester, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Such deficit ideologies are notably exemplified by the work of Ruby Payne (2003) who “blame students and their families for the achievement gap and advise repressive management techniques and advocate pedagogies that certainly do not facilitate teachers’ understandings of the ‘gap’ is rooted in economic, cultural, and racial inequality in both school and society” (Ahlquist, Gorski, & Montano, 2011, p. viii).

Grace Boggs (1970) argues that the genesis of modern education began with the sinister intention of not only propagating a stratified economic system by affording the White American

bourgeoisie the opportunity to transmit their wealth on to the next generation, but that same system explicitly has singled out the Black community to be relegated to the margins of the lower class – what essentially amounts to racially-based economic eugenics. Boggs further argued that juxtaposed to maintaining the wealthy class, such an unequal educational system caters to the acculturation of Black students into their predestined role of the proletariat while proliferating a working force to be managed by Whites. That is, “America, like all other societies, allocates opportunities and incentives to learn in a highly unequal way. Those with the ‘right’ genes are systematically favored over those with the ‘wrong’ genes” (Jencks et al., 1972, p. 71) – White “genes” being the favored in the case of educational experiences and opportunities (Anyon, 1980; Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Among recent policy assumptions regarding factors that influence inequality in educational outcomes is how schools are organized. Namely, aside from detailed components of school organization like class size (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Cline & Small, 1994; Glass, 2008; Greene et al., 2005; Mathis, 2013), there are three major components related to school organization: charter schools, school vouchers, and curriculum/pedagogical practices – each of which is now taken up, in turn, below. School organization factors highlight notions of equal educational opportunity and the reinforcement of particular cultural capital through pedagogical and curriculum practices. It is important to immediately point out that overall, “evidence suggests that school choice systems may be leading to higher levels of segregation...” (Lubienski & Lubienski, 2014, p. 143). As a result, market-based school organization likely reinforces those disparities examined in the socioeconomic and race sections above.

Operating under the assumption that traditional public schools have failed (Berliner & Biddle, 1995), new iterations of school organizations have arisen namely in the way of charter

schools. Charter schools have since become the darling of education policymakers and reformers – including TFA alumni who enter into policymaking and leadership positions – who seek new organizational manifestations of schools to ameliorate inequality. Initially billed as a way for teachers to regain classroom-level autonomy, change school governance (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010), and foster innovation, charters have since become the default assumption for how school organization can be reimagined to combat, not teacher autonomy, but systemic school failures. Charters, like school vouchers, represent the assumption that state-operated school and schooling suffer from a lack of parental choice and thus limit educational opportunity while exposing students to mediocre teachers. Accordingly, the interjection of free-market competition would thus shake schools out of the mediocrity that reproduces inequality by way of direct competition for financial resources. Yet, despite the attempt to provide better educational opportunities, charter schools have “unequivocally created greater degrees of racial segregation” (Scott & Wells, 2013, p. 125), and thus, undermine notions of equal opportunity to end inequality (Garcia, 2010). Moreover, charter expansion in post-Katrina New Orleans, as an example, has favored the hiring of alternatively certified teachers like those from TFA, the average “teaching experience has shifted closer to 0-1 years experience (See Table 4.2). And while the impacts of teachers are limited (as explained above), research suggests that to the extent that teachers are influential, novice teachers do worse than their veteran counterparts (Berliner, 2013; Berliner & Glass, 2014; D. Goldstein, 2014a; Thomas, 2013; Vasquez Heilig & Jez, 2014).

Continuing along the assumption that public schools have failed, school vouchers have been seen as a way to end educational inequality by providing yet another method of parental choice within the guise of free-market competition – specifically by offering expanded

conceptions of equal education opportunity (Chingos & Peterson, 2012; Friedman, 1955; Greene & Winters, 2003; Moe, 2001; Walberg & Bast, 2003; Wolf, 2012). Accordingly, voucher proponents argue that school vouchers stand to diminish educational inequity and increase educational outcomes by, (a) forcing public schools to ‘get better’ as a result of competition; and (b) exposing public school students to the ‘better’ teachers and facilities traditionally associated with private schools. However, like charter schools, the evidence of voucher use benefits is strikingly limited, usually ideologically based (DeBray-Pelot, Lubienski, & Scott, 2007; Lubienski & Brewer, 2014), and ultimately exacerbates segregation along racial and economic lines.

Curriculum structure is not a form of school organization, *per se*, but curriculum is nonetheless an integral component of schooling that can be a factor in informing educational outcomes. Finding historical roots in the eugenics movement of the early twentieth century, standardized testing and cognitive testing have reinforced racial and economic distinctions as affluent and White cultural norms are rewarded on such tests (D. Goldstein, 2014a; Sacks, 1999, 2007). In addition to testing, pedagogical practices and school climate can further reinforce racial and economic distinctions among students (Apple, 1990, 1993). This reality is seen in charter school curriculum, namely at Knowledge is Power Program or KIPP (the nation’s largest charter network – founded by two TFA alums). Jim Horn notes that KIPP schools are, “a thinly-veiled effort to impose a new variety of cultural eugenics by those who view the transmission of urban cultural traits as a threat to White middle-class values and economic prosperity” (Horn, 2011, p. 93). Accordingly, the guiding policy assumption here is that non-White cultural understandings and experiences reinforce poor educational outcomes. As a result of this assumption, the only way to provide equal educational opportunity is to surround students with

curriculum and expectations that coincide with White culture – often also surrounding them with White teachers. Additionally, many charter schools like KIPP require parents to volunteer a set amount of hours per semester (or make a financial payment in lieu of volunteering). This school culture factor clearly creates barriers for families that cannot afford the time commitment and/or the financial one associated with not volunteering. As a result, this type of school climate and culture overtly reinforces unequal educational opportunities.

### **III. A Brief Overview of the Evolution of Teacher Preparation**

Given the myriad of early forms of schooling in the U.S., there was not much in the way of universal formalized teacher preparation or a standard process of teacher certification. As most early schools – overseen by local communities and towns – focused primarily on teaching the Bible (Fraser, 2014; Urban & Wagoner, 2009), individuals who were seen to be moral, upstanding, and who possessed knowledge of the Bible could be hired to teach. The formal requirements for maintaining a job as a teacher included, in some instances, less attention on being a ‘good teacher’ and more on being a ‘good person’ as evidenced by their being prohibited from riding in cars with men other than a father or brother and not being allowed to spend time in downtown ice-cream shops.

Among the most notable early forms of a more formalized preparation for teachers can be found in Catharine Beecher’s Hartford Female Seminary where she sought to train women for work as teachers. And while Beecher’s ideology was one that both celebrated the traditional role of woman-at-home, she also forged new understandings about the role of women outside of the home – dominantly as school teachers (Urban & Wagoner, 2009) – as she advocated for the United States to open the types of “normal” schools that trained teachers in the same way that



France and Prussia (Prussia's form of schooling becoming the model upon which U.S. schools ultimately were modeled after) trained teachers (Beecher, 1835). Normal schools would, in time, become the modern colleges of education that would oversee teacher preparation. To this day, traditional colleges of education and "traditionally certified teachers" are the mainstay of teacher preparation in the U.S. And while every college of education differs in its approach, they have certainly evolved from Beecher's regulations and oversight that was grounded in theology, to oversight from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) that now regulates almost all traditional forms of teacher preparation. CAEP is a recent consolidation of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) that began in 1954 with the goal of "rais[ing] the quality of preparation [of teachers]" and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) founded in 1997 to ensure evidence-based qualifications (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, n.d.).

Juxtaposed to the traditionally certified teacher and colleges of education are those teachers who enter the profession by way of an alternative certification program/organization that circumvents the years of coursework, practicum experience, and in many cases, the pedagogical tenants of teacher preparation associated with colleges of education. The term "alternative" in the phrase alternative teacher preparation aptly situates teacher preparation within the recent historical context of housing teacher preparation within colleges of education. On the face of it, alternative certification programs operate under the auspices of: (1) injecting competition into the "monopoly" of teacher preparation historically held by state universities; and/or (2) under the assertion and façade that teacher preparation can be expedited and that extensive training in both methodology and practicum practice (e.g., student teaching) is thus not a necessary component of sufficient teacher preparation before entering the classroom (Kopp,

1991). Additionally, alternative certification processes and organizations have received increasing support for expansion given the purported difficulty of staffing teachers in “hard-to-staff” schools – often urban schools that serve predominately non-White and non-affluent students. The combination of those assumptions work to reify the existence of alternative certification programs as a necessity to combat burdensome government oversight (like CAEP) and expenses at the state level (e.g., funding for colleges of education) in addition to offering individuals who aspire to be teachers a faster – and assuredly cheaper – entry into the field while seemingly serving as the best solution to a problem that traditional colleges of education have not been able to solve. However, as noted by some (Roth & Swail, 2000), since the advent of teacher colleges (e.g., traditional certification) did not occur until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, that alternative certification routes (in this definition, alternative meaning less formalized as is now the case of the traditional route) were actually the basis of teacher credentialing. That is, since local communities were responsible for hiring teachers and there existed no colleges of education – or normal schools at the time – the credentialing process was not formalized and was entirely up to local leaders to determine what constituted a ‘qualified’ teacher. Again, that determination was up to the discretion of community leaders and their evaluation of an individual’s grasp on the Bible and other moral expectations.

Alternative certification programs have taken on many shapes and sizes. The most notable of nation-wide programs include TFA, the New Teacher Project (TNTP), and the Relay Graduate School of Education (formerly known as “Teacher U”). There are also city-specific programs like the New York City Teaching Fellows in addition to state-specific and district-specific programs for alternative licensing (Teach Gwinnett, n.d.). However, the latter state-based licensing programs tend to not recruit candidates; rather, they provide coursework often in

partnership with a local university's college of education for individuals who are seeking employment as a teacher but do not have a traditional background in education. TFA and TNTP, on the other hand, actively recruit individuals to become alternatively certified teachers. TNTP was founded in 1997 by TFA alumna Michelle Rhee and functions in similar ways to that of TFA. Though, an important branching off specific to TNTP has been the organization's production of original research that has argued, among other things, that teacher unions are one of the main obstacles to education reform (Levin, Mulhern, & Schunck, 2005). Recently TNTP produced a study that concluded that current forms of teacher professional development are inadequate and that professional development should be more specific towards helping teachers increase metrics (e.g., test scores) (The New Teacher Project, 2015). TNTP founder Rhee became the Chancellor of D.C. Public Schools in 2007 and resigned in 2010 following an election cycle and accusations of cheating (Merrow, 2013). Following her resignation, Rhee established Students First, a lobbying organization that publishes state-based grading scale each year in addition to providing political and financial support for anti-union activities (Students First, 2013). With the help of Students Matter (an organization that is supported by Rhee and Students First), the high profile anti-teacher union case of *Vergara v California* made national headlines as the decision of the Court found that teacher tenure laws were unconstitutional (Students Matter, 2014; "Vergara v. California," 2014).

The Relay Graduate School of Education ("Relay") was founded as a partnership between three large charter network providers: Uncommon Schools, Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), and Achievement First. And while charter schools will not be examined in this dissertation, it is of interest that the founders of KIPP are TFA alums and much of the leadership of Achievement First and Uncommon Schools are also TFA alumni. Heralded by Secretary of

Education Arne Duncan (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), Relay has quickly become a mainstay for the alternative certification of charter schoolteachers in addition to providing credentialing for TFA corps members so that corps members need not partner with a traditional college of education for coursework related to licensure and credentialing. Additionally, Relay has become a choice provider for districts seeking to attend to the now present teacher shortage. Established at Hunter College by David Steiner and in conjunction with charter operators Norman Atkins (Uncommon Schools) and David Levin (KIPP), Relay is an initiative grounded on the assertion that teacher preparation should be characterized by more clinical practice and less on theoretical or methodological training usually found in traditional colleges of education (Carey, 2009). Unlike TFA's training that consists of only 5 weeks in the summer, Relay was designed as a master's degree program where candidates spend the bulk of their time teaching. Relay and its founders assert that the course of study prescribed for pre-service teachers at traditional colleges of education are antiquated and do not meet the demands of schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – namely charter schools – and that “the existing university-based process of teacher training and licensure wasn't giving [Atkins and Levin] enough of the staff that they required” (Carey, 2009).

Internationally, Teach First (TF) and Teach For All (TFAll) are examples of exporting the belief that what is needed most in education reform is reform in entry into the teaching profession. TF, founded in 2002, and TFAll presuppose that limited pedagogical training is needed in the course of teacher preparation as selectivity of certain traits that are deemed beneficial to the classroom takes precedence. The quest for certainty in education affords alternative certification programs to “plan backward” from high-test scores to the purported individual characteristics of teachers that facilitate such academic growth. That, along with a

plethora of venture philanthropic and business connections, TF and TFAI have successfully exported TFA's disposition that teacher preparation need not adhere to the regulated traditional system of training and credentialing (Friedrich, Walter, & Colmenares, 2015; La Londe, Brewer, & Lubienski, 2015; Straubhaar & Friedrich, 2015). More specifically, calls for deregulation coincide with assumptions and assertions that traditional preparation programs do not produce good teachers and should be overhauled. Former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has also expressed a desire to totally overhaul teacher preparation despite rating his efforts to date as 'failing' (Brown, 2015a).

Other alternative certification programs aside, TFA has, since its founding in 1990, become the largest, reportedly the most prestigious, and subsequently the most examined alternative teacher preparation program in the U.S. (Teach For America, 2015) that continues to expanded exponentially across the globe (La Londe et al., 2015). Founded on the ideas espoused in Wendy Kopp's undergraduate thesis at Princeton University (Kopp, 1989), TFA began with 300 corps members under the auspices aligned with the rationale of alternative certification programs that sought to ameliorate teacher shortages in hard-to-staff school districts – namely impoverished urban and rural districts that predominately served non-White students. Kopp's assertion was that it was the lack of qualified teachers from the traditional teacher preparation routes associated with colleges of education that had resulted in national achievement gaps and that the best solution would be the creation of a national cadre of high-achieving teachers to be sent into those hard-to-staff schools to: (a) ameliorate teacher shortages; and (b) provide the “best and brightest” teachers to the nation's neediest of students given the reported lack of intelligence found among those who matriculate into and through traditional teacher preparation programs (Kopp, 1989; Labaree, 2010).

TFA dominantly embodies both assumptions mentioned above about the need for alternative teacher preparation. Specifically, TFA advocates for the full de-regulation of teacher preparation (T. J. Brewer & Cody, 2014; Crawford-Garrett, 2013) – considering colleges of education as failed institutions. That is, traditional colleges of education are seen as overly expensive bureaucratic entities that largely produce unqualified teachers since entry into traditional certification programs do not require elevated academic requirements like high ACT/SAT scores or high GPAs. Conversely, TFA has established itself as an alternative teacher preparation program that circumvents the exorbitant costs associated with state-run colleges while providing those individuals with a more prestigious academic pedigree with entry into the teaching field (Sass, 2011).

Kopp has since grown her organization into a teacher preparation powerhouse that wields incredible power over the public discourse surrounding teacher preparation and the teaching profession as well as immense influence on policymaking through the organization's own efforts as well as through its growing alumni who adopt TFA's discourse and seek to reinforce policies that benefit TFA (Cersonsky, 2013; Jacobsen & Linkow, 2014; Trujillo & Scott, 2014).

Other impacts of TFA can be found in the organization's influence on public discourse about teacher tenure and in the secondary impacts from the organization's alumni as they leave the classroom. TFA was largely supportive of the plaintiffs in the *Vergara v. California* case that found teacher tenure protection to be unconstitutional as a mechanism that purportedly served to protect bad teachers from being fired and ultimately represents a form of discrimination (D. Goldstein, 2014b). As pointed out above, alumna Michelle Rhee has made a career on lobbying against teacher tenure, for increased charter schools, increased use of standardized tests, and merit pay schemes that link teacher salary to student test score outcomes. TFA's impact by way

of its alumni is also evidenced by the dispositions and practices associated with the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) charter school network founded by two TFA alums. For example, KIPP prefers staffing its schools with TFA corps members because they can be worked harder over a shorter amount of time focusing almost exclusively on the test-prep pedagogy reinforced by NCLB while the partnership with TFA guarantees an endless flow of “new blood” of teachers with such dispositions (Horn, 2011).

Though, while TFA’s impact on the teaching profession is largely seen in the teachers they provide to schools and in the impact that the organization’s alumni have had, likely the two largest impacts that TFA has had on teacher preparation and the teaching profession lay in the organization’s ability to influence President Obama’s decision for Secretary of Education (Dillon, 2008; Hursh, 2011b) and the organization’s lobbying to include TFA corps members within the NCLB definition of “highly qualified” and in the extension of that definition through an add-on to the Bill that ended the 2013 government shutdown (V. Strauss, 2013) – a more through examination of NCLB’s “highly qualified” designation for teachers is examined in Section IV below.

TFA has come under increasing scrutiny over the past few years. Namely, TFA has been anecdotally criticized as an organization that explicitly operates to replace traditionally certified and/or veteran teachers (Takahashi, 2012a, 2012b) – a reality that has recently been confirmed empirically (T. J. Brewer et al., 2016).

In sum, the history of teacher certification in the U.S. began with loosely defined prerequisites of Bible-based knowledge and/or some formal training in the classics – all evaluated by local communities, to a practice of housing credentialing in colleges of education, to now, the growing tide of competition from alternative certification organizations. To be sure,

the passing of NCLB in 2001 was a unique federal attempt to streamline accountability for teacher certification while ultimately leaving it up to the individual states to determine for themselves who was and wasn't qualified to teach.

#### **IV. Teacher Preparation in the NCLB Era**

The Higher Education Act of 1998 included language that required standardized reporting on teacher quality by both colleges of education and the states in which they were located while also requiring reporting on the amount of alternatively certified and emergency certified teachers (Roth & Swail, 2000) but no federal law had the same reach and impact as that of NCLB's attempt to standardize teacher preparation by standardizing the aims of education. Indeed, the passage of NCLB represented a new era of federal policy as it relates to addressing the perceived failed nature of schools in the United States. The continued rhetoric of the failed school resulting in the academic achievement gap between Whites and non-Whites reinforced the disposition that previous attempts to reform K-12 education – like the Higher Education Act of 1998, Goals 2000, etc., - continued to fail. NCLB's approach to education reform installed a more robust and direct level of federal accountability to raise test scores.

Prior to, and following, the passage of NCLB, states have largely retained autonomy when it comes to setting forth the prescribed course of study and certification for their own teachers. The impact of this autonomy is readily seen in questions and processes of interstate certification reciprocity. That is, a teacher certified in one state, say Illinois, may or may not be immediately eligible to teach in another state according to the receiving state's guidelines on acceptable forms of certification and NCLB's "highly qualified" designation (a designation that will be examined in detail below). And while all states require teacher candidates to have



completed an undergraduate degree, there are as many variances in what coursework and testing is required as there are states. NCLB did, however, begin to standardize teacher preparation jargon and expectations around notions of what constitutes a qualified teacher from an unqualified teacher – specifically the “highly qualified” teacher. However, despite this state-based autonomy, legal challenges to NCLB’s definition of the highly qualified designation have proven problematic to enforce given the federal law’s apparent superiority over state-based decision making.

NCLB was passed in 2001 as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) with almost unanimous and bipartisan support (Debray, 2006). Signed into law by President George W. Bush (who fancied himself as the “education president”), NCLB, in an attempt to reduce the nation’s achievement gaps between White and non-White students, created a new system of reporting and disaggregating student test data to determine if individual schools were making “adequate yearly progress” (AYP). Failure of a school to achieve AYP after two consecutive years meant that the school began a tiered system of punitive measures to incentivize improvement – the final punitive measure resulting in a state takeover and likely converting the school into a privately run charter school. NCLB further postulated that all students would be proficient in their respective grade levels by the year 2014. The means towards achieving these ends, according to the law and public opinion, was in ensuring that all teachers were “highly qualified” by the end of the 2005-2006 school year (“No child left behind (NCLB) Act,” 2001). Accordingly, NCLB created new forms of accountability for both schools and teachers to raise test scores, report those scores, as well as ensure the method for raising such scores – by seeking to place ‘highly qualified’ teachers in front of students, namely students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

However, it is important to point out that while NCLB is the dominant marker in teacher preparation history and policy that relates to an attempt to fully standardize teacher accountability, that ideology was not a newfound belief in the 2000s; rather, Taylorism dispositions are found in the 1920s as proponents of Taylorism argued that schooling ought to conform to dispositions and practices of scientific management and that teachers ought to be evaluated based on student academic output(s) (D. Goldstein, 2014a).

Within NCLB, teacher quality was situated as one of the most important components of student academic achievement. To those ends, the law stipulated that all teachers ought to be “highly qualified” and made it law that all teachers have a bachelor’s degree, demonstrate subject-matter expertise, and hold state certification (as defined by the individual state) (United States Department of Education, 2004). If, according to the law, a teacher were not classified as highly qualified, the hiring principal of that school must notify – in writing – the parents of those students who were to be taught by that teacher. This ultimately served as an incentive to principals to hire only those teachers who had the designation of highly qualified. Again, because NCLB gave each individual state the authority to determine the process for teachers to become highly qualified, a teacher may be considered highly qualified in one state but not in another.

State-based certification exams have slowly replaced the once universally accepted Praxis exam in an effort to fully cement state-based autonomy in determining who is and isn’t qualified to be a teacher. And despite the tests being in place to ensure quality control over the entry into the profession, some research has suggested that testing teacher candidates prior to entry does not actually have an impact on teacher quality while it also may create an unnecessary barrier (both cost based and culturally based) that prevents otherwise qualified individuals from going

through the certification proves for new teachers (Angrist & Guryan, 2008). Additionally, others have shown that certification status for new teachers is not as reliable of an indicator for teacher quality than is the actual teaching that takes place in the classroom (Kane et al., 2008) and others have argued that certification and teaching experience are not requirements for “good teaching” (Greene et al., 2005) while others contend that full preparation that precedes certification (particularly traditional preparation versus alternative preparation) is exceedingly better at preparing ‘good’ educators (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). Again, ‘good’ educators in this measure are those that are able to raise test scores – the panacea for closing the national achievement gap as outlined by NCLB. Such metrics are, indeed, also aligned with the Obama administration’s Race to the Top incentive that sought to ensure that students were “college and career ready” – a goal that is also purportedly measured by student test scores even in elementary school (Hernández, 2009).

Above all else, NCLB’s impact on teacher preparation and the teaching profession can be found in this elevation of the importance of test scores as the law “institutionalized standardized testing as the vehicle by which public schools would be measured” (Urban & Wagoner, 2009, pp. 413-414). Prior to NCLB, evaluations of teachers in training and teachers in service included a myriad of factors outside of test scores. Yet, akin to the iconic Wendy’s marketing slogan of “where’s the beef?” NCLB magnified the standard of asking, “where’s the data?” As such, other factors related to educative experiences in the classroom began to receive less attention as the focus pulled toward test scores and tracking teacher qualifications related to raising those scores (United States Government Accountability Office, 2005). Traditional teacher preparation courses including foundations of education courses have become increasingly under attack as the ideology behind teacher preparation has shifted to focus more on subject/content mastery under

the assumption that subject/content test scores can be increased if teachers are better trained in those areas (Hardee & McFaden, 2015; Swain, 2013). Essentially NCLB and the reaction from teacher preparation programs have created (by design or perhaps by default) an overwhelming quest for certainty. That is, within the realm of Taylor's scientific management, teacher preparation has set itself to ensure – for certain – that its preparation program and those individuals who matriculate into and through are going to be 'good' teachers. Though, it is important to point out that through the deprofessionalization of teaching, as will be discussed below, neoliberal education reformers like the Gates Foundation claim that “superior teachers are created not through teacher education programs or professional development, but because they use student's test scores for the feedback necessary to improve” (Hursh, 2011a, p. 46).

CAEP as the regulating body of traditional teacher preparation programs, for example, exists to ensure that the prescribed coursework for pre-service teachers creates empirical data while the teaching candidates themselves create, log, and assess their own individual data related to impact on student scores – often through paid platforms like LiveText. CAEP, in turn, then is able to attest to the credibility of a particular teacher preparation program through its accreditation process, thus providing a “guarantee” to prospective hiring school districts that an alumnus is empirically qualified and prepared to be a 'good' teacher – that is, raise student test scores.

To illustrate the impact of NCLB on teacher certification, I draw on the state of Georgia as a case study example of how NCLB allows each state to outline licensure requirements all under the expectation that teachers meet the “highly qualified” designation. I've chosen Georgia because it was the state in which I progressed through the licensure process. Not only does Georgia provide a useful and detailed example of how states can define teacher qualification, but

given that TFA partners with numerous metro-Atlanta school districts is of interest when examining the specific impact and opportunities for TFA's growth under the NCLB "highly qualified" designation for alternatively certified teachers. For those teachers in Georgia who enter the profession by way of a "non-traditional" route (alternatively certified), no such "guarantee" from an accrediting body exists outside of the alternative certification organization's own rhetoric and the rhetoric from supporters. To be a highly qualified teacher in Georgia, a traditionally certified teacher must:

1. Hold a bachelor's degree from a GaPSC [Georgia Professional Standards Commission] accepted, accredited institution of higher education;
2. Hold a valid Georgia teaching certificate
3. Have evidence of subject matter competence in the subjects they teach by:
  - a. An academic major OR the equivalent (minimum of 15 semester hours for middle grades; minimum of 21 semester hours for secondary)
  - b. AND a passing score on the State approved, required content assessment for the area/subjects they teach
4. Have a teaching assignment that is appropriate for the field(s) listed on the Georgia teaching certificate.  
(Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2010, p. 9)

Continuing from the credentialing requirements in Georgia outlined above, the requirements for the highly qualified designation for those teachers prepared in alternative methods are identical except for requirement number 3. That is, alternatively certified teachers do not have to show transcripts confirming training in content areas as they can 'prove' that they have subject matter competence by simply passing the state approved content assessment (in this case the Georgia Assessment for the Certification of Educators – or GACE). And while alternatively certified teachers in Georgia are also required to have a teaching assignment that is appropriate for the field(s) listed on their teaching certificate, it is not unusual for TFA corps members to hold a bachelor's degree outside of a content area (e.g., journalism) yet, take and pass a GACE test,

thus imprinting their teaching certificate with, for example, a mathematics endorsement and thereby establishing them as a ‘highly qualified’ teacher.

Though an alternatively certified person who successfully passes the GACE becomes a highly qualified teacher according to NCLB, the teacher is employed on a provisional license. As a result, the teacher “must complete and receive the appropriate Georgia clear, renewable professional certificate within three years from the date of initial certificate validity to remain ‘highly qualified’” (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2010, p. 10). Thus, while there exists alternative routes into teaching, the state of Georgia has measures in place to ensure that those teachers certified alternatively are eventually exposed to the training from traditional colleges of education – thus earning a “clear and renewable” teaching license like that of traditionally certified teachers.

While the alternatively certified teacher fulfills the requirements of a clear and renewable certificate, s/he is paid only 94.5% of a full salary (Georgia Department of Education, 2013); however, as is the case of TFA corps members who, as alternatively certified teachers, receive a provisional license, TFA has brokered an agreement with the state that their corps members not receive a reduced salary (94.5%) but rather a full (100%) salary associated with holding a clear and renewable certificate (T. J. Brewer et al., 2016). Moreover, since TFA corps members who teach on a provisional license – but with the highly qualified designation from NCLB – teach only for a 2 year commitment, the three year window is sufficient time to teach while never enrolling in a masters program thereby not complying with the state’s requirements that alternatively certified teachers work with a college of education to secure a full clear and renewable license. Thus, TFA corps members who are given the ‘highly qualified’ designation do no more than pass the state GACE exam in the content area that the corps member is assigned

– a content that is usually not supported by the corps member’s educational background. Also, because of the highly qualified designation, principals do not notify parents of the alternative preparation route of those teachers as NCLB requires notification only in the event that the teacher is not classified as highly qualified.

Because states have autonomy in determining who is and isn’t considered highly qualified, there have been instances where the highly qualified designation have been challenged particularly for those teachers who are alternatively certified to teach. In 2010, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (California) ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in *Renee v. Duncan* that the labeling of teachers who were alternatively certified as highly qualified was a direct violation of NCLB’s goal of providing qualified teachers to students (Affeldt, 2012). The court found that alternatively certified teachers – namely TFA corps members – were not highly qualified and that the concentration of such teachers in poor urban schools was thus a violation of NCLB (Ravitch, 2012a). Specifically, “under NCLB, all students are entitled to a highly qualified teacher, and where a state or district lacks 100% highly qualified teachers the law further states that low-income students and students of color should not be disproportionately taught by unqualified teachers” (Zeichner, 2013).

Because of the legal challenges and questions surrounding alternatively certified teachers as highly qualified, in 2010, Congress passed a continuing resolution that specifically named “teachers in training” as highly qualified. Again, despite state-based legal challenges to alternatively certified teachers being classified as highly qualified, organizations like TFA continue to wield immense influence at the federal level as the NCLB provision for “teachers in training” to be designated as highly qualified continues – even as an add-on to the continuing resolution that ended the 2013 government shutdown.

While the passage of NCLB did not usher alternative certification programs into existence, the frenzy surrounding the law that included assertions that public schools had failed, teachers (and by default, traditional teacher preparation programs) were to blame for that failure, and that, subsequently, teachers ought to be the focus of increased accountability facilitated the rampant growth of alternative certification programs. Because organizations like TFA promote the idea that teacher quality is situated as the most important component of student academic achievement, the organization has thrived over the past 25 years as evidenced in its rampant growth and the organization's ability to garner hundreds of millions of dollars from venture philanthropists (deMarrais, 2012; deMarrais, Lewis, & Wenner, 2013; Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Saltman, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012).

Though, TFA is not the first organization to assert that what was lacking in teacher preparation was a more prestigious academic pedigree. President Johnson's National Teacher Corps was largely based on Joan Wofford's plan to incentivize well-to-do individuals to teach for a few years in urban schools (D. Goldstein, 2014a). Along with teaching a few courses per week and observing more experienced teachers, Wofford and Johnson's alternatively certified teachers would work on a master's degree that allowed them to "[circumvent] the traditional role of education schools and their 'Mickey Mouse courses'" (D. Goldstein, 2014a, p. 125).

In summation, the history of teacher preparation in the U.S. is as complex as U.S. history itself. As forms of education in the States predated Horace Mann's common schools – and even during the proliferation of those – education was essentially a local endeavor. As such, teacher preparation took on no discernable standardized forms outside of the vast differences between communities, counties, and states. And while state-based regulatory bodies that differ in their approach and governance now largely oversee teacher preparation, it can be argued that there



still exists no consistent inter-state expectations or policies about teacher preparation or credentialing. However, the federal NCLB and its elevation of test scores as the *pièce de résistance* of education have narrowed the aims of what is expected of teachers and, in turn, shifted expectations of what teacher preparation ought to look like. Within that shift exists a boom in alternative certification programs that have thrived in the NCLB era as they have received not only vast financial support but have garnered much support from the general public and the past three presidential administrations. The growth of alternative teacher preparation organizations raises significant questions about the validity of traditional teacher preparation routes – at the very least, they have created a real force of competition that must be acknowledged. The types of policies and ideologies that found root in NCLB have certainly influenced schooling practices that, in turn, influence the type(s) of teachers needed. Alternative certification programs continue to thrive as they have aligned their aims with those test-prep ideologies espoused within NCLB. And while colleges of education continue to slowly adopt that same rhetoric and ideology, the nation continues to be supplied with teachers trained to raise test scores – a reality that will continue to dramatically impact the type of education students receive.

## **V. Teaching as a Profession**

Teaching, in all likelihood, has never actually fully asserted itself as a true profession (Ginsburg & Megahed, 2011; Harness, 2012). Thus, it is not my intention to claim that TFA is solely responsible for the deprofessionalization of teaching; rather, that the field of teaching – as an unstable field – is appropriated by and further deprofessionalized by organizations like TFA.

Teaching, seen historically as a feminine job, has always struggled to achieve a level of social respect on par with professions like doctors and lawyers (D. Goldstein, 2014a).

Evidence of society's assertion that teaching is a historically feminized space (Urban & Wagoner, 2009) was recently showcased by Republican presidential candidate John Kasich who proclaimed that much of the problems in education arise from teachers spending too much time in the teachers lounge. According to Kasich, if he were "king in America, [he] would abolish all teachers' lounges where they sit together and worry about 'woe is us'" (V. Strauss, 2015a). And while the snipe was an attempt to undercut unionization it was also a microaggression that cast [women] teachers as nothing more than gossipy hens.

TFA has reinforced a unique phenomenon when it comes to issues of teaching as a profession. While TFA benefits from being readily understood as a prestigious organization, in my estimation, this prestige has less to do with the actual act of teaching and more to do with the acceptance rate of TFA applicants and the innumerable post-teaching opportunities that are available to alumni. That is, while it has been suggested that TFA has made "teaching sexy again" (Mathews, 2010), what is "sexy" here is not the two years of classroom teaching but the attractiveness (and I use that word on purpose) of converting the social capital of volunteerism and "White-savior" work into more concrete non-teaching career opportunities. Specifically, this conversion is possible given TFA's "discourse of bourgeois social voluntarism" and an ideology "based on a post-Reganite selfish idealism" (McCarthy, 1998, p. 142). TFA is able to keep its acceptance rate artificially low by flooding college campuses with marketing and recruiters. Acceptance rates are kept artificially low given that the minimum eligible GPA to apply is 2.5, yet, the average GPA of corps members over the past few years has been approximately a 3.5 (Teach For America, n.d.-a). By allowing applications from those with a

2.5, though the organization historically doesn't accept anyone with less than a 3.0 inflates applications and affords TFA the opportunity to report low acceptance rates, thus creating artificial prestige.

Volunteerism aside, categorizing teaching as “sexy” carries with it a connotation of feminine objectification notwithstanding, my contention here is that the TFA paradigm is that the job of teaching is not only something temporary that can be thrown away after one benefits from it, but that for those career teachers, the practice of hiring TFA teachers for less money, less benefits, and operating under the assumption that teaching is something to do to pass time, reinforces the long-held notion that teaching is a feminized role that deserves less money, less benefits, and less respect. Districts that turn to TFA for staffing needs to save money, then, reinforce the notion that teaching ought to be a low-wage job.

More evidence exists that reform rhetoric that classifies teachers as the necessary object of reform are intrinsically anti-woman. Conceptions of teachers as temporary workers replicate lifecycle employment that reinforces a low-paid approach to teaching. Despite efforts to position teaching as a profession, repeated attempts at teacher-proof curricula, high stakes testing, high levels of supervision, and now TFA, teaching, with its high turnover rate and its majority of women, remains in its classically feminized state in many ways.

Additionally, organizations like TFA-alumna-founded Students First push for anti-union legislation, which anti-unionization in many ways becomes anti-woman as the profession of teaching – largely staffed by women – are threatened with the loss of collective bargaining and job protections. Aligning with the “civil rights” rhetoric of TFA and other reformers, teacher unions have been castigated as racist for “trapping minority children in failing schools” (Key, 2014).

Morwenna Griffiths contends that rather than seeing teaching as less than a profession due to its feminization, such a reality is to be welcomed as it challenges hegemonic masculinity (Griffiths, 2006). Though Griffiths contends that the onslaught of the “one size fits all” approach to education is a manifestation of managerialism that is characteristic of hegemonic masculinity (Griffiths, 2006, p. 403). Along this conception, TFA and other reformers who promote a standardized approach to teaching and learning therefore reinforce the masculine managerialism of schools; however, corps member acceptance of teaching as a temporary and low-paying job reinforces the social construction of teaching as feminine.

### *Neoliberalism and Teacher Professionalism*

In an effort to reduce teaching to a technocratic function – thereby further deprofessionalizing and deskilling teaching – neoliberalism seeks to deregulate entry into the field while simultaneously injecting competitive actors that will, according to market logic, reduce costs associated with teaching and teachers while increasing efficiency (Weiner, 2011). According to neoliberal logic, teaching represents a noncommodified good that, by way of deregulation, can be converted into a commoditized value for profit (Giroux, 2004; Weiner, 2011). The attempt to deregulate, deskill, and deprofessionalize teaching is exacerbated by the introduction of pseudo-privately controlled groups of teachers like those who are sponsored by corporations and private venture philanthropies.

Ted Purinton notes that education reform seeks to shift control of and rewards of teaching into a managerial hierarchy (Purinton, 2012). Further, Purinton suggest that,

an autonomous profession proves its worth to society – within markets or political system – as a result of the perceived value of its trademark skill, developed through *intense training*. De-skilling, then, is the natural consequence of neoliberalism, which seeks occupational deregulation in favor of flexible

employment. A profession controls employment through training, *credentialing*, and performance monitoring and then obtains certification granting rights from the state. Flexible employment markets allow for *quicker introduction into a field*, as well as simpler firings by managers and fewer certification constraints from the state. (Purinton, 2012, p. 30, emphasis added)

Considering the advent of alternative certification programs in the field of teacher preparation, organizations like TFA that rely on a fast-entry equation of preparation represent the neoliberal tenant of a quicker introduction into a field while purporting that intense training or credentialing typically associated with a profession represents an unnecessary obstacle.

The goal of deprofessionalizing teaching – while justifying alternative certification and opening the door for expansion of such practices – is to also cast teachers as interchangeable and replaceable cogs in the machine of standardized education. And while some government agencies have even challenged the need for teachers to be certified at all (Ravitch, 2012b), modern philanthropists are redefining the role of teachers beyond simple classroom instruction. That is, through the deprofessionalization of teaching, teachers are seen as less useful in the policymaking role of what takes place in schools. Notably, a representative of the Gates Foundation – who has given TFA anywhere between \$10,000,000 and \$24,999,999 over the past few years (Teach For America, 2012a) – suggested that teachers could not be part of the [Gates] board because that would be a conflict of interest since it would be, “like having the workers running the factory” (Hursh, 2011a, p. 46).

And, as has been argued by some, cost reduction that is associated with hiring alternatively certified teachers is the real driving force behind alternative teacher preparation programs (Glass, 2008). Though, it is important to point out that such financial implications of which teacher preparation route is preferred, salary cost considerations are a minimal figure considering potential savings that would naturally follow by reducing cumulative costs

associated with paying higher insurance premiums and pension/retirement benefits on behalf of teacher employees. In this light, alternative teacher preparation and certification organizations typify the type of teacher desired from the NCLB test-prep era all at a cheaper cost to school districts. As such, NCLB-like policies and the preferencing of alternatively certified teachers create the capacity for districts to attempt to conform to federal (and state) law while saving money in the process – though, while there are clear financial savings, there exists an exuberant costs borne by students that are the recipient of teacher turnover that is associated with alternative certification programs like TFA (M. L. Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013).

## **VI. Teach For America's Role in Perpetuating Inequality**

Much of the historic literature on TFA has focused on the organization's impacts on student outcomes – namely on test scores. While some research suggests that TFA corps members produce better, or equal, results when compared to their traditionally certified counterparts (Antecol, Eren, & Ozbeklik, 2013; Clark et al., 2013a; Clark et al., 2015; Decker et al., 2004; Turner, Goodman, Adachi, Brite, & Decker, 2012; Zukiewicz et al., 2015), others research suggests that such findings are misleading or mixed at best (Kovacs & Slate-Young, 2013; Rubinstein, 2013; Vasquez Heilig, 2013), or that TFA corps members perform worse than their non-TFA counterparts (Vasquez Heilig & Jez, 2010). The interest in examining corps member's impact on student test scores is an indication of the elevated importance of test scores in addition to an evaluation of one of the stated aims/purposes of TFA's involvement in teacher preparation: raising test scores. To those ends, TFA continues to be ranked as one of the

country's leading teacher preparation programs by the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) (National Council for Teacher Quality, 2014).

Other research has examined TFA's impact on the lives of corps members as a result of their participation (T. J. Brewer, 2014; T. J. Brewer & deMarrais, 2015; Matsui, 2015; Barbara Torre Veltri, 2010), TFA's connection to venture philanthropies and charter school networks (deMarrais, 2012; deMarrais et al., 2013; Kretchmar et al., 2014), TFA's role in perpetuating racism and symbolic violence (A. Anderson, 2013a, 2013b), whether or not alumni of the organization continue in civic engagement (Fairbanks, 2010), what extent alumni turned policymaker or school principal reinforce TFA's brand of education reform (Jacobsen & Linkow, 2014; Trujillo & Scott, 2014), and the persistence of corps members as teachers (M. Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; M. L. Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Vasquez Heilig & Jez, 2010, 2014).

TFA itself produces a fair amount of self-funded research on the organization including studies on the persistence of corps members as teachers and principal satisfaction with TFAers. For example, TFA suggests that 90 percent of partnering principals report high levels of satisfaction with corps members – often more satisfied with corps members than traditionally certified teachers (Teach For America, 2015). However, TFA has never released information about what principals receive the survey, the response rate, or the background of the principals (e.g., whether the principal is a TFA alumnus), or if satisfaction with corps members is reliant upon any increase in test scores.

Here I attempt to illustrate how TFA's pedagogical belief in teaching to tests via drill-and-kill methods in an effort to raise student test scores is founded upon deficit ideologies that, in turn, reinforce the unequal nature of schooling in the U.S.

In effect, the ideological assumption that the solution to systemic poverty can be manifested through the raising of test scores in an effort to “rescue” students from their impoverished lives delegitimizes the capacities of those students while reinforcing dominant, affluent, and often, White dispositions. Moreover, TFA rhetoric that suggests to incoming and current corps members that they will likely be the “one caring adult in a child’s life” is indicative of the organization’s belief that impoverished students and students of color have no decent role models or adults who care about them other than corps members.

Deficit ideologies are nothing new and certainly not a unique characteristic of TFA or its corps members. Though, the disposition is clearly a characteristic of the larger force of educational activists that insist that poverty is an inexcusable “excuse,” the TFA rhetoric largely centers around what first year teachers can do to “fix” the poverty cycle. As Olivia Blanchard pointed out, “That’s really what the achievement gap is—for all of the external factors that may or may not add challenges to our students’ lives—mostly it is that they really and truly have not been taught and are therefore years behind where they need to be” (Blanchard, 2013). In her explanation of why she decided to quit TFA, Blanchard points out that the language that was used by TFA staff early in the training process centered around the idea that she, and the other corps members in her region, could “save” a broken system that no one else had been able to fix. Other alums have voiced similar concerns (Matsui, 2015). Finding contemporary roots in the work of Ruby Payne (2003), deficit ideologies have a vast reach beyond simple dispositions towards class. That is, many deficit ideologies are “laden with racial prejudices” (Redeaux, 2011, p. 185). A significant portion of TFA rhetoric could be classified as missionary zeal. That is, corps members develop and embody an attitude that it is specifically their presence in the communities in which they are placed and that it is their presence in student’s lives that brings



about new possibilities. Said another way, poor communities, communities of color, and the students therein, would be left wanting for hope and opportunity, sans TFA (see, for example, Figure 4.1). It is through this disposition and discourse that TFA corps members embody a sense of missionary zeal. As one corps member put it,

Corps members see the value of communities like the ones in which we teach. Corps members realize we all have the responsibility to grow and learn together, and that as Americans we all are tied to each other through the network of communities. These children, in poor areas, are our future just as much as the children from our neighborhoods back home. (Ness, 2004, p. 197)

While this corps member acknowledges “value” in the communities in which TFA places, the value is seemingly a self-serving one. This rhetoric situates TFA as a necessary and integral part in the “lifting up” of impoverished communities. These communities without TFA may – according to the discourse – be unable to help themselves without the help of those who look like “children from our neighborhoods back home” – meaning White and affluent.

Another corps member said, “Negative school environments and teachers who didn’t expect the absolute best from students propelled his anger” (Ness, 2004, p. 200). It is important to note that what this corps member elevated as what was “best” for students was a myopic understanding of learning situated in an ever-increasing version of standardization and accountability. That is, the form of schooling that led him through a life of prestige, college acceptance and completion, and acceptance into the seemingly prestigious TFA centered around academic success and testing. Another corps member stated, “in general, school had never engaged these students. I wanted to change how my students perceived school and learning, to share my belief that education is a tool to be used by students for their own betterment. In the meantime, though, I would settle for adequate end-of-course test preparation” (Ness, 2004, p. 93).

Tying involvement in TFA to prestige in addition to the celebrating of corps member's academic pedigrees and accomplishments feeds the ideology that students of color lack the necessary role models to rise out of poverty. Stern and Johnson state that within TFA, "Success is narrowly defined in terms of employment and money. Merit is used as a discursive trope to legitimate the corps member's own success and casts a racialized and classist shadow on all those who don't succeed, despite working quite hard" (Stern & Johnston, 2013, p. 7).

Moreover, this mentality fosters the potential for corps members to not only believe that they are the single best adult in a child's life but that those children should also acknowledge and thank the corps member for that service. For example, in Holly Ness' book of corps member narratives, a corps member stated, "My kids ate me alive. They wouldn't sit down. They were yelling and throwing things. Before Christmas break, I asked them to write me a paragraph telling me why I should return after vacation" (Ness, 2004, p. 199). Another stated that, "Children in low-income areas needed me. Corporate America didn't need me" (Ness, 2004, p. 26).

TFA corps members are introduced to inequality and schools during the summer Institute. However, while there is mention of studies like the *Coleman Report* (1966), the *Report* is explicitly denounced as an attempt to "make excuses" for poor academic performance.

Specifically, TFA suggests that the *Report*,

fostered a perspective absolving teachers and schools from responsibility for students' success or failure, encouraging a disempowering tendency to look 'outside their own sphere of influence' for reasons why students are not succeeding. (Farr, 2010, p. 5)

This discourse supports TFA's Academic Impact Model that situates the teacher as the root cause of a student's liberation from poverty or the perpetuation of generational poverty (T. J. Brewer,

2014). Moreover, the discourse centers test scores as the indicator of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ teaching/schooling that informs a student’s potential of social and economic mobility. For TFA, the continuation of low test scores is indicative of ‘bad’ teachers. And, as the data will show in Chapter 4, teachers now have at the forefront of their practice a commitment to raising test scores as ideal employees in the post-NCLB and neoliberal era.

TFA presents this discourse and disposition to incoming corps members as a proven fact. That is, test scores are the ideal metric for measuring the quality of a teacher and a student’s opportunity to escape socioeconomic inequality (Kopp & Roekel, 2011). During the first week of Induction, corps members are exposed to the historical achievement data of the schools in which they will be employed while suggesting that the non-TFA teachers are responsible for the poor test scores that result from low-expectations and excuse making. At Institute, corps members utilize the Institute Student Achievement Toolkit (ISAT) which is a compilation of test questions and answers that align with state-specific standards. Corps members then practice creating a standards-aligned test. Students at the summer Institute are given the test as an initial baseline indicator of achievement. For the four weeks that follow, corps members engage in “backwards planning” by divvying up test questions, turning them into lesson plans, teaching those lessons, and then finally giving the same ISAT test at the end of the four weeks. Student growth between the pre- and post-test is attributed to the quality of the teacher.

### *How TFA Promotes Deficit Ideologies*

TFA discourse consistently objectifies students by situating them as the recipient of TFA’s “excellence.” In this way, it is the corps members themselves, not the students, their parents, or communities, which lead children to success. Noting Anderson again who analyzed

the discourse of deficit on TFA's website, illustrates that TFA advertises that "We can provide an excellent education for kids in low-income communities" (A. Anderson, 2013b, p. 35). As is pointed out, much of TFA's rhetoric centers around the notion of "we/you" (A. Anderson, 2013b, p. 35) in an effort to situate the corps member – or in this case the prospective corps member – in the driver's seat of change. More specifically, given the rampant moniker of education as today's "civil rights issue," corps members are placed not as those White compatriots on freedom rides to the South, rather, they are situated as the driver who facilitates the experience and is responsible for any changes that follow. Ravitch, in an effort to shed light on the how TFA recruits only the "brightest" to join stated,

TFA is not content to send our young people to do useful work in the schools. Flush with media acclaim and corporate largesse, TFA sells its brand as the best means of changing American education and ending educational inequity. It maintains that its teachers are singularly equipped to save children's lives, because TFA teachers have high expectations, clear goals, and a sense of purpose. It portray itself as a prominent actor in the new civil rights movements, a force to abolish inequality and establish social justice. (Ravitch, 2013a, p. 135)

Moreover, "the construction of a grand narrative organized around change as progress and progress as change not only legitimates the path of 'whitestream' history but also sustains the hegemonic goals of capitalism (wealth accumulation) and colonization (appropriation of property)" (Grande 2004, cited in A. Anderson, 2013b, p. 37) – though, as examined earlier, non-Whites and the poor have had little historical success at wealth accumulation. TFA's website states that,

leading educators explain why we must help kids growing up in poverty beat the culture of low expectations," and "successful teachers break the cycle of low expectations faced by many students in low-income communities. They show students that if they work hard enough, they can and will achieve. They maintain high expectations for their students, while still meeting them where they are academically, so the students can succeed. (A. Anderson, 2013b, p. 39)

As pointed out by Anderson, this ideology partnered with perceived misbehavior reinforces the notion that these students enter school without “motivation as a result of parental and/or communal noninvolvement in or antipathy towards their children’s education” (A. Anderson, 2013b, p. 39). The marketing mechanisms used by TFA encourage young, college graduates to “save” students, because everyone else has given up on them. For an incoming TFA teacher, they have been told through various mediums, that they are the only individuals willing to fix the problem of low student achievement, and that it is their duty to step in and create change. As Ravitch suggests, “The [TFA] Web site says that the problem of low academic performance in high-poverty neighborhoods is a ‘solvable problem’...Nothing is said on the Web site about addressing or reducing poverty, leaving the implication the “the problem” (low test scores of students who are poor) is ‘solvable’ by TFA” (Ravitch, 2013a, p. 136).

### *TFA’s Pedagogical Impact on Students*

TFA corps members are expected to accept, without question, the use of test scores as the means of measuring student learning and evaluating teacher effectiveness (Kopp & Roekel, 2011). This short-sighted disposition towards teaching and learning informs corps member’s approach to teaching which negatively impacts student’s as “[i]t is quite clear from research that teacher dispositions influence the impact teachers have on student learning and development” (Dottin, 2011, p. 405). These dispositions towards teaching and learning not only hurt students but it also undermines the teaching profession by considering the teacher as mechanistic and cold rather than intentional and caring. Yet, this approach – and its negative impacts – is a staple within TFA as Crawford-Garrett points out that corps member’s “socialization into the profession positions them as passive recipients of knowledge and engenders deficit ideologies of students,

families and communities" (Crawford-Garrett, 2013, p. 12). TFA continues to receive millions in philanthropic funding because the organization and its corps members are eager to accept this as main functional role of teaching. Anderson aptly situates current educational policy and pedagogy within the larger neoliberal press for more accountability, more testing, higher expectations, and better results by pointing out that quote "Not only does this sort of high-stakes atmosphere create classroom environments based on fear, but it also forces students to comply with whitestream standards and curricula that may be inconsistent with their unique interests and/or needs" (A. Anderson, 2013b, pp. 31-32).

## **VII. Theoretical Frame: Strategic Action Fields**

I now turn my attention to the theoretical framework that, alongside Critical Policy Analyses (CPA) (discussed in Chapter 3) will be useful in examining the social, historical, and political contexts through which and by which policy, resources, and discourse have become manifest, divided, and shaped conversations and practices of the teaching profession: Strategic Action Fields.

Strategic Action Fields theory (SAF) is "an integrated theory that explains how stability and change are achieved by social actors in circumscribed social arenas" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 3). Filling what they determined to be a lack of intersection between social movement theory, organizational theory, economic sociology, and political science, Fligstein and McAdam suggest that fields – drawing extensively, though not exclusively from Bourdieu's work on fields – are mesolevel orders of organization. However, contrary to Bourdieu's conception of fields, SAF asserts that the mesolevel social orders are not only interconnected with one another but that they are situated and embedded within countless contexts – environmental, historical, and

cultural (see Figure 2.3 for Fligstein and McAdam’s conception of mesolevels as “Russian Dolls”). Fligstein and McAdam suggest that previous work on fields has suggested that fields are largely “self contained, autonomous worlds,” and that SAF conceives of fields as “embedded in complex webs of other fields” (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 18). Moreover, individuals within fields have, according to SAF, an extensive amount of agency not only to influence the particular field they are in but also in distal fields. SAF contends that the creation of new fields or shifts in current fields arise from destabilizing events that demarcate the various groups within a field. According to Fligstein and McAdam’s SAF, there are three main groups that operate within and through each field: (1) the incumbent; (2) the challenger; and (3) the state (see Figure 2.1). According to Fligstein and McAdam,

A strategic action field is a constructed mesolevel social order in which actors (who can be individual or collective) are attuned to and interact with one another on the basis of shared (which is not to say consensual) understandings about the purposes of the field, relationships to others in the field (including who has power and why), and the rules governing legitimate action in the field. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 9)

The central elements of SAF theory are: (1) strategic action fields; (2) incumbents, challengers, and governance units; (3) social skill and the existential functions of the social; (4) the broader field environment; (5) exogenous shocks, mobilization, and the onset of contention; (6) episodes of contention; (7) settlement. As will be examined in detail in Chapter 4, many of these elements are crucial in developing an understanding of TFA’s impact on teacher preparation policy and the teaching profession in some regions. Moreover, given that CPA is interested in interrogating how distributions of power create winners and losers while reinforcing inequality and privilege (Diem, Young, Welton, Cummings Mansfield, & Lee, 2014), SAF provides a lens through which the affiliation of groups of teachers (e.g., traditionally certified vs. alternatively certified) is

determined from the conflict and competition between ideologies in an attempt to secure resources within the field. Additionally, SAF has at its foundation a commitment to understanding and highlighting the environment in which changes take place. As such, the combination of SAF and CPA – both centering context as a key component of inquiry – will cast a light on the political environment of the field of teachers and teaching that is controlled, informed, and impacted by policy decisions and policy discourse.

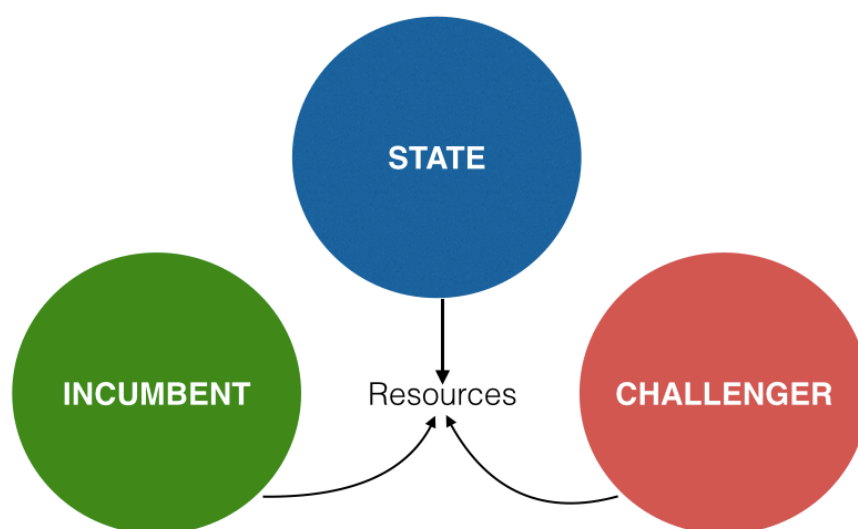
Fligstein and McAdam provide an example of SAF theory by way of examining the U.S. mortgage market between 1969 and 2011. Situated against the backdrop of World War II, the dominant actors in the mortgage market in the U.S. were local savings and loans banks that attended to a stable field of mortgages as a result of ongoing federal rules and regulations related to home lending. Changes in rules related to mortgage lending and the economic recession of the 1970s produced an era of contention within the mortgage market as new field participants were introduced and represented field challengers. Ultimately, the government's creation of an alternative, but proximal, field introduced new avenues for mortgages – all under the supervision of and financing by the quasi-private Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac – led to the collapse of savings and loans banks and the positioning of private banks as the incumbent in the mortgage market.

The partnering of SAF and CPA is useful given the shared focus of constructivism. That is, Fligstein and McAdam report that SAF “attempts to combine the social constructionist aspects of institutional theory with a central interest in understanding the sources of stability and change in a strategic action field. We see strategic action fields as socially constructed arenas within which actors with varying resource endowments vie for advantage” (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 10). As a theoretical framework, SAF compliments CPA given that CPA “seek[s] to show



how institutions actually structure the play of power, often in ways hidden from view. Not only can they facilitate the ability of some groups to achieve their goals, they can block or hinder the attempts of others” (F. Fischer, 2003, p. 29).

Fischer (2003) points out that policy network theory is able to examine how power structures within networks inform the creation and transmission of ideas. As such, Fligstein and McAdams’ theory compliments this notion of power within networks to create or benefit from field instability in the quest for field rewards.



*Figure 2.1.* Components of a Strategic Action Field

According to Fligstein and McAdam, the state provides or oversees the production of resources that become a ground of contention between the incumbent and the challenger of the field. This contention creates, or has the capacity to create, power struggles that are either subtle or overt. Considering how these power struggles play out within the policy landscape requires a

critical perspective. During the process of working towards control of resources and respective power, incumbents and challengers through their actions and discourse reinforce or subvert the rules of the field. This positioning for power and access to resources creates an understanding of who is in power and who is not. Accordingly,

actors occupy a position and they understand who is in what position in the field. One way of thinking about this is that they know who their friends, their enemies, and their competitors are because they know who occupies those roles in the field. Third, there is a set of shared understandings about the “rules” in the field. By this, we mean that actors understand what tactics are possible, legitimate, and interpretable for each of the roles in the field. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p. 4)

However, what is important to point out here is that the question of whom or what group is the incumbent or challenger in a given field must be contextualized. I now turn to a fuller description of the three field players while considering the contextual factors that relate specifically to TFA.

### *Incumbents*

Here I argue that the incumbents in the broad field of education – specifically teacher preparation – include: traditional colleges of education, traditionally certified teachers, traditionally certified principals, and teacher’s unions. When examining charter schools, for example, the field incumbent would be comprised of all entities and individuals connected to the traditional public school and traditional colleges of education that train teachers, while charters, alternatively certified teachers, and alternative “colleges of education” (e.g., Relay) represent the challenger (deMarrais & Warshaw, 2013). According to SAF,

Incumbents are those actors who wield disproportionate influence within a field and whose interests and views tend to be heavily reflected in the dominant organization of the SAF. Thus, the purposes of the field are shaped to their interests, the positions in the field are defined by their claims on the lion’s share of the resources in the field, the rules tend to favor them, and shared meanings tend to legitimate and support their privileged position within the field. (Fligstein

& McAdam, 2011, pp. 5-6)

In the case of teacher preparation and practice, the college of education's privileged position as the historical incumbent has reinforced the role of colleges of education as the primary provider of teacher preparation – a reality particularly true for the preparation of teachers who get jobs in the suburbs. And, as explicated below, this privileged position according to SAF is reinforced by the state as the college of education's control over resources (in this case human capital) is protected through the historical relationship of the state providing funds to public universities.

Fligstein and McAdam further argue that

Most incumbents are generally well positioned and fortified to withstand these change pressures. For starters they typically enjoy significant resource advantages over field challengers. They also may not face a challenge even in the face of a significant destabilizing shock because of the perception by challengers that incumbents are secure in their power. Finally, incumbents can generally count on the support of loyal allies within governance units both internal to the field and embedded in proximate state fields. Possessed of these material, cultural, and political resources, incumbents are positioned to survive. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p. 9)

An important consideration here for examining TFA's impact on the teacher preparation field is that, broadly speaking, TFA has likely not been successful at creating a significant destabilizing shock throughout the entire teaching profession. However, what is important to consider is that while TFA's role as a field challenger has increased over the past twenty years, TFA has generated – or benefited from – significant amounts of destabilizing shock in individual regions (e.g., New Orleans). That is, TFA has had little impact on the field of teacher preparation, hiring, and educational leadership outside of some urban and rural areas. Considering the importance of context in the defining of who is the incumbent is vitally important here. Given that TFA does not place corps members in suburban schools, traditionally certified teachers (and the colleges of education who grant those degrees) have been able to retain their position as the

incumbent, due, by in large, to the fact that the state apparatus (e.g. school boards) continues to maintain classist and racist conceptions about the types of teachers desired for suburban schools. However, TFA and other alternative certification organizations have made significant strides within urban and rural contexts over the past few decades. While TFA likely remains a field challenger in the urban areas of Atlanta and Chicago, other contexts such as New York and Eastern North Carolina are seeing the challenger – TFA – reposition itself as the new incumbent. In other contexts like New Orleans, there has been a complete role reversal of the incumbent and the challenger. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the majority of teachers were veteran, traditionally trained, and Black. Since TFA has operated in the region since 1990, the contextual factors suggest that TFA remained a field challenger until Hurricane Katrina. After the storm, the demographic shift away from veteran, traditionally trained, and Black teachers to a dominantly novice, alternatively certified, and White teaching force reordered the actors within the field (see Chapter 4 for supporting data). Thus, the answer of “who is the incumbent” must be contextualized and historicized. While traditionally trained teachers remain the clear incumbent in suburban schools, there are regions where we are witnessing a shift that may find alternative certification organizations as the new incumbent – in New Orleans the shift is complete. Within the SAF framework terms, Hurricane Katrina served as an *exogenous shock* that created an *episode of contention* that resulted in the settlement of a new incumbent. And, as is the function of the state apparatus, the state now reinforces and supports the power of the incumbent teaching force of dominantly alternatively certified and White teachers.

### *Challengers*

Opposite of the incumbent, of course, is the field challenger. As is the case in the field of teacher preparation, the challenger here represents any organization or avenue into the field of

teaching that avoids or otherwise goes around the traditional route of training associated with colleges of education. TFA, for example, represents an obvious challenger in the field of teacher preparation as the organization and others like it clamor over control of resources. As stated above, the resource here is largely represented as the human capital of teacher candidates. Of course, teacher candidates can represent a significant amount of revenue for either the college of education (the incumbent) or the challenger (TFA, for example) as each field actor receives money in exchange for training. Also, the resource conflict is also represented by spaces for teacher employment. That is, a singular opening for a teacher in a district represents not only a resource of pride that can be converted into recruiting by reporting gainful employment of alumni, but they can also represent a significant component in the overall discourse about teacher preparation and the teaching profession. Compared to the privileged nature of the incumbent,

Challengers, on the other hand, occupy less privileged niches within the field and ordinarily wield little influence over its operation. While they recognize the nature of the field and the dominant logic of incumbent actors, they can usually articulate an alternative vision of the field and their position in it. This does not, however, mean that challengers are normally in open revolt against the inequities of the field or aggressive purveyors of oppositional logics. On the contrary, most of the time challengers can be expected to conform to the prevailing order. They may do so grudgingly, taking what the system gives them and awaiting new opportunities to challenge the structure and logic of the system. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p. 6)

As is the case of TFA as the challenger, while TFA has not conformed to the prevailing order of how teachers are trained, TFA has conformed to the prevailing order of state licensure oversight. And until the advent of alternative credentialing services like those offered by Relay, TFA partnered with traditional colleges of education for credentialing services. As is the case of teacher licenses, the state apparatus (often a state-based governing body that issues licenses) oversees the credentialing process for teachers. Because this process has historically been

associated with close partnerships with colleges of education, the licensure process more often than not represents the state's default nature of supporting the incumbent. However, with the rise of neoliberalism and the advent of new licensure processes developed by TFA and Relay, the privileged nature of the incumbent is being challenged – a point I take up below.

### *State Apparatus/Governance Units*

In the field of teacher preparation, the state apparatus or governance unit is represented by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), the federal government, state governments, school boards, and state-based licensure/credentialing bodies (e.g., the Illinois State Board of Education, the Georgia Professionals Standards Commission, etc.). The state takes on many forms because “the state is not a single monolithic entity, but rather one node within a complex matrix of social regularities” (C. A. Brewer, 2008, p. 95). While the federal government (including the USDOE) and states make laws related to the teacher preparation process and licensure requirements, it is often the state-based governance unit that oversees the issuance and maintenance of teacher licenses and school boards who oversee hiring decisions. These state-based entities represent the “formal governance units that are charged with overseeing compliance with field rules and, in general, facilitating the overall smooth functioning of the system” (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p. 6). As is the case of teacher preparation, the transition from preparation to actual teaching is controlled by access to a teaching license.

Teacher licenses represent an acknowledgement of satisfying federal and state-based proscribed requirements for employment as a teacher; and, as examined above, the state-based requirements for teacher licensure vary wildly across the country. Though, for the purposes of this dissertation, I operate on the assumption that all states offer a “full” license (e.g., a “clear

and renewable license”) and a “provisional” license specifically designed to provide temporary licensing while an individual completes the required course of study for a “full” license. As is often the case, many states consider provisional licenses to be an “emergency” or temporary license; however, some states have a third level of license designation of emergency. The difference here is that provisional licenses often represent that the bearer has completed some portion of formalized study/training to become a teacher whereas the bearer of an emergency often has no formalized introduction to teaching. That said, this varies across states and these definitions are not meant to be interpreted as valid for all degrees of licenses across all states.

According to SAF,

governance units bear the imprint of the influence of the most powerful incumbents in the field and the logics that are used to justify that dominance. Regardless of the legitimating rhetoric that motivates the creation of such units, they are generally there *not* to serve as neutral arbiters of conflicts between incumbents and challengers, but to reinforce the dominant logic, and safeguard the interests of the incumbents. Ordinarily, then, governance units can be expected to serve as defenders of the status quo and are a generally conservative force during periods of conflict within the SAF. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p. 6)

Thus, in the case of teacher preparation, the state’s prescribed licensure requirements reinforce the incumbent’s position of power within the field. Moreover, according to SAF, the federal and state governments that create policies related to teacher preparation and the teaching profession also reinforce the incumbent’s position of power and control over field resources. However, while there are aspects of the teacher preparation process that clearly privilege colleges of education, SAF is not suitable (or it is wrong) when considering the advent of the neoliberal state. For example, while SAF argues that “there is a set of shared understandings about the nature of the ‘rules’ in a field” (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 11), the neoliberal state has in many ways facilitated a shift in rules and expectations. For example, rather than continuing to

house teacher certification at the state level, there have been calls in Louisiana to shift this control to the school-level – namely for charter schools (Ravitch, 2012b) and the emergence of and broad acceptance of Relay represents a shift in the rules of the field related to teacher training and licensure.

### *Contextual Considerations*

While Fligstein and McAdam's SAF theory necessarily troubles any conception of a field as fitting within a mold, what is needed is further development to account, specifically, for contextual nuances that result from varying demographic and regional areas. That is, while there are similarities across the field of teacher preparation – namely as a result of federal oversight by way of NCLB – the interpretation of the law and the historical and racial dynamics of varying regions require a more complex consideration of where actors fall within SAF's categories of incumbent or challenger. SAF is clear that any given field is wrought with interactions between its own field and other related fields. Yet, considering the contextual nuances associated with poverty and race across varying school districts/regions provides a useful and more complex lens for understanding where field actors fall within the SAF as they clamor over resources and relative power.

The contribution that I'm making here is to show how contextual realities within teacher preparation and educational policy define – or redefine – who is the incumbent and, therefore, who is the challenger. In the suburban context, the absence of TFA has left traditionally certified teachers in almost uncontested control over the field. In urban contexts such as Atlanta and Chicago, the field's actors are becoming increasingly blurred as to who holds the position of the incumbent and who is the field challenger. In the context of New Orleans, however, the



exogenous shock of Hurricane Katrina provided the opportunity for a full swap of who was the incumbent and who was the challenger – in this case, the new incumbent became the alternatively certified, novice, White teacher while traditionally trained, veteran, and Black teachers became the challenger within the field. While it is true that the state apparatus sides with the incumbent over the challenger, the varying contextual and historical realities in different regions have seen a reconceptualization of who is the incumbent based on how extensive the state apparatus has given in to market-oriented ideology. Again, Fligstein and McAdam's theory asserts that,

A strategic action field is a constructed mesolevel social order in which actors (who can be individual or collective) are attuned to and interact with one another on the basis of shared (which is not to say consensual) understandings about the purposes of the field, relationships to others in the field (including who has power and why), and the rules governing legitimate action in the field. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 9)

As such, considering the field of teaching writ large, the deterioration of conceiving of public schooling as a public good to a conception of it as an individualized practice has shifted the nation's shared understanding of the purposes of teaching. Rather than conceiving of teaching as professionalized work, the elevation of the importance of test scores has altered the purpose of teaching into an understanding of it as a largely technocratic skill. The result of this repurposing has witnessed the decline of and deterioration of teacher's unions. And while TFA is not responsible directly for the decline in the strength of unions, the historical realities of the repurposing of teaching has facilitated a niche environment where organizations like TFA thrive. Considering the terminology of SAF, the professional status of teaching represents the *broader field environment* that has been in a decades-long *episode of contention*. And while the episode

of contention has not fully ended with *settlement*, it has reshaped the public discourse surrounding teaching.

Because “governance units bear the imprint of the influence of the most powerful incumbents” and “reinforce the dominant logic, and safeguard the interests of the incumbents,” the era of settlement in New Orleans has been cemented by the fact that TFA has been successful at moving TFA alumni into leadership positions. TFA alumni, for example, hold offices as the State Superintendent of Education serve as members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. As such, these educational leaders have reinforced the dominant logic of teaching as a technocratic skill, the elevation of market-oriented reforms such as charter schools, and the importance of testing data.

Because much of the recent trends in policies related to teacher preparation and the teaching profession find genesis in the continued ‘crisis’ of the failed schools, the field of education is truly in an ongoing state of transformation resulting in destabilization. Accordingly, “crisis and opportunities for the construction of new fields or the transformation of existing strategic action fields normally arise as a result of destabilizing change processes that develop within proximate state or nonstate fields” (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 3). As outlined in Chapter 2, the historical and continued turmoil in public discourse about the U.S. education ‘crisis’ and the blame lying squarely on the shoulders of teachers has facilitated a continued state of destabilization within the teaching profession. As such, the field is ripe for continued transformation by way of policy that favors challengers to the field who represent and utilize a discourse of ‘anti-status quo.’ Additionally, the historic and current forms of policy implementation that seek to ‘fix’ ‘bad’ schools and ‘bad’ teachers will further be shown to be a

manifestation of the tacit intentionality to reinforce the myth of White supremacy (Gillborn, 2007).

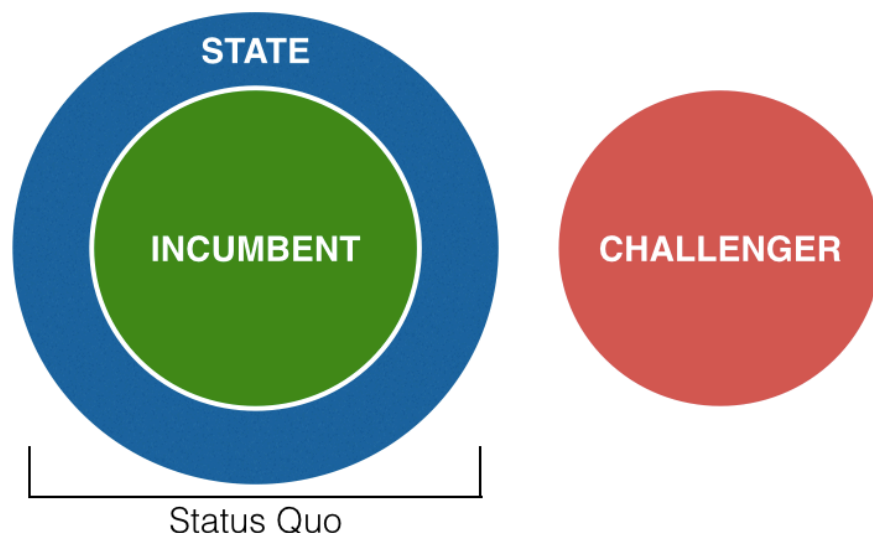


Figure 2.2. Strategic Action Fields in Settlement or Contention

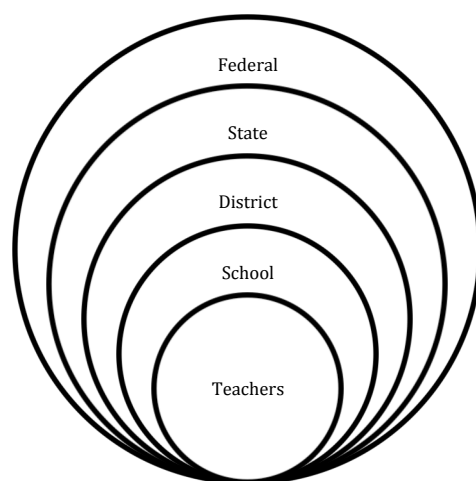
Fligstein and McAdam suggest that each field and the actors associated with that field are also contextualized in a broader field environment. That is,

We conceive of all fields as embedded in complex webs of other fields. Three sets of binary distinctions will help us characterize the nature of these “other fields” and their relationships with any given SAF. The first distinction is between *distant* and *proximate* fields. Proximate fields are those SAFs with recurring ties to, and whose actions routinely impact, the field in question. Distant fields are those that lack ties and have virtually no capacity to influence a given SAF. The second distinction is between *vertical* and *horizontal* fields. The distinction captures the formal hierarchical relations that exist between a specific pair of proximate fields. A field that is vertically linked to another is one that exercises formal authority over it or is in a subordinate position relative to it. When neither field exercises formal authority over the other, but they mutually depend upon each other, we say their relationship is horizontal. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p.

8)

Considering the broader field environment, SAF contends that each actor in a particular field is embedded in larger proximate fields. Fligstein and McAdam suggest a helpful analogy for understanding this is to think of a particular field as a Russian doll.

As shown in Figure 2.3, the traditional regulation of schools in the United States resembles that of a Russian doll that “can be usefully decomposed into their units, which themselves would be strategic action fields” (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 59).



*Figure 2.3.* Traditional Regulation Organization of Public Schools (SAF Russian Dolls Concept)

Within this SAF model of distant and proximal fields within the educational policy landscape, the area of contention when it comes to TFA is the type of teacher who fills the role of educator. Traditionally, colleges of education have supplied schools/districts with credentialed and licensed teachers. The advent and growth of alternative certification models like TFA have challenged those historical practices in urban and rural contexts. Additionally, while TFA operates within the field’s rules as put forth by district, state, and federal policies,

TFA's shifting focus to producing educational leaders who work within those fields reinforces TFA's ability to influence policies that are favorable to the growth of the organization.

Central to SAF theory is that field actors must have a certain level of social skill that aligns with the expectations and rules of that particular field. Accordingly,

The concept of social skill is rooted for us in symbolic interactionism (Goffman, 1959, 1974; Joas, 1996; Mead, 1934). Actors' conceptions of themselves are powerfully shaped by their interactions with others. When interacting, actors try to create a positive sense of self by fashioning shared meanings and identities for themselves and others. Identities refer to sets of meanings that actors have that define who they are and what they want in a particular situation. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 47)

In the case of TFA, the development of manufactured expertise is a crucial component of TFA's ability to operate within the field. Relying on the public discourse of the "best and brightest," TFA is able to position its corps members into the field as having the necessary social skills that inform good teaching. In turn, their experiences as teachers develops and reinforces their manufactured expertise and expands opportunities to transition into educational leadership positions.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODS

When considering the work associated with critical policy analysis (CPA), (Diem et al., 2014) Diem, et al., (2014) found that what establishes CPA as a unique method is the theoretical frame utilized to understand policy implementation and implications as well as the purpose for garnering such understandings (p. 1085). I've chosen to employ CPA because of its critical lens and the ability to expose inequities of power. Contrary to the growing push for positivistic research designs that presume neutrality (Berliner, 2006; Labaree, 2011), my positioning within critical theory and commitment to justice and equity informs my inquiry here.

Positivistic lines of inquiry seek to verify a priori hypotheses through quantified methods for the purpose of prediction and control and ultimately generalizability (Diem et al., 2014; Ponterotto, 2005). This approach to research is grounded on the assumption that truth and realities exists without context and that they are readily discoverable. However, such dispositions ignore the impact of power structures, socioeconomic inequality, and injustice as both a real and formidable force on the lived realities of individuals and groups. This unquestioning view of society seeks to understand social phenomena in a sterile environment – often seeking to reduce complex human experiences into statistical digits. Accordingly, this approach to research undermines the power of discourse, for example, in shaping the lived realities of individuals as they participate in the social construction of their worlds.

And while this line of reasoning has given birth to and support for the “gold standard” of the randomized controlled trials (RCT) in educational research, such dispositions and practices necessarily ignore or attempt to control for issues of human agency, power imbalances, and inequality. Contrary to the assumptions and dispositions within the realm of RCT, and the likes,

are research methodologies that are grounded in the assumption of constructivism and the notion that reality does not exist a priori rather, reality is constructed by individuals and individual interactions. Thus, the method – and inquiry disposition – of this dissertation are situated within the post-positivistic and constructivist foundation of critical theory that employs Critical Policy Analysis. My aim here is to employ a critical analysis – by way of examining policies and practices – that have reinforced systemic inequality, undermined the teaching profession, and weakened the conception of equal education for students who are the recipients of TFA teachers.

### **I. Critical Policy Analysis (CPA)**

Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) is a form of policy analysis that allows the researcher to situate policy work within the varying contexts that give rise to policy while acknowledging that defining the problems that policies seek to alleviate is not straightforward and highly contestable (Diem et al., 2014).

Traditional forms of educational policy studies have, at their foundation, four assumptions that purport to situate inquiry and the researcher as neutral: (1) change/reform is deliberate and can be planned/managed; (2) preferences/goals drive actions; (3) the necessary knowledge for identifying and developing policy solutions – and communicating that knowledge to others is obtained through evidence and reflects reality; and (4) policy implementation can be evaluated and programs amended to fix continual problems (Diem et al., 2014).

However, critical forms of educational policy studies such as critical theory find foundation as a juxtaposition of “taken-for-granted empirical practices of American social science researchers” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 286), represents not only the disposition that knowledge is not fixed but that lived realities are shaped by injustices and stratification.

Moreover, critical educational policy studies posit that policies are a “practice of values” (Taskoh, 2014, p. 57) and, as such, demands the question of “who’s values” get promoted. In turn, critical theory seeks to understand and lay bare social inequalities (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) while simultaneously advocating for justice and equality.

Broadly conceptualized, my use of CPA is grounded in a political position of critical theory (Kincheloe, 2008) that asserts that meanings are socially constructed and discourse becomes a reinforcing mechanism through which dominant rhetoric is reified (F. Fischer, 2003) all the while seeking to interrupt the status quo of systemic inequality (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). That is, while some earlier forms of policy analysis were grounded in rationalism and positivism, CPA seeks to understand the contextual realities outside of a scientific quest for certainty (Baez & Boyles, 2009; Boyles, 2011) while enabling the researcher to examine the inequitable distribution of power and knowledge (Taskoh, 2014). Considering that rhetoric is a form of discourse, the *critical* analysis of policy within CPA that draws on the foundations of critical theory is especially useful for the purposes of this dissertation. One of the tenants of the critical approach to policy analysis centers on the “difference between policy rhetoric and practiced reality” (Diem et al., 2014, p. 1072). As such, when considering TFA’s impact on policies that influence local hiring practices, it is evident that there is a conspicuous disparity between policy rhetoric and practiced reality.

Some CPA scholars recognize the importance of historicizing policy events within social contexts to illuminate power hierarchies (C. A. Brewer, 2008) while understanding how policy development reinforces and reproduces the dominant culture (Diem et al., 2014). As a method, CPA “is a set of strategies for researching the development and the effects of policy that highlights how power operates in specific historical and social contexts” (C. A. Brewer, 2008, p.



90), thus, CPA being informed by a critical theory lens, will prove an effective method for uncovering how TFA's influence on teacher preparation policy and subsequent hiring practices buttresses dominant power hierarchies within the field of education. Curtis Brewer (C. A. Brewer, 2008) suggests that there is a need to historicize policy events when engaging in CPA. That is, while policy decisions appear in the current, they are inextricably linked to historical assumptions, discourses, and practices. Brewer also suggests that "the production of policy, the definition of social problems, and the solutions themselves are the products of the dynamics of power in a given society in a given time" (C. A. Brewer, 2013, p. 274). Further, in pointing out the importance of historicizing policy, Brewer argues for the importance of considering history as a contingency. That is, contingency is "meant to capture the ways in which our social interactions are devoid of any imminent nature or logic and thus are always open" (C. A. Brewer, 2013, p. 275).

Moreover, the use of CPA affords the opportunity to situate policy and discourse within a phenomenological social constructionist paradigm. That is, in the effort to understand and situate the implications of policy decisions it is vital to examine policy from a multi-faceted perspective. To that end, Fischer points out that, "each policy is likely to have different meanings for different participants; that the exact meaning of a policy, then, is by no means self-evident but, rather, is ambiguous and manipulable; and that the policy process is – at least part – a struggle to get one or another meaning established as the accepted one" (F. Fischer, 2003, p. 65). Fischer goes on to show that such a theory elevates policy expectations over actual policy outcomes as the basis for policy creation and evaluation. Further, Fischer suggests that, "the phenomenological orientation addresses itself first to the question of problem definition" (F. Fischer, 2003, p. 65), thus, as explicated in Chapter 2, since much of the orientation of

policymaking related to teacher preparation and the teaching profession find foundations within the predetermined definitions of: (a) failed schools; and (b) ‘bad’ teachers, a critical theory perspective that highlights the importance of phenomenology is useful as policy creation and advocacy within education began first – and continues from – by defining the problem of education with teachers.

Discourse, while typically associated with the spoken word (discursive practices), also includes written statements and recursive practices. Taken together, speech, writings, and recursive practices reinforce ideas, beliefs, and expectations – as such, I conflate all three practices into the singular term ‘discourse.’ Ultimately, discourse is utilized to create reality. Both social and political life are “embedded in a web of social meanings produced and reproduced through discursive practices” (F. Fischer, 2003, p. 13).

Part of the creation of reality and shared understandings and expectations lays an attempt to reinforce current power structures. Accordingly, discourse becomes not only the passive mechanism by which and through which reality is constructed but also a purposeful mechanism for maintaining and reproducing control. That is,

Proponents of various positions in conflicts waged in and through discourse attempt to capture or dominate modes of representation. They do so in a variety of ways, including inviting or persuading others to join their side, or silencing opponents by attacking their positions. If successful, a hierarchy is formed, in which one mode of representing the world (its objects, events, people, etc.) gains primacy over others, transforming modes of representation from an array on a horizontal plane to a ranking on a vertical plane. (Mehan, 1996, p. 241)

Thus, given the power of discourse to reify and reinforce power hierarchies, norms and expectations, employing CPA affords the researcher the opportunity to throw off the “subjective dualism imposed by ‘positivist’ or ‘neopositivist’ epistemological doctrines” (F. Fischer, 2003, p. 12) while affording the opportunity to examine, evaluate, and illustrate the impact(s) of

context and agency that, while not synonymous with studied subjects in the ‘hard sciences’ but are exceedingly synonymous with the lived realities of humans and the researchers who examine human interaction – especially in education research (Berliner, 2002). Moreover, because “knowledge and discursive practices are [a] critical dimension of the struggle for power” (F. Fischer, 2003, p. 35), understanding how policy is discussed (and of particular interest are disparities between discursive rhetoric and actual practices – a phenomenon that will be examined in Chapter 4 as it relates to TFA’s policy discourse and actual practices) provides a valuable understanding of the contexts, cultures, expectations, and lived realities of those who promote policies and those who are ultimately impacted by those policies. Because much of the policies centered around teacher preparation and the teaching profession (and the role of alternatively certified teachers in that realm) many of the justifications for and continued rationale for policies related to the teaching profession hinge on ideological dispositions rather than true empirical evidence. Accordingly,

Rather than taking the actions and assertions of politicians and policymakers as straightforward statements of intent, accounts of policy problems and issues are thus seen as devices for generating varying presuppositions about social and political events rather than factual claims. While the concept of a fact is not rendered meaningless, policy actions have to first and foremost be seen as resting on interpretations that reflect and sustain particular beliefs and ideologies. To be sure, empirical data and information play a role in policymaking, but their meaning is determined by how they fit into the particular arguments of an ideological framework. (F. Fischer, 2003, p. 62)

Thus, using a CPA method facilitates a deeper understanding of the rationale(s) for policies that have seemingly favored organizations like TFA. That is, while there is scant empirical evidence on the effectiveness of expanding teacher preparation policy to providers outside of traditional colleges of education, for example, the ideological assumption that traditional colleges of education have failed can hardly be examined outside of the contextual and historical aspects of

teacher preparation policy. It is from this line of rhetoric and discourse that policy implementation has favored alternative teacher certification programs over the last two decades. While both traditionally trained and alternatively certified teachers similarly employ phrases like “student success” and “equality,” these discursive artifacts – while identical words – have dramatically dissimilar meanings. And this is in line with what Fischer suggests about discourse. That is, “different social groups, especially groups with differing degrees of power and authority, may use the same words differently in their interpretations of social and political situations” (F. Fischer, 2003, p. 73). As outlined in Chapter 2, because alternative teacher certification programs like TFA have aligned their discursive practices with the discourse and dispositions of education reformers seeking to inject market-oriented reforms, the power of the discourse surrounding phrases like “student success” or even education as the “civil rights movement of our time,” TFA has garnered much of the support (especially financial support) from reformers while growing in their political influence while the neoliberal state has converged around a shared discourse about teachers and schools (e.g., failed schools and bad teachers).

The need for interrogating the use of discourse to promote the ideology of the failed school and the “bad” teacher is obvious when considering the role that discourse plays in promoting/reinforcing power structures all the while against the backdrop of schools and the shared assumptions and ideologies of those impacting policy decisions. Accordingly, it is evidently clear that discourse analysis is vital to lay bare the intentions, historical connections, current and likely future implications of policy affecting teacher preparation and the teaching profession. This is especially important given that “policy making is viewed as an arena of struggle over meaning, or as ‘the politics of discourse’” (Taylor, 2006, p. 26); and as previously suggested, policies are a “practice of values” (C. A. Brewer, 2008).

Taylor suggests that “*policy making* is viewed as an arena of struggle over meaning, or as ‘the politics of discourse’” (2006, p. 26, emphasis in original). Additionally, Taylor asserts “*policy texts* represent the outcome of political struggles over meaning” (p. 26, emphasis in original). Taylor further suggests that particular objectives are not only informed by a related discourse, but that competing discourses represent the struggle over meaning making within any given arena – or ‘field’ – to draw from SAF.

## **II. Data Sources & Data Collection**

TFA’s influence on the teaching profession has manifested in numerous ways. Namely, the organization’s influence on federal and local policies has influenced teacher-hiring practices that has, as naturally follows, implications of financial considerations, discourse surrounding teachers and schools as mechanism for solving poverty, and for the teaching profession writ large.

In order to understand TFA’s impact on policies, documents related to the passage of federal/state laws related to teacher preparation, marketing documents from TFA, and legal contracts are to be analyzed. Data sources are considered to originate officially from TFA when appearing on TFA’s website, partner websites, emails sent by TFA, publications and official marketing materials from TFA (including TFA’s official Facebook page), and public statements made by TFA officers and staff in a variety of mediums and platforms. District-based Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) are analyzed to determine how discourse shapes perceived realities at the local level while providing an empirical source of data to determine the extent to which TFA has wielded influence on local hiring decisions and the financial and professional implications that naturally follow. In total, data is drawn from 49 MOUs across the

regions shown in Table 3.1. Further, data was gathered from the Center for Responsive Politics, TFA’s “On the Record” website, TFA regional websites, state and district based salary schedules for teachers, and the Internal Revenue Service.

Table 3.1.  
*Districts Represented in MOU Data Collection*

District	State
Atlanta Public Schools	Georgia (Metro-Atlanta)
Clayton County Public Schools	Georgia (Metro-Atlanta)
Cobb County Public Schools	Georgia (Metro-Atlanta)
DeKalb County Public Schools	Georgia (Metro-Atlanta)
Fulton County Public Schools	Georgia (Metro-Atlanta)
Gwinnett County Public Schools	Georgia (Metro-Atlanta)
New York City Public Schools	New York
Recovery School District	Louisiana
Chicago Public Schools	Illinois

The selected school districts and states in Table 3.1 were chosen for a two reasons: (1) they represent a diversity of geographic region; and (2) the inclusion of the Chicago Public Schools, New York Public Schools, and the Recovery School District represent what is arguably the flagship regional locations of TFA’s work. FOIA requests were made by email, online submission form, or by telephone. Data was supplied as either an electronic copy of MOUs or by mail. All other data collected were collected from websites as cited and represent publically available information.

Descriptive statistics on regional corps member numbers are extracted from each contract (when available). Discourse and content analysis of the contractual language provides insight into claims and representations of the organization, in addition to providing insight into shifting district-level obligations. Data related to the financial impact of TFA were gathered from district-based websites containing salary schedules for teachers. New Orleans was chosen

intentionally as it represents a district-wide shift in financial considerations for hiring while Fulton County Public Schools (FCPS) was chosen at random to investigate the financial impact related to staffing a single teaching position. Historic salary schedules for FCPS were used to align with the year(s) that FCPS contracted with TFA to staff positions (e.g., 2013). Teacher population for pre-Katrina New Orleans is estimated at 4,600 as that number represents the lowest estimation for the number of teachers who were laid off by the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) after the hurricane (S. Carr, 2015; Mitchell, 2015). Many stories related to the post-Katrina lay offs estimated that there were more than 7,000 teachers laid off; however, the larger number includes non-teaching employees ("Eddy oliver v orleans parish school board," 2012). Ultimately, such data sources will also aid in understanding how TFA's influence in public discourse surrounding teachers and teacher preparation fits within the historicized context of teacher preparation policies in the U.S.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA & FINDINGS

Drawing from MOUs, tax documents, public documents, publically available writings from TFA officials (including information on TFA’s website), this chapter outlines and analyzes data related to the question of: What are the actual and potential effects of TFA on federal, state, and school district policies/practices surrounding teacher preparation and the education profession? This question must be answered from both the perspective of the organization as well as how the federal/state governments and school districts have conceptualized and utilized TFA to accomplish policy aims. What follows are data related to TFA’s impact on teacher preparation and the education profession broadly conceptualized, at the local level by way of hiring practices, and impacts on school leadership.

I argue here that among TFA’s chief impacts on teacher preparation and the education profession that there are three overarching impacts that warrant examination: (1) TFA’s impact on the teaching profession itself; (2) the impact of TFA on hiring practices; and (3) the impact of TFA on school leadership and policy through its growing alumni base. Explicated in Chapter 2, TFA has thrived off of the myth of the ‘failed school’ and the ‘bad teacher’ that are the result of a misunderstanding – intentionally or not – of the role that schools play in the reproduction of inequality. Subsequently, TFA embodies the disposition and ideology that “better” teachers are able to raise test scores, thereby providing students with the missing piece of the puzzle to end systemic inequality and racism. Within each implication outlined below, the common theme or justification for TFA’s involvement has always been, and continues to be, aligned with the



rhetoric of the failed school and the bad teacher resulting in the academic achievement gap between Whites and non-Whites. I now take up each impact in turn.

### **I. TFA's Impact on the Teaching Profession**

In this section, I argue that TFA's impact on the teaching profession has manifested in three areas: (1) pedagogical impacts; (2) licensure/professionalization impacts; & (3) racial impacts. TFA's impact on pedagogy can be characterized as a test-prep pedagogy while relying on strict behaviorism. TFA's impact on licensure processes for teachers, namely an amendment to NCLB to include teachers in training as "highly qualified," is likely the result of more than \$4 million in lobbying expenses. And finally, TFA's impact on race in the classroom has fosters a culture of deficit ideologies directed at students and communities of color. Each impact is now taken up in turn.

#### *Pedagogical Impacts*

The genesis of TFA centered around two assumptions: (1) that there was a lack of qualified teachers; and (2) that recruiting the nation's "best and brightest" to teach for two years would not only attend to the teacher shortage of the late 1980s but it would bolster the intellectual pool of those who teach our nation's students. And while the latter assumption has been present and evident in TFA's discourse throughout the years – in fact, Wendy Kopp argued that "poor teaching was to blame [for corporate America struggling to find good hires] since education majors had low SAT scores and grades" (Kopp, 1989 as cited in (D. Goldstein, 2014a, p. 190) – it was the former that informed the creation of TFA. TFA was chartered with the goal of attending to a shortage of teachers, namely in inner city and urban areas. Always conceived

of as an alternative certification program, TFA corps members from the first cohort in 1990 to those who entered the organization in 2015 have been proscribed a fast-track “crash course” in teacher preparation.

The initial goal of TFA in the 1980s and 1990s was to ameliorate teacher shortages by working within the constraints of federal and state policies. Recognizing that corps members would have to rely on a fast-track entry into teaching, Kopp asserted that, “[TFA] would bill itself as an emergency response to a shortage of experienced, qualified teachers and would therefore not be telling the nation that its inexperienced members were preferable to, or as qualified as, experienced teachers” (Kopp, 1989, p. 50). Corps members get, on average, 18 hours of student teaching compared to what is usually in excess of 1,200 hours with traditional training (T. J. Brewer, 2014).

However, the organization has shifted its rhetoric in the last few years away from Kopp’s original claim to a new claim that TFA corps members are better than their traditionally trained counterparts. TFA claims that a random-assignment “gold standard” study found that corps members with less than two years of experience outperformed non-TFA teachers who had, on average, fourteen years of experience by imparting an additional 1.3 months of learning in reading (Teach For America, 2015). While any measurement of learning in days or months is a phony metric (Jersey Jazzman, 2013b), other TFA claims related to studies that found corps members imparting 2.6 additional months of learning have been thoroughly debunked as irrelevant as the “additional learning” represents almost immeasurable differences (Jersey Jazzman, 2013a; Rubinstein, 2013; Vasquez Heilig, 2013; Barbara T. Veltri, 2013). Additionally, as explicated in Chapter 3, the reliance on random assignment in educational research is exceedingly problematic – especially when comparing teachers to other teachers –

since there is nothing random about the assignment of students to teachers. As is often the case, there is quite a bit of thought that goes into student/teacher assignments thereby rendering a “gold standard” study invalid. TFA’s claims of greater effectiveness – and efficiently given the fast-entry – are bolstered by the organization’s immense marketing strategy. In fact, TFA spends more money annually on advertising and marketing than it does on actually training corps members (Horn, 2011).

But, there are real limits to the claims that corps members are “better” than non-TFA teachers. TFA’s claims of great effectiveness are limited to corps member’s ability to raise student test scores. Yet, much of the growing critique of education reform’s impact on pedagogical practices has suggested that teachers are being motivated to, or forced to, teach directly to tests. The advent of merit pay schemes, VAM and other teacher-evaluation methods, and public reporting (shaming) of teacher’s students’ test scores, many have decried that the environment of elevating test scores as the panacea of student learning encourages teachers to teach to tests. Within the field of education,

Student achievement on standardized assessments is the most prominent issue in educational policy and discourse, and under a neoliberal state, reformers and funders require performance-based accountability systems to demonstrate and reward growth. (Scott, Trujillo, & Rivera, 2016, p. 10)

And while many teachers succumb to teaching to tests within the reform environment, this approach to teaching is explicitly a characteristic of corps member’s classrooms. Dana Goldstein’s picture of a corps member’s classroom shows that the corps member’s “white board references the priorities of the standards and accountability school reform movement: high standardized test scores on the DC-CAS exam and other forms of measurable learning growth” (D. Goldstein, 2014a, p. 146).

TFA's pedagogical framework of "backwards planning" is quite literally a method of developing lesson plans to teach to a test. Corps members are introduced to lesson planning during Institute by working with the Institute Student Achievement Toolkit (ISAT). During the first week of Institute, corps members enter their assigned classrooms (though, they haven't started teaching) and administer a content-based test generated by the ISAT and aligned with state testing standards. Corps members then grade these pre-tests and determine a baseline of student academic achievement. Based on the results of the test, corps members plan out four weeks of teaching to cover content material related to test questions answered poorly. With the ISAT's bank of questions, each day's lesson is strategically aligned to help students answer the test questions the majority of them got wrong. All lesson plans (which, following TFA's framework are, on average, 15 single-spaced pages long, are due every day at the risk of being written up by TFA staff) must show alignment of the material to be taught with the specific associated test question. After four weeks of teaching (or re-teaching) the content related to the test questions and lessons on good test-taking strategies, the test is administered again. Because students have been drilled with test-prep lessons for a month, there is often an increase in scores from the pre-test and the post-test. The increase in scores is determined to be a success of "good teaching" by the corps member.

Aligning with the NCLB ideology that testing and raising test scores is the panacea for closing opportunity gaps, corps members celebrate their ability to raise scores as evidence that, despite having only 18 hours of student teaching, they are indeed ready for the classroom. TFA's specific approach to test-prep pedagogy redefines the role of a teacher and aligns that role with market-oriented conceptions of education reform.

Other impacts on the teaching profession extend beyond test-prep pedagogy. TFA requires that corps members adopt Lee Canter's Assertive Discipline method (Canter, 2009) during Institute. Employing "behavior narration" and strict rules and consequences systems, corps members are required to follow Canter's behavioristic management system. Within this approach, corps members rely on "pedagogies of silence and control to push students to simply regurgitate information" (P. R. Carr & Porfilio, 2011), eye tracking, and compliance at all times.

### *Licensure/Professionalization Impacts*

While TFA corps member's approach to pedagogy aligns well with the test-frenzy initiated by NCLB, the "highly qualified" requirement has been problematic for the organization at times. For example, teachers in Georgia are specifically required to have a teaching assignment that is appropriate for the field(s) listed on their teaching certificate, it is not unusual for TFA corps members who hold a bachelor's degree in a non-core subject (e.g., journalism) to take and pass the GACE in a content area, math for example, thus imprinting their teaching certificate with a mathematics endorsement and thereby establishing them as a "highly qualified" teacher. The issue, however, is that NCLB stated that by the 2005-2006 school year, only teachers that were classified as,

"highly qualified" should instruct core academic classes in school districts receiving Title I funding (the "100% requirement") *Id* § 63919(a)(2). "Core academic subjects" are "English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics arts, history, and geography." *Id.* § 7801(11); 34 C.F.R. § 200.55(c). ("Renee v. Duncan," 2012, p. 5014)

This provision in NCLB created a problem for TFA because corps members who did not have degrees in a content area or in education would not fall into the "highly qualified" designation of

NCLB. This problem quickly became a legal problem for TFA in California when the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the plaintiff in *Renee v. Duncan* by concluding that teachers who were teaching under an alternative-route certification did not satisfy NCLB's "highly qualified" requirement. In what would seem to be a deathblow to TFA and other alternative certification organizations, the injury did not last long. In December of 2010, the one and only amendment to NCLB since it has been law was inserted into a Continuing Resolution (H.R. 3082) as Section 163 and it stated that teachers who were still in training are considered "highly qualified" (National Council of Teachers of English, 2012). Despite a backlash from professional education organizations (National Education Association, 2010), the amendment to NCLB effectively voided the Ninth Circuit Court opinion and allowed TFA to continue operations as corps members were able to retain the highly qualified designation regardless of educational background or licensure status. Also of interest here is that the amendment was scheduled to sunset in 2013, however, a last minute amendment to the Continuing Resolution that reopened the government after the federal shutdown in 2013 extended Section 163 of Public Law 111-242 until 2016 (V. Strauss, 2013).

TFA has worked diligently and allocated a significant amount of money to lobby the federal government for policies and bills that facilitate TFA's operations and expansion. And while these lobbying efforts are not always directly related to TFA, they are related to the circumstances under which TFA would continue to thrive and grow. For example, in 2012, the top issues lobbied by TFA were: (1) Federal Budget & Appropriations; and (2) Education (Center for Responsive Politics, n.d.-a). In 2014, the top issues lobbied were: (1) Federal Budget & Appropriations; (2) Education; (3) Indian/Native American Affairs; and (4) Veteran Affairs (Center for Responsive Politics, n.d.-b). Lobbying for Veterans Affairs in 2014 was for

Amendment 3867-S.2410, which sought to transition veterans out of the military and into national and community service programs. Such efforts, while not exclusively or overtly beneficial to TFA, do benefit the organization as they launched a Veterans Recruitment Initiative in 2012 (Teach For America, 2012b). Lobbying for Indian/Native American affairs also benefits TFA as the organization has significantly increased its presence on Native lands in the past five years (Teach For America, n.d.-f).

In the last fifteen years, TFA has spent \$4,241,797 lobbying the federal government (see Table 4.1). While it is near impossible to track specific lobbying money to a single bill or political effort, it is important to point out that 2010 was also the year in which TFA spent the largest amount of money lobbying the federal government than any other year: \$573,952. And, as explicated above, 2010 was an important year as the only amendment to NCLB was a provision that included teachers in training as highly qualified – a provision that essentially voided the Ninth Circuit Court opinion and allowed TFA to continue operations.

Considering TFA's implications on the teaching profession from the perspective of SAF, while TFA – as a field challenger – has largely operated within the established rules of the state when it comes to teacher credentialing and certification, their participation has not always been in support of the rules. Namely, after the first year of TFA's operations, founder Wendy Kopp said that we should “abolish state certification laws altogether” (Kopp, 1991, p. para. 2). Kopp put forth an argument that reimagined the role of traditional colleges of education as a supplemental service. In her view, teacher procurement would be left to individual districts to “launch national recruitment efforts not unlike those conducted by every major firm in corporate America” (Kopp, 1991, p. para. 2) and colleges of education would serve as one component of ongoing professional development.

Another large year was 2008 during the presidential election. During Obama's transition from President-Elect to President, Linda Darling-Hammond served as the head of the education policy working group and was considered by many to be the obvious choice for Secretary of Education. However, given Darling-Hammond's outspoken criticism of NCLB and specifically TFA, the editorial staff for the Washington Post suggested that Darling-Hammond would not be a good choice for the position of Secretary stating:

It would be a mistake to retreat from the accountability that No Child Left Behind has brought in improving learning and narrowing the achievement gap for minority students. And the next secretary should encourage the kind of innovation and entrepreneurship typified by Teach For America's success in attracting top college graduates to inner-city schools. (Washington Post, 2008) as cited in (R. A. Goldstein, Macrine, Chesky, & Perry, 2011)

While there is no direct evidence of TFA specifically lobbying Obama's transition team to not nominate Darling-Hammond – though, some have made that argument (Miner, 2010), the onslaught of media stories suggesting that she would be a bad choice because of her critical stance on TFA likely influenced the President's decision (Bracey, 2009).

Table 4.1  
*Reported Lobbying Expenses from TFA*

Year	Lobbying Expenses	Lobbying Firm Used
2000	\$40,000	Van Scoyoc Associates
2001	\$60,000	TFA
2002	\$160,000	TFA
2003	\$180,000	TFA
2004	\$200,000	TFA
2005	\$220,000	TFA
2006	\$190,000	TFA & Healy Strategies
2007	\$230,000	TFA & Healy Strategies
2008	\$509,199	TFA
2009	\$152,405	TFA
2010	\$573,952	TFA
2011	\$529,295	TFA
2012	\$362,944	TFA



Table 4.1 (cont.)

2013	\$314,002	TFA
2014	\$260,000	TFA
2015	\$260,000	TFA
Total	\$4,241,797	

*Note:* Source: Center for Responsive Politics (Center for Responsive Politics, n.d.-c)

Also of interest is that TFA's increased lobbying efforts in 2008 coincided with the recession that saw tens of thousands of teachers laid off due to budget cuts, yet in 2009, TFA's presence in the Chicago Public Schools – a district that experienced massive layoffs – was the single largest year-to-year increase for TFA in the city since they began there in 2000.

Table 4.2  
*New CMs in Chicago Public Schools (2000-2014)*

Year	New CMs	Year-to-Year Increase
2000	40	-
2001	60	+50%
2002	85	+41%
2003	75	-12%
2004	75	0%
2005	50	-34%
2006	60	+20%
2007	80	+33%
2008	80	0%
2009	225	+275%
2010	200	-12%
2011	200	0%
2012	265	+32.5%
2013	325	+22.6%
2014	325	0%
Total	2145	

*Note:* Table appeared in Brewer, et al., (2016).

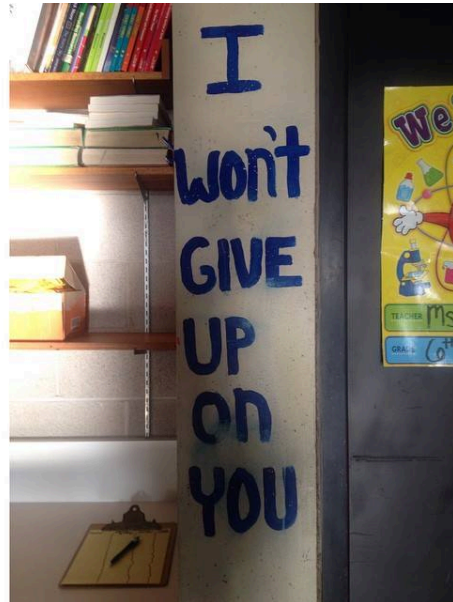
While it is clear that TFA has spent a significant amount of money and time lobbying the federal government for policies that would facilitate the organization's expansion, what isn't as clear is the amount of money that other intermediary organizations who support TFA have spent on lobbying on behalf of TFA and policies that would benefit TFA's operations and expansion.

### *Racial Impacts*

TFA is often chastised as a dominantly White organization that parachutes into Black and Brown communities with a savior mentality seeking to help non-Whites (Hartman, 2011). And while TFA has made efforts to become less of a White organization (a point taken up below), the legacy of TFA's dominantly Whiteness is ever-present in the discourse of the organization and its practices. What is important here is that research has concluded that students often perform better academically when they share the same racial/ethnic background as their teacher (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015).

TFA did, in 2013, begin new recruiting indicatives to diversify the corps. However, while the organization has successfully increased the number of non-White corps members, connecting back to the pedagogical implications of TFA outlined above, the message corps members – even corps members of color - relay to students remains consistently aligned with the myth of meritocracy and a concentration on testing one's way out of poverty (see, also, Chapter 2). Along with TFA language that stated who would be the best teacher, TFA training material refers to the need to bolster academic achievement through big goals, prescriptive visions, and data tracking. In fact, it is often readily easy to spot a TFA classroom when examining the artifacts in the room that are geared towards promoting these ideas (Diamond, 2012; D. Goldstein, 2014a). This obsessive belief that students of color have no goals of their own, vision

for their own future, or committed adults in their lives (see Figure 4.1) is characteristic of the recursive and discursive practices of TFA.



*Figure 4.1.* TFA's Deficit Ideologies. Source: TFA's Facebook Page (Teach For America, 2014)

This disposition clearly situates the privileged affluent White ideology and culture as superior to non-White understandings of what constitutes success. The discursive message here is that non-TFA teachers (often of color), families, and the community, have likely given up on students before. TFA teachers are told that if they follow the recipe for teaching, as put forth by TFA, all of their students will reach 80% proficiency on standards and objectives and will go to college. This same language is used for elementary, middle, and high school teachers, so even those teachers who are working with first graders are instilling in the minds of their students that college is the only option for escaping their impoverished non-White communities and joining the world of White success. Through the creation of a vision and a goal, and step-by-step lesson plans, TFA teachers are instructed that they will solve all issues related to educational inequity

and will propel all students to success. Failure, or inability to meet these standards means that the teacher is a failure, and that they have ultimately failed their students. Discursively, such statements center the corps member (the “I”) as the focal point of the statement and the student (the “you”) as the recipient of the corps member’s dedication – or what Paulo Freire would call false generosity. Accordingly,

The pedagogy of the oppressed, animated by authentic, humanist (not humanitarian) generosity, presents itself as a pedagogy of humankind. Pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. It is an instrument of dehumanization. (Freire, 1970/1992)

The impact that TFA has had on hiring practices has subsequently had impacts on the types of teachers who staff our nation’s schools – and in some cases, TFA’s impact on the racial composition of teachers is more dramatic. For example, prior to Hurricane Katrina, the teaching force in New Orleans was predominately Black. However, after the storm, the influx of TFA and other alternatively certified teachers not only displaced Black educators but saw a significant increase in White teachers. The racial composition of all newly hired teachers prior to the 2005 hurricane were dominantly Black (though, White hires had become close in the year that preceded the storm) (Barrett & Harris, 2015, p. 3). However, immediately following the hurricane, White teachers composed the bulk of new teacher hires in New Orleans. Overall, the total teaching population in New Orleans was approximately 71% Black prior to the hurricane to just under 50% after the storm (S. Carr, 2015).

## **II. TFA’s Impact on Hiring Practices**

Here, I argue that TFA's impact on hiring practices is informed (1) deceptive discourse; and such practices have profound impacts on (2) financial considerations; and (3) teacher experience levels. I provide a content analysis of the difference between TFA's public messaging surrounding how corps members get jobs and the discourse in MOUs. Further, I estimate the real financial costs of TFA at the local district level while also considering the implications for teacher experience. Each impact is now taken up in turn.

### *Rhetoric Versus Reality*

Aside from critique and criticism surrounding TFA's approach to recruiting and training corps members and the pedagogical practices they employ once they're in the classroom is a critique of exactly how TFA corps members get their jobs. A criticism often leveled at TFA is that corps members are actively replacing traditionally certified and/or veteran teachers. This criticism is often coupled with anecdotal evidence that suggests TFA corps members do in fact replace non-TFA teachers. However, TFA has sought to challenge this criticism head-on. TFA's "On the Record" website poses ten of the most often asked questions and critiques of the organization along with a response or explanation. To the question of "Do corps members take jobs from veteran teachers?" TFA provides the following explanation,

TFA is one source of candidates for open teaching positions. Corps members do not have special contracts with schools or districts. They apply for open jobs, and they go through the same interview and hiring process as any candidate. Our approach is to bring the best possible people into the field, but no one is obligated to hire our teachers. (Teach For America, n.d.-j)

Marion Brady (2016) accused TFA as being part of the larger corporate movement to privatize education by suggesting, among other things, that veteran teachers are "too set in their ways to

change and should be replaced by fresh Five-Week-Wonders from Teach For America.

Rebutting that claim directly, TFA suggested that,

There's no scenario in which a TFA corps member forces any teacher out of an existing role, or vice versa. Corps members apply for open teaching positions and go through the same hiring process as any candidate. (Teach For America, 2016)

Drawing from Taylor's political model of policy based in a theory of discourse (Taylor, 2006), there exist two distinct discourses here. First, there is the discourse of TFA's critics that say TFA corps members replace non-TFA teachers, seemingly with the objective of protecting their own employment opportunities. Second, there is the discourse of TFA that claims that corps members receive no special treatment when it comes to hiring and staffing, seemingly with the objective of protecting both TFA's image as well as its operations. The struggle over what does it mean when TFA corps members are hired as teachers therefore represents an arena for contention within the field. Both realities cannot exist at the same time yet it is precisely the dichotomous discourse that fuels the policy debate surrounding hiring practices of TFA corps members.

By claiming that TFA corps members compete even handedly with non-TFA teachers for open positions, TFA is able to suggest that principals employ their own autonomous decisions when it comes to hiring corps members for an open position. That is, when a principal has an opening in her building and the district contracts with TFA, the principal is able to consider a TFA corps member or a non-TFA teacher equally for that open position. The growth of TFA, therefore, would be explained as a result of the benefit of alternative certification policies and school principals making conscious decisions to hire TFA corps members rather than non-TFA teachers for open positions. According to TFA, this is precisely what has happened as the organization claims that not only do principals often prefer TFA corps members over non-TFA

teachers but that the results that corps members get from their students informs current hiring practices and encourages future policy expansion. Yet, the data suggests that not only do TFA corps members receive special consideration but also that the resulting TFA discourse is exceedingly misleading. Here I take up each portion of the official claim in turn.

*TFA is one source of candidates for open teaching positions.* This portion of the claim is essentially misleading. While it is true that TFA is just one of the many providers of teachers, TFA does not operate in every district and, as will be explicated below, the districts that contract with TFA actually do reserve spots for corps members. That is, while a school may have an opening, if that school has been chosen by the district to receive corps members, then the claim that TFA is just one source, among others, for filling the position is misleading.

*Corps members do not have special contracts with schools or districts.* This claim does not align with the evidence. Every district that partners with TFA enter into a MOU with TFA that explicitly serves as a special contract. Each contract includes language such as: “School District will hire every [corps member] provided by [TFA], up to and including the Agreed Number, who meets [district eligibility]” (Atlanta Public Schools & Teach For America, 2012).

*They apply for open jobs, and they go through the same interview and hiring process as any candidate.* This portion of the claim is also demonstrably false. Regional TFA offices work with the local school districts that are contractually obligated to hire corps members to facilitate a “hiring fair.” The hiring fair is not open to the public as the only candidates being “interviewed” are corps members (T. J. Brewer, 2013).

*Our approach is to bring the best possible people into the field, but no one is obligated to hire our teachers.* This portion of the claim repeats previous suggestions that there is no guarantee for hire being required of the district. However, according to MOU language,

Although [TFA] will work in good faith with School District to provide Teachers who meet specific grade level, subject matter or other criteria specified by School District, School District **shall hire every** qualified Teacher made available by TFA pursuant to this Agreement whether or not such Teacher meets such specific criteria, and School District shall use its reasonable best efforts to hire Teachers across the full range of grade levels and subject matters, including in non-critical or non-shortage areas. (Fulton County Public Schools & Teach For America, 2007, p. 2, emphasis added).

Thus, each portion of TFA's discourse surrounding the criticism that its corps members replace traditionally certified teachers and that corps members have no special contracts with schools is plainly false. There was an overt example of this in Memphis in 2011. In the summer of 2011, Memphis City Schools "had 101 teacher vacancies and 133 candidates between TFA and its own residency program, plus 210 'surplus' or displaced teachers" and "the district said all 100 [TFA] candidates would be placed" (Roberts, 2011). Keith Williams, president of the Memphis Education Association, said that the "district had 15,000 applicants that were not even considered...this makes it impossible for a person to teach in Memphis City Schools unless they come through [TFA]" (Roberts, 2011). Examples in other cities also show that spots are being reserved for corps members. During a rancorous debate about whether or not to enter into a contract with TFA, the Seattle Public Schools (SPS) board suggested that TFA was needed to attend to a teacher shortage. However, Jonathan Knapp, the Vice President of Seattle Education Association said that, "SPS is misrepresenting the number of teacher vacancies in the district by saying there is a teacher shortage in the district. There is no shortage of teachers in the district" (Bahattacharjee, 2011). And, as pointed out by Bahattacharjee (2011), SPS "received 18,688 applications for 766 positions in the 2010-11 school year alone," reinforcing Knapp's assertion that there was no need for TFA since there was no teacher shortage.

Principals hire based on their subject-area needs. And, as discussed above, teachers are specifically required to have a teaching assignment that is appropriate for the field(s) listed on



their teaching certificate. This requirement is state-specific and is in addition to the NCLB requirement of a teacher being “highly qualified.” The problem, however, is that TFA’s MOUs circumvent the state requirement by requiring a district to hire a corps member across the full range of content areas even if the corps member fails to meet the subject-area criteria.

Considering this reality through the lens of SAF, the advent of the neoliberal state and the supporting of outside field challengers have caused a changing of the rules associated with the field. That is, while the rules of the field stipulate that teachers be: (1) “highly qualified,” and in the case of Georgia; (2) assigned to a teaching position supported by their teaching certificate; district-based MOUs have worked around the latter requirement. While a corps member is required to take and pass the GACE exam in the subject area that they teach, thus imprinting that area on their license, the discourse of the MOUs create an environment where a school district may be in a position to violate state laws if they are being required to hire a corps member for a specific subject when that corps member may not meet the specific criteria. Licensure aside, the impact of TFA on hiring practices can be examined from the meta-level of the district (impacts in New Orleans) and the macro-level of staffing a single teaching position. Innately, staffing decisions carry financial implications since hiring is an action of employment. I now turn to the financial considerations of TFA’s impact at the local level.

### *Financial Impacts*

Intended or unintended financial implications of a school district’s use of alternatively certified teachers usually provide the immediate financial benefit of lowering overall compensation costs as emergency licensed or otherwise alternatively certified teachers do not receive 100% of the standard teacher salary for a teacher with comparable teaching experience.

For example, emergency or alternatively certified teachers in Georgia are classified on a PROV BT-4 license which carries with it 94.5% of the full compensation associated with a PROF BT-4 license (traditionally certified)(Georgia Department of Education, 2013). In Georgia, a standard salary is set by the state and each district, or county, provides an additional stipend. Because of the stipend, there is regional variance in total salary, yet, alternatively certified teachers who hold a PROV BT-4 license receive less than a traditionally certified teacher. In the Atlanta Public Schools, for example, a PROV BT-4 provides a first-year teacher \$34,218.17 in total annual salary whereas the PROF BT-4 provides \$36,209.33. Depending on the licensure level held by a teacher who would be hired, this \$1,991.16 difference between the two salaries represents either an increase in salary cost or a potential for savings. By way of example, there were 353 corps members teaching in Metro-Atlanta in 2013; accordingly, if the Atlanta Public Schools district, for example, hired 353 non-TFA alternatively certified teachers compared to hiring 353 fully certified and traditionally certified teachers, the district would “save” \$702,879 per year on salary compensation.

Juxtaposed to this initial financial savings realized by school districts that hire non-TFA emergency or alternatively certified teachers exists the reality that TFA teachers (while both emergency and alternatively certified) receive 100% of the scheduled teacher salary. Thus, the hiring of 353 TFA teachers in the Atlanta Public Schools would, by comparison, represent the same amount of salary expenditure as it would if the district hired 353 fully certified traditionally trained teachers because TFA corps members are positioned, albeit symbolically, at the PROF BT-4 level as opposed to the provisional equivalency. Yet, the hiring of TFA corps members does not initially constitute a financial wash for school districts when compared to hiring fully certified teachers. TFA requires that school districts offset the financial investment into the

corps members made by TFA. These financial investments include costs associated with recruiting (marketing, salaries for recruiters, etc.), loans provided to corps members to offset relocation costs, housing and food costs associated with the free room and board provided by TFA to the corps members during the summer Institute, and transportation of the corps members to and from their university housing to the schools where they complete their Institute training (Cohen, 2015). This “finders fee” ranges anywhere between \$2,000 and \$5,000 (Vasquez Heilig & Jez, 2010) and is a price stipulated in the MOUs between TFA and the school district. In the case of the Atlanta Public Schools district, the finder’s fee for 2013 was \$4,000 per corps member, per year (Atlanta Public Schools & Teach For America, 2012). This translates into an initial additional cost associated with the hiring of TFA corps members rather than traditionally certified teachers or other alternatively certified teachers. In the case described above, the hiring of 353 corps members would therefore cost an additional \$2,824,000 over a period of two years as a result of the finder’s fees.

Considering the financial impact of staffing a single teaching position over time also sheds light on the financial implications that TFA has had on teaching. For example, Fulton County Public Schools (FCPS) partnered with TFA to provide 37 corps members to begin during the 2012-2013 school year (TFA has provided at least 110 corps members to the district since the relationship began in 2007). The MOU stipulated that FCPS would pay TFA \$60,000 per year for the cohort – thus, \$120,000 total for 37 corps members or \$3,243.24 for each corps member for each year (Fulton County Public Schools & Teach For America, 2013a). Using salary schedule data from 2013, Table 4.3 shows the long-term financial implications of hiring TFA corps members rather than non-TFA teachers.

Table 4.3  
*Annual Salary and Cumulative Costs of Staffing a Single Teaching Position, Fulton County Public Schools*

Years	Non-TFA (w/ BS)	Non-TFA (w/ BS) Cumulative	Non-TFA (w/ MS)	Non-TFA (w/ MS) Cumulative	TFA	TFA Cumulative
1	\$40,308	\$40,308	\$44,748	\$44,748	\$43,551	\$43,551
2	\$40,308	\$80,616	\$44,748	\$89,496	\$43,551	\$87,102
3	\$40,308	\$120,924	\$44,748	\$134,244	\$43,551	\$130,654
4	\$40,308	\$161,232	\$44,748	\$178,992	\$43,551	\$174,205
5	\$41,436	\$202,668	\$45,996	\$224,988	\$43,551	\$217,756
6	\$41,436	\$244,104	\$45,996	\$270,984	\$43,551	\$261,307
7	\$42,012	\$286,116	\$46,644	\$317,628	\$43,551	\$304,859
8	\$42,600	\$328,716	\$47,292	\$364,920	\$43,551	\$348,410
9	\$43,800	\$372,516	\$48,612	\$413,532	\$43,551	\$391,961
10	\$45,024	\$417,540	\$49,968	\$463,500	\$43,551	\$435,512
11	\$46,284	\$463,824	\$51,372	\$514,872	\$43,551	\$479,064
12	\$47,580	\$511,404	\$52,812	\$567,684	\$43,551	\$522,615
13	\$48,924	\$560,328	\$54,288	\$621,972	\$43,551	\$566,166
14	\$50,292	\$610,620	\$55,812	\$677,784	\$43,551	\$609,717
15	\$51,696	\$662,316	\$57,372	\$735,156	\$43,551	\$653,269
16	\$53,148	\$715,464	\$58,980	\$794,136	\$43,551	\$696,820
17	\$54,636	\$770,100	\$60,636	\$854,772	\$43,551	\$740,371
18	\$56,160	\$826,260	\$62,328	\$917,100	\$43,551	\$783,922
19	\$57,732	\$883,992	\$64,068	\$981,168	\$43,551	\$827,474
20	\$59,352	\$943,344	\$65,856	\$1,047,024	\$43,551	\$871,025
21	\$59,352	\$1,002,696	\$65,856	\$1,112,880	\$43,551	\$914,576
22	\$61,008	\$1,063,704	\$67,704	\$1,180,584	\$43,551	\$958,127
23	\$61,008	\$1,124,712	\$67,704	\$1,248,288	\$43,551	\$1,001,679
24	\$62,712	\$1,187,424	\$69,600	\$1,317,888	\$43,551	\$1,045,230
25	\$64,464	\$1,251,888	\$71,544	\$1,389,432	\$43,551	\$1,088,781
26	\$64,464	\$1,316,352	\$71,544	\$1,460,976	\$43,551	\$1,132,332
27	\$64,464	\$1,380,816	\$71,544	\$1,532,520	\$43,551	\$1,175,883
28	\$64,464	\$1,445,280	\$71,544	\$1,604,064	\$43,551	\$1,219,435
29	\$64,464	\$1,509,744	\$71,544	\$1,675,608	\$43,551	\$1,262,986
30	\$64,464	\$1,574,208	\$71,544	\$1,747,152	\$43,551	\$1,306,537
Total	\$1,574,208		\$1,747,152		\$1,306,537	

*Notes:* Salaries based on Fulton County Public Schools (Fulton County Public Schools & Teach For America, 2013b). TFA costs include \$3,243.24 annual finder's fee in addition to salary paid and are reset every two-years following TFA's two-year teaching commitment.

As shown in Table 4.3, the hiring of a non-TFA teacher who holds a bachelor's degree would cost the district \$1,574,208 over thirty years. Hiring a teacher who holds a master's degree would cost \$1,747,152 over thirty years. And filling the position with a TFA corps member who holds a bachelor's degree and is replaced every two years would cost \$1,306,537 over the same time period. Thus, the long-term financial implication of hiring a corps member indicates that there is a substantial savings when it comes to salary costs. However, there are two major concerns that must be addressed. First, it has become commonplace for a teacher to not maintain the same teaching position for thirty years so the example is a hypothetical one. Second, and likely a more realistic consideration, is that the hiring of a TFA corps member is actually *more expensive* than hiring a non-TFA teacher who holds a bachelor's degree. In fact, despite the salary for a position being filled by a corps member and reset every two years being set at \$40,308 per year, the additional finder's fee of \$3,243.24 brings the salary cost to \$43,551 per year as it represents an additional 8% cost in salary. With this in mind, the existence of a finder's fee paid to TFA makes the hiring of a corps member a more expensive financial commitment through the thirteenth year of filling a position. It is not until the fourteenth year of staffing a position where the cumulative cost associated with a non-TFA teacher who holds a bachelor's degree becomes cheaper than a TFA corps member - \$610,620 and \$609,717, respectively. In other regional districts, the savings are realized earlier. For example, the costs associated with staffing a position with a TFA corps member in the Atlanta Public Schools becomes cheaper after the eighth year. However, as is exceedingly the case in many states, Georgia included, many pre-service teachers do not enter teaching right away as they are often required to have a bachelor's degree in a content area and then a masters degree in teaching. When comparing the costs associated with hiring a TFA corps member rather than a teacher who

holds a masters degree, the hiring of a TFA corps member is *immediately cheaper* than the traditionally certified teacher and remains so for the duration of staffing the position.

Thus, if a district is given the option to hire a TFA corps member or a traditionally certified teacher who both hold bachelor's degrees, it would appear that the policy decision to hire TFA corps members rather than traditionally trained teachers actually creates an increased financial burden on school districts. This cost is magnified by the fact that TFA corps members do not stay in the classroom as long as traditionally certified teachers (Brown, 2015b). However, while school districts spend more money initially by hiring TFA corps members as compared to other alternatively certified teachers and traditionally certified teachers, those districts stand to save a considerable amount of money over time given: (1) the high rate of turnover of TFA corps members that prevents increased salary due to longevity of time served; and (2) the reduced costs of long-term insurance and pension contributions. Because teacher salaries have traditionally been linked to years of service and level of higher education degree, the hiring of TFA corps members presents a few interesting financial policy implications for consideration:

1. Districts, that are often facing reduced budgets, must justify the additional up-front expense of TFA corps members as a result of the non-refundable finder's fee.
2. The hiring of TFA corps members (or other novice teachers) shifts the average years of teaching experience closer to zero – which, over time, presents the opportunity for long-term savings.
3. The reduction in average teacher experience (an indicator commonly associated with quality instruction) may represent the need to supplement instruction with other measures that represent additional costs.

Districts that are cash-strapped who are considering entering into an agreement with TFA must first justify the additional expenditure as a result of the finder's fee. In Eastern North Carolina, for example, the finder's fee of \$3,500 represents an additional 10% cost of the overall teacher salary given that the salary for a new teacher with a bachelor's degree is \$35,000 (Instruction, 2015). Since inception, TFA has placed approximately 50,000 corps members (Villanueva Beard & Kramer, 2015). And while finder's fees vary across regions and vary over time – often ranging between \$2,000 and \$5,000 per corps member, per year (Vasquez Heilig & Jez, 2010) – estimating the total finder's fee expense borne by districts sheds light on the exorbitant costs associated with hiring corps members. Assuming that the average finder's fee was \$4,000 per corps member, per year, 50,000 corps members have cost districts approximately \$400,000,000 in finder's fees alone since TFA began. That money could, of course, otherwise be used to fund other educational measures and practices. Table 4.4 shows the estimated amount of finder's fees paid across districts in Atlanta, Chicago, New York, Eastern North Carolina, and New Orleans.

Table 4.4  
*Estimated Finder's Fees to TFA in Selected Regions*

District	Years	Total Corps members	Average Annual Finder's Fee	Total Estimated Finder's Fees
Metro-Atlanta	2000-2014	1,370	\$3,534.50	\$9,684,530
Chicago	2000-2014	3,060	\$1,222.87*	\$7,484,000
New York	1990-2014	5,290	\$4,583.33	\$24,245,833
Eastern North Carolina	1990-2014	1,100	\$3,500	\$3,850,000
New Orleans	1990-2014	1,230	\$5,000	\$6,150,000
Total		12,050	\$4,154.46	\$51,414,363 <sup>†</sup>

*Notes:* Totals are as follows: Atlanta (1,200 alums plus 170 corps members)(Teach For America, n.d.-e); Chicago (2,600 alums plus 460 corps members)(Teach For America, n.d.-b); New York (4,700 alums plus 590 corps members)(Teach For America, n.d.-g); Eastern North Carolina (820 alums plus 280 corps members)(Teach For America, n.d.-c); and New Orleans (960 alums plus 270 corps members)(Teach For America, n.d.-d). Average annual finder's fee is based on collected MOUs. \*Indicates that the average annual finder's fee was calculated by dividing the

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total reported finder's fees of \$7,484,000 by the total number of corps members (3,060).

†Indicates that the figure is the total of the column (not a product of the row).

### *Teacher Experience Impacts*

Considering another implication listed above, the shift of average years of teaching experience closer to zero constitutes an overall financial savings potential for school districts that would save money by reducing the number of teachers who receive higher levels of compensation due to multiple years or decades of teaching. The Recovery School District (RSD) in New Orleans that expanded following the 2005 Hurricane Katrina provides a unique and dramatic example of this shift of teacher experience closer to zero. As illustrated in Table 4.5, the teaching population in New Orleans prior to the storm had quite a bit of experience. In fact, 83% of teachers had more than four years of experience with 17% having 0-3 years of experience. However, the storm provided the opportunity to engage in what Naomi Klein has called “disaster capitalism” (N. Klein, 2007). Klein suggests that market-oriented reforms pushed by Milton Friedman and his followers require real or perceived disasters to facilitate what would otherwise be uncomfortable reforms. With the city in physical and emotional ruin, the slate was wiped clean to throw away the old approach to education with public schools and replace them with charter schools. In addition to New Orleans becoming the first major city in the United States to fully revamp and reconceive of public education as charter schools, the city and its policymakers also sought to reconceive of what types of teachers would staff these schools. Evaluating the reform efforts in New Orleans, then Secretary of Education Arne Duncan proclaimed that Hurricane Katrina was “the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans” (N. Anderson, 2010).



Over a short period of time, alternatively certified teachers from TFA and TNTP, and a few other organizations, represented the majority of the teachers in the city. Accordingly, as shown between Tables 4.5 and 4.6, the years of teacher experience dramatically shifted closer to zero as a result of the firing of approximately 4,600 veteran traditionally trained teachers and re-staffing the city’s schools – now charter schools – with novice alternatively certified teachers. In 2007, the RSD in New Orleans “with federal funds and through partnerships with nonprofit organizations like Teach For America and The New Teacher Project, [launched] an aggressive recruiting campaign” and hired “well over 500 new teachers, bringing the total number of teachers to about 1,100” (Cowen Institute, 2011, p. 11). In total, there were 1,113 teachers in the RSD and 729 teachers in schools that remained under control of the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) during the 2007-2008 school year totaling to 1,842 teachers in the city.

Table 4.5.

*New Orleans Teachers by Years of Experience and Estimated Total (pre-Katrina)*

	0-1	2-3	4-10	11-14	15-19	20-24	25+	Total
Percentage	9.7%	7.3%	24.7%	9.0%	8.9%	10.9%	29.5%	100%
Est. Total	446	336	1136	414	409	501	1,357	4,600*

*Notes:* Experience percentages from Dixon (2011). Estimated total population numbers rounded to the nearest whole number. \*The total pre-Katrina teacher population is estimated.

Table 4.6.

*New Orleans Teachers by Years of Experience and Estimated Total (post-Katrina)*

	0-1	2-3	4-10	11-14	15-19	20-24	25+	Total
Percentage	36.7%	17.2%	19.3%	4.8%	5.5%	4.9%	11.6%	100%
Est. Total	676	317	356	88	101	90	214	1,842

*Notes:* Experience percentages from Dixon (2011). Estimated total population numbers rounded to the nearest whole number.

Descriptive statistics suggest that pre-Katrina ( $M = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 4.33$ ) mean years of experience for teachers were between 11-14 years. However, post-Katrina ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 4.43$ ) the mean

years of experience for teachers shifted to 2-3 years of experience. Pre-Katrina standard deviations were smaller, suggesting that talent was concentrated more closely to the average while human talent post-Katrina was more spread out. An independent samples t-test indicates statistically significant differences between pre- and post-Katrina groups ( $t(3473) = 23.44, p < .001$ , one-tailed).

And, as explicated above, while this not only represented a dramatic shift in the racial demographic profile of the city's teachers from predominately Black to predominately White, it provided the city with an unprecedented opportunity to reduce the costs associated with teacher labor as teacher experience was shifted closer to zero years of experience.

In order to examine those financial implications it is useful to analyze the difference in salary costs before and after the hurricane. Approximately 4,600 teachers were laid off immediately following the storm (S. Carr, 2015; Mitchell, 2015). And while exact data for the total population of teachers in New Orleans prior to the storm does not exist, I use this number to represent the pre-Katrina population of teachers. Partnering that number with the experience levels reported by and to expand upon the work of Dixson (2011), I estimate whole numbers of teachers in each experience bracket in Tables 4.5 and 4.6.

For example, prior to the storm, 9.0% of teachers had 11-14 years of experience. Out of a total of 4,600 teachers, I estimate that 414 teachers were in the experience bracket of 11-14 years. Having done this for each experience bracket, I multiplied the whole number by the average salary associated with those levels of experience. For example, continuing with the group with 11-14 years of experience, the average salary was \$40,017 for teachers with that many years of experience at the bachelor's degree level. Accordingly, 414 teachers being paid, on average, \$40,017 per year cost the district \$16,566,935 in salary expenditures. This estimated

expense was also calculated for each experience bracket and is illustrated in Table A.1 in the Appendix.

In total, I estimate that salary expenditures pre-Katrina to have been \$177,896,510 out of a total operating budget that was close to \$500,000,000 (Cowen Institute, 2011). The salary estimation is a conservative estimate since the calculations are based on teachers having only a bachelor's degree. Following the shift in teacher experience closer to zero, the city's expenditure for teacher salaries dropped down to approximately \$79,339,269. Despite the fact that overall teacher salaries were increased by approximately 16% following the hurricane in an effort to recruit teachers back into the city (S. Carr, 2008), the shift in teacher experience closer to zero as a result of the massive layoffs and the re-staffing of schools with TFA, provided the city with significant savings of approximately \$98,557,241 per year. The bulk of the savings came from the sheer reduction in the teacher labor force. Assuming that the post-Katrina 1,842 teachers retained the same levels of experiences as the pre-Katrina group, the salary costs would be \$86,196,095 per year (see Table A.2 in the Appendix). So, if the post-Katrina group maintained the same levels of experience (and higher pay based on that experience), the simple overall reduction in the labor force would have resulted in an annual savings of \$91,700,415 ( $\$177,896,510 - \$86,196,095$ ). The estimated salary costs associated with the reduction in force *and* the shifting teacher experience closer to zero was, again, \$79,339,269 – therefore, the shift of experience closer to zero saves the district and estimated \$6,856,826 per year in salary expenses ( $\$86,196,095 - \$79,339,269$ ).

As was shown in Table 4.3, the prospect of hiring a TFA corps member over a non-TFA traditionally certified teacher for a single teaching position represents a more expensive proposition for the district until there has been enough turn over to offset the increased salary

costs due to the finder's fees. In the example of New Orleans, however, if there is an opportunity to replace an entire school or district's teaching force with TFA, while the district would pay finder's fees, the shift of teaching experience closer to zero years represents an opportunity for exceptional financial savings. As was the case in New Orleans, the hurricane and the following influx of TFA, provided a district-wide opportunity to shift the years of teacher experience closer to zero. So, while any single TFA corps member costs the district more in the beginning when compared to a non-TFA teacher due to the finder's fee, the collective result of the firing of experienced teachers and filling their positions with novice teachers manifested a significant savings in salary expenditures.

Since the 2007-2008 school year, the average experience level of teachers in New Orleans has continued to shift further to zero. As such, while salary costs before the storm generally rose each year as teachers accumulated more years of service, the shift represents an exponential and growing savings on salaries over the decade that followed the storm given the reconceptualization of teacher preparation in the city.

And while the Cowen Institute asserts that this high level of turnover presents a financial problem as investment in human capital is lost and continually replaced (Cowen Institute, 2012), the loss of investment is not entirely owned by the school district and the loss is substantially less than the potential long-term savings that result in this shift. And while New Orleans represents an extreme and unique example of the financial impact of relying on alternatively certified teachers, attempts to replace entire schools with TFA corps members, including replacing principals with TFA alumni, have been pushed in Chicago (J. Anderson, n.d.).

### **III. TFA's Impact on Educational Leadership**

In this section, I argue that TFA's impact on educational leadership has taken on two distinct but interconnected forms: (1) principal preparation; and (2) alumni-turned-policymaker. As stated previously, TFA's mission statement does not include the words "teacher" or "teach" as the organization's aims center on the production of educational leaders. The model, as it goes, is to have corps members teach for two years to develop manufactured expertise so that they are able to justify their transition into a principalship, school board position, or other elected position that oversees educational policy.

### *Impacts on the Principalship*

The Chicago Public Schools (CPS), under direction of then CEO Arne Duncan, began partnering with TFA in 2007 to provide principals from within TFA's network of alumni. In exchange for two interns, CPS allocated \$229,812, which included covering an annual salary of \$86,000 for each intern (Chicago Public Schools, 2007). The contract does not state whether TFA received a finder's fee for the interns.

In 2012, CPS began an expanded strategic partnership with Loyola University, New Leaders, TFA, and the University of Illinois at Chicago to provide principals for CPS. The initial contract in 2012 made \$1,730,001 available among the four providers to cover the costs associated with the recruitment and training of aspiring principals from the various provider networks (Chicago Public Schools, 2012a). Subsequent contracts outlined specific agreements with the individual providers. The contract with TFA for their The Aspiring Principal Program (APP) is described as a "year-long rigorous internship that provides Interns with study and practice that prepares them with the practical knowledge, skills, tools, and support they will need to lead a school from day one of a principalship" (Chicago Public Schools, 2012b, p. 17). The

one-year coursework for APP is completed at Harvard University followed by a one-year internship at a school within CPS. This subsequent contract earmarked \$255,000 of the appropriated \$1.7 million to TFA as a finder's fee in exchange for 17 aspiring principals from within its alumni network (see Table 4.7).

In 2013, CPS extended the contract with the four providers out to 2015. In that extension, the allocation for the programs rose from \$1.7 million to \$4,215,001 (Chicago Public Schools, 2013). This contract stipulated that "TFA will recruit and select a minimum of thirty (30) Interns and a minimum of twelve (12) Pre-Interns (Harvard) who will be prepared to lead a school serving CPS students in the school year following the internship" (Chicago Public Schools, 2013, p. 5). The agreement outlined that TFA would receive a finder's fee of \$15,000 per APP intern as they met milestones. With 42 Interns in the pipeline, TFA's finder's fee from CPS would be \$630,000 (see Table 4.7). Thus, of the money set aside by CPS to cover expenses associated with the training of interns at Harvard, stipends, etc., a full 15% of the money was allocated to TFA as a finder's fee.

Currently, CPS oversees 517 public schools, 130 charter schools, 11 contract schools, and 2 SAFE schools for a total of 660 schools (Chicago Public Schools, n.d.). The contracts do not stipulate how TFA alumni turned principals will be allocated within the schools that CPS oversees. If the 44 principals (2 from 2008 and 42 in 2015) were evenly distributed among the 660 schools, TFA principals in 2015 would represent 6.7% of all principals. If the principals were isolated to public school positions, they would represent 8.5%, and if they were isolated to charter schools they would represent 33.8%. However, it is important to point out that many TFA alumni who are interested in becoming a principal may choose to affiliate with New Leaders given that TFA and New Leaders maintain a partnership. With this in mind, the

estimations of percentages of principals in CPS who are TFA alumni are conservative as requests for MOUs between CPS and New Leaders went unanswered.

Table 4.7.

*CPS Personnel and Financial Commitment to TFA's PPI*

	2007-2008	2012-2013	2012-2015
Alumni Principal Candidates	2	17	42
Finder's Fee to TFA	?	\$255,000	\$630,000

*Note:* TFA's contract with CPS was increased and extended in 2012 out to 2015 and the 2012-2015 numbers are inclusive of the 2012-2013 numbers. Question mark (?) indicates that a finder's fee may or may not have been paid to TFA in exchange for interns from the allotted program amount. (Chicago Public Schools, 2007, 2012b)

New Leaders, founded by President Obama's education advisor and Race to the Top architect (Rubinstein, 2012), has produced more than 1,600 principals since it began in 2000 (New Leaders, n.d.). While burgeoning research suggests that TFA alumni who run for local school boards employ campaign rhetoric that is aligned with the ideologies of TFA (Jacobsen & Linkow, 2014), there exists a gap in research on the long-term implications of TFA alumni who enter the principalship. The transition of corps members out of the classroom and into positions of leadership is explicitly the modern mission of TFA. That is, while TFA began with the goal of attenuating the teacher shortage of the late 1980s, it has since shifted its organizational goals to focus more on influencing policy and practice by way of its alumni base. This influence takes on many shapes as alumni are hired into the principalship by way of TFA's Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI), as they enter elected offices through campaigns facilitated by TFA's Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE), and the myriad of other political, school (e.g., charter schools), and philanthropic impacts that alumni have (Kretchmar et al., 2014).

### *Impacts on Policymaking*

Other impacts of TFA can be found in the organization’s influence on public discourse about teacher tenure and in the secondary impacts from the organization’s alumni as they leave the classroom. Despite some research finding that TFA alumni are less civically engaged than their non-TFA peers, Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE) is a “nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Teach For America corps members and alumni to grow as leaders in their communities and help build the movement for educational equity” (Leadership for Educational Equity, n.d.). The impact and financial resources of LEE have grown significantly over the last few years as has its membership base as it approaches 30,000 people (see Table 4.8). LEE reported net assets of \$4,037,714 at the end of 2013. Comparatively, TFA reported \$437,830,876 in net assets at the end of 2013 (Internal Revenue Service, 2013). As the Director of LEE, Matthew Kramer was paid \$381,946 in total compensation in 2013. Leadership for Educational Equity Foundation, which “supports the mission-driven charitable and educational activities of LEE, reported net assets of \$1,420,000 in 2013.

Table 4.8.  
*Contributions and Grants for Leadership for Educational Equity, Inc.*

Year	Revenue
2007	\$150,100
2008	\$680
2009	\$150,000
2010	\$219,440
2011	\$1,278,722
2012	\$3,850,056
2013	\$10,538,200
Total	\$16,187,198

*Note:* Revenue as reported on LEE’s 990 tax forms (Internal Revenue Service, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013)



In 2013, TFA spent \$750,000 to groom 12 “alumni for posts as state cabinet secretaries or superintendents” and selected seven alumni to “work for senators, representatives, and the House Education and the Workforce Committee” (Simon, 2013). Other efforts such as TFA’s Capitol Hill fellowship places alumni as congressional staffers – an initiative that is funded by venture philanthropist and TFA board member Arthur Rock (Simon, 2013). While LEE is non-partisan, candidates supported by LEE support market-oriented educational reforms (Jacobsen & Linkow, 2014; Jazzman, 2013). Prominent alumni like Michelle Rhee have boisterously supported market-oriented reforms while seeking to dismantle teacher tenure, as was the case in Students First’s support of *Vergara v. California*. Other prominent alumni include Louisiana State Superintendent of Education John White and Kira Orange-Jones. Orange-Jones not only serves as the Executive Director (ED) of the New Orleans region, but she also serves as a member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education – which, as some have suggested, should represent a conflict of interest given that her role as ED is to expand TFA and her role as a Board member is to make decisions about such expansions (Ravitch, 2013b).

Given TFA’s shift in discourse about its organizational aims to focus more on developing alumni leaders, and both TFA’s and LEE’s impressive stock-pile of money, the organization is firmly situated to continue to install alumni into policymaking decisions that will foster an environment conducive to TFA’s continued growth.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

### I. Summary

This dissertation has taken up the question of: “What are the actual and potential effects of TFA on federal, state, and school district policies/practices surrounding teacher preparation and the education profession?” Opening with a discussion of educational inequity, the underlying causes of poverty and poverty’s connection to variance among student outputs, and modern-era policies such as NCLB, I’ve shown that TFA has benefitted from a shifting discourse surrounding teacher preparation and the expected purpose of teachers. Specifically, I have shown that TFA has had a significant impact on policies and practices in three areas: (1) impact on the teaching profession itself; (2) impacts on hiring practices; and (3) impacts on education leadership and policy through its growing alumni base.

TFA, and other related educational reform organizations, systematically approach education reform and classroom pedagogy from the perception that in order for systemic poverty to end, student academic outputs must be equal – as measured by test scores. While TFA acknowledges that there is a difference between educational inputs for those students who come from affluence and the impoverished students that corps members teach, central to the ideology within the organization is that “good,” or in the case of TFA compared to traditionally certified teachers, “better” teachers can trump poverty. In fact, Steven Farr of TFA explicitly said that the Coleman Report was just an excuse for and justification for bad teaching – letting teachers off of the hook. Yet, as explicated in Chapter 2, the *Coleman Report*, along with Bowles and Gintis, Christopher Jenks, and others, firmly concluded that a student’s socioeconomic status is the most powerful determinant of educational outputs and outcomes.

TFA's fast-entry teacher preparation that includes only 18 hours of student teaching clearly challenges the long-held practice that teaching ought to be regarded as a profession requiring years of pre-service training (similar to medicine and law). Loose credentialing requirements set forth by states and bolstered by NCLB's provision for alternatively certified teachers to be classified as "highly qualified" represents a real challenge for conceptions of teaching as a true, and meaningful profession. The denigration of professional teacher's unions – sparked also by a shift in national dialogue surrounding teachers and testing – has afforded TFA the opportunity to expand in areas with little or no objection. Corps members who readily accept teaching as a low-pay and temporary job not only undermine teaching as a profession but reinforce long-held conceptions of teaching as a feminized job.

TFA's impact on hiring practices have not only reshaped the demographics of teachers in many of the areas that TFA places corps members – namely, replacing Black and Brown teachers with dominantly White corps members. And, as was examined in Chapter 4, TFA's use of MOUs is a systematic attempt to reserve teaching positions for corps members as the contracts require that the district "hire every" corps member that TFA makes available. The result of these hiring practices means that districts must bear a greater financial burden to pay for TFA's non-refundable finder's fees – fees that have collectively cost in the hundreds of millions of dollars since TFA began in 1990. However, and related to TFA's impact on the teaching profession, as districts rely on TFA to staff singular positions, the cost of TFA becomes a cheaper option over time and is automatically cheaper than hiring a teacher who holds a master's degree.

TFA's shifting aim away from teachers to educational leaders has produced countless principals, school board leaders, and other elected officials who all hold considerable power to expand TFA. And, since most of those alumni leaders share the ideology associated with TFA, it

is reasonable to assume that TFA's political future is secured and continues to align with the neoliberal state's assertion that "better" teachers can produce "better" test scores thus leading towards the end of systemic poverty and ending racial inequity in education.

While decades of educational research have concluded that when it comes to student outputs, poverty matters. Yet, the reconceptualization of teaching as a technocratic skill rather than a true profession has facilitated TFA's growth within the educational landscape. Examining the discursive and recursive practices of the organization within the broad scope of educational reform show that TFA has become quite effective at influencing policy and practice in urban and rural contexts. Drawing on Fligstein and McAdam's SAF theory, I've shown that the lens is useful in understanding the positioning of field players, though, in the case of teacher preparation and TFA, contextual and historical situating is required to understand whether TFA is the field's incumbent or its challenger.

## **II. Implications of Recent Trends**

The current and future implications of recent trends in teacher preparation and certification policy are vast as the history surrounding teacher certification practices and policies. However, given the extensive reach of NCLB and its implications for shaping the field of teaching, the realm of teacher preparation and credentialing (both traditional and alternative iterations) will likely continue to conform to and align with the 'needs' of schools and hiring principals. This alignment is readily apparent in alternative certification programs like TFA and increasingly – albeit at a slower pace – within traditional colleges of education. Teacher preparation policies and practices – while preceding teacher service – are inextricably linked to the policies and practices associated with teaching. For example, it is the field of teaching and

the practice of schooling that largely prescribes the type(s) of teachers needed and, in turn, that largely dictates the type of pre-service education that teacher candidates receive. Over a century ago, the types of teachers needed aligned with the assumption that the Bible be at the center of learning, in modern times, the needs of schools mirror the aims to raise student test scores. It has been argued that the shifts in expected pedagogical practices of teachers to align more with test-prep pedagogy has begun to force traditional colleges of education to incorporate more training related to testing despite opponents of colleges of education insisting that traditional routes are ineffective. Though, given the slowness and reluctance of traditional colleges of education to 'conform' to elevating the importance of student test score outcomes, many have proposed the outright elimination of colleges of education in an effort to locate teacher certification and credentialing at the local school level (specifically in charter schools) (Ravitch, 2012b). Overall, current trends in the teaching field that inform the type(s) of teachers needed will likely reinforce and result in more: (1) test-preparation focused teachers; (2) radical shifts in teacher demographics like race and experience, (3) and considerable financial implications for local school districts. Each implication will now be taken up in turn below.

From a supply and demand point of view, while traditional certification programs have started to shift its course of study to support more test-prep pedagogy and methods, that shift has not kept up with the adoption of test-prep pedagogy supported in alternative certification models. Because alternative certification organizations, like TFA, openly state that the focus of every teacher should primarily be on raising test scores (Farr, 2010; Kopp & Farr, 2011), the increase in hiring TFA corps members further exposes students to such myopic pedagogical dispositions and practices. Ultimately, this disposition reinforces the myths that; (a) schools have failed (Berliner & Biddle, 1995); (b) school failure and low expectations has reproduced poverty

(Greene et al., 2005; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003); and (c) that the natural remedy for ameliorating systemic poverty is by addressing the failure of schools ability to raise student test scores – namely by ‘fixing’ teachers (Brill, 2011; Downey, 2011; Kopp, 2001; Kopp & Farr, 2011; Kopp & Roekel, 2011; Rothstein, 2004, 2008, 2010). In short, increasing test scores by increasing teacher quality (quality measured as a teacher’s ability to impact scores) become a silver bullet solution to systemic poverty.

Unfortunately, the demand for teachers who have been prepared specifically to raise test scores will likely create more instances of cheating and less collaboration among teachers who must work individually towards merit-based salaries. Moreover, demands for teachers who consider test scores to be the primary focus of educators aptly situates students as unfinished commodities needing to be machined to standardized form. As a result, students will be increasingly exposed to new (and resurrected) forms of symbolic violence from their teachers (A. Anderson, 2013a).

In an effort to further cement the purported causal relationship between teacher preparation and ‘teacher quality’ and student outcomes on standardized tests, the US Department of Education (USDOE) announced in 2014 that it was unveiling a new framework for evaluating teacher preparation programs. In short, the new framework seeks to evaluate and assign ratings for teacher preparation programs using a combination of Value Added Measures (VAM) and other metrics despite VAM instruments to have been found to be largely unreliable given the instrument’s inability to account for the varying aspects informing student test scores outside of teacher factors – which only account for less than 10% of the variance between student test scores (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2015).

The new USDOE evaluation framework seeks to rate both traditional credentialing organizations like colleges of education while also including alternative route organizations in the evaluation and rating structure. In fact, TFA was included on the committee that created the new USDOE evaluation framework as the representative for all alternative certification programs in the country. And while there aren't special exemptions written into the USDOE evaluation framework that exclude alternative certification programs from the same evaluation components expected of traditional certification programs, TFA has simultaneously lobbied at the local level to have its corps members excluded from the formulas that calculate teacher retention. For example, a recent bill in Texas – though currently withdrawn – highlights TFA's efforts to create exceptions for its corps members ("Hb 1060," 2015). Accordingly, the Bill would stipulate that “a teacher who is employed by a school district through participation in a program that requires a two-year teaching commitment in an underserved area or low-income community and who leaves employment with the district after the two-year commitment is not considered for purposes of reporting teacher turnover information under Subsection (e)(3) ("Hb 1060," 2015, p. 1). Ultimately, the USDOE's new evaluation system reinforces the myth that student test scores are largely informed by teacher characteristics and, in turn, collaterally informed by the training those teachers receive (Kumashiro, 2015).

And while the USDOE is now jumping on the bandwagon of evaluating teacher preparation programs based on the ability of their alumni to raise student test scores, evaluating teacher preparation programs has been a mainstay for the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ). For the past two years, NCTQ has released its assessment of all of the colleges of education and the dominant alternative certification organizations. On the whole, traditional colleges of education have continued to receive less than stellar ratings from NCTQ while

organizations like TFA continue to receive very high marks. Though, many have raised questions about NCTQ's methodology (Baker, 2013) while also pointing out that TFA's Wendy Kopp serves on the advisory board of NCTQ.

Other implications of the current trends associated with alternative teacher certification (and traditional certification programs that are shifting the prescribed course of study) relate directly to the culture of classrooms and the pedagogical approach of teachers. Given the vast impact that NCLB had – and continues to have even as the law is being phased out – on elevating the importance of test scores, pre-service teachers in both traditional and alternative programs have and will likely continue to increase the use of myopic pedagogical methods that situate test scores as both the foundation of and the pinnacle goal of education. This type of pedagogical practice is readily apparent in the types of teaching practices associated with TFA. For example, TFA requires all of its corps members to post a “Big Goal” at the front of the classroom that represents a target percentage of students “meeting or exceeding” (or a comparable metric) acceptable scores on standardized tests. Accordingly, pedagogical practices that are characterized as test-prep require more rigid expectations of student behavior resulting in more draconian and often behaviorist classroom management techniques.

Aside from debates about the importance of student test scores, the real impact of teacher preparation policy trends will likely to only continue to place teachers who lack a the full set of requisite skills historically associated with teaching. That is, “Teachers who enter without full preparation are less able to plan and redirect instruction to meet students’ needs (and less aware of the need to do so), less skilled in implementing instruction, less able to anticipate students’ knowledge and potential difficulties, and less likely to see it as their job to do so, often blaming students if their teaching is not successful” (Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 208). Though, it has



been shown that, contrary to blaming students, TFA's model for teacher self-evaluation positions the teacher as the recipient of blame, not students, if success is not achieved (T. J. Brewer, 2014).

In many ways, TFA's assumption about teacher 'shortages' is correct in that urban schools that serve predominately low-income and non-White students are exposed to teachers who are disproportionately underprepared/unprepared and inexperienced (Darling-Hammond, 2005). However, the challenge therein lies with TFA's assumption that addressing a shortage of well-prepared and experienced teachers is ameliorated by sending in teachers who are, themselves, less prepared and less experienced than those non-TFA teachers.

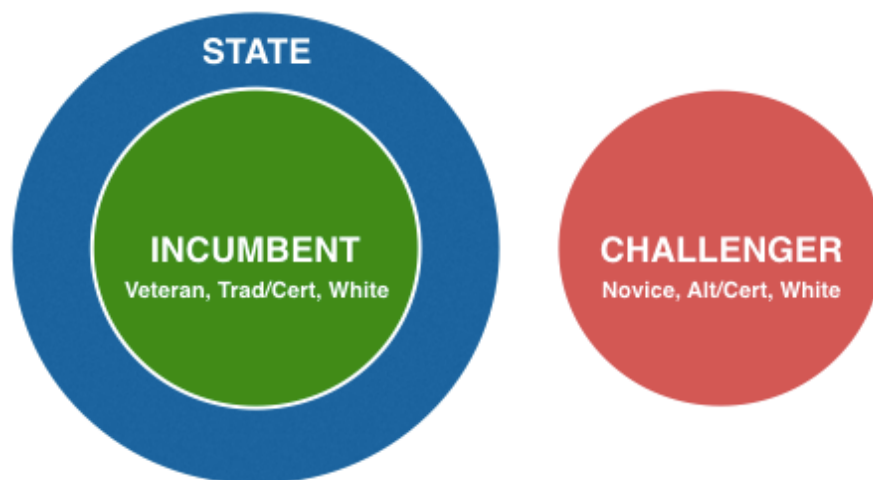
The continued leveling of requirements for entry into the teaching field that makes it easier for alternative certification organizations to thrive will likely continue to shift the demographics of the nation's teachers – especially in those urban and rural areas where organizations like TFA target. For example, prior to the physical, economic, social, and cultural devastation wrought by hurricane Katrina, a full 29.5% of teachers in the city had twenty-five or more years of teaching experience (Dixson, 2011). The salt-water waves that breached the levees and flooded the city paved the way for the waves of school reforms that would follow. Arne Duncan, the Secretary of Education, himself proclaimed that the hurricane was “the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans’ because it gave the city a chance to rebuild and improve its failing public schools” (Bruce, 2010). Accordingly, the seemingly clean slate created a sense of *carte blanche* control to reimagine schools in the city. The Recovery School District (RSD) was completely given over to charter schools that, as explicated above, preferred alternatively certified teachers – usually from TFA. As a result, the demographics of the average teacher shifted to one that was more White, and exceedingly less qualified and experienced. Indeed, the average teaching experience of teachers in the city shifted from 29.5%

having twenty-five or more years to a new majority (36.7%) having less than one year of teaching experience (See Table 4.6). In sum, while current policy trends that equalize the candidacy of traditionally certified and alternatively certified teachers to be hired for the same positions, it is the policy practice at the local level of replacing traditionally certified and/or veteran teachers with novice alternatively certified teachers that will likely have the largest impact.

School district (and federal) policies that continue to elevate opportunities for teaching candidates from alternative certification programs to compete evenly – and in some cases unequally (T. J. Brewer et al., 2016) – with candidates from traditional certification programs will certainly have continued financial implications for local schools. Ultimately, there are two overarching financial implications: (1) cost differences associated with hiring TFA corps members, for example, who commit to teaching for only two years versus a non-TFA teacher who bears no such overt commitment; and (2) the financial implications of systematically replacing veteran teachers with TFA corps members. For the former, the hiring of a TFA corps member over a novice but traditionally certified teacher for a single teaching position costs a school district more money initially given the district's contractual obligation to pay a finder's fee per corps member, per year, to TFA (T. J. Brewer et al., 2016). For example, as is the case in the Atlanta Public Schools, the hiring of an alternatively certified TFA corps member over a traditionally certified teacher costs the school district an extra \$75,133 over the course of nine years to staff a single teaching position with a TFA corps member rather than a non-TFA teacher (T. J. Brewer et al., 2016). It isn't until the tenth year of staffing a position that a non-TFA teacher represents a cheaper hiring option. However, over the course of thirty years, the hiring of TFA corps members over non-TFA teachers for a single position saves a school district

\$267,671 per teaching position (see Table 4.3). As is the case in the RSD in New Orleans, the systematic shift of the teacher demographic of experience down from twenty-five or more years to less than one created the opportunity for the district to save \$6,856,826 annually in teacher salary alone (see Table A.1). Though, it is important to point out that such financial implications of which teacher preparation route is preferred, salary cost considerations are a minimal figure considering potential savings that would naturally follow by reducing cumulative costs associated with paying higher insurance premiums and pension/retirement benefits on behalf of teacher employees.

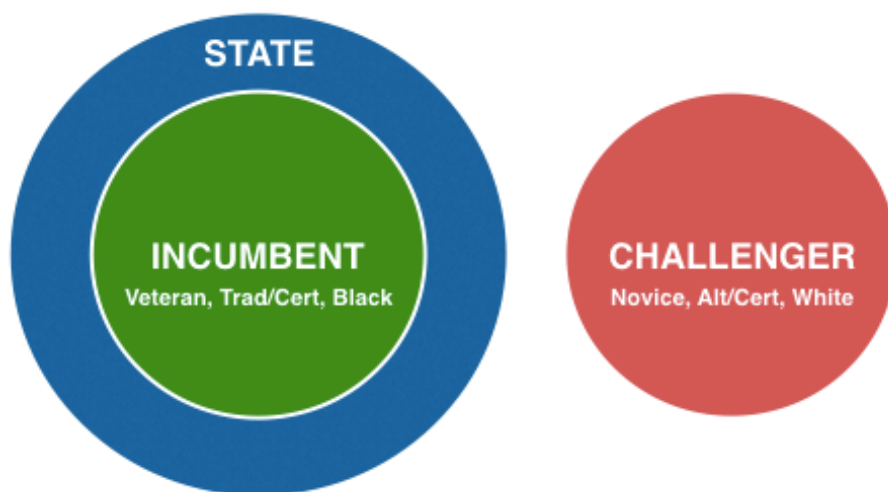
Considering these impacts through the lens of SAF, it becomes clear that defining the incumbent within the field requires a discussion of contextual factors. For example, given that TFA has not expanded into suburban contexts, the incumbent can be defined as largely veteran, traditionally certified, and often White teachers (see Figure 5.1).



*Figure 5.1.* Field Settlement – Suburban Context.

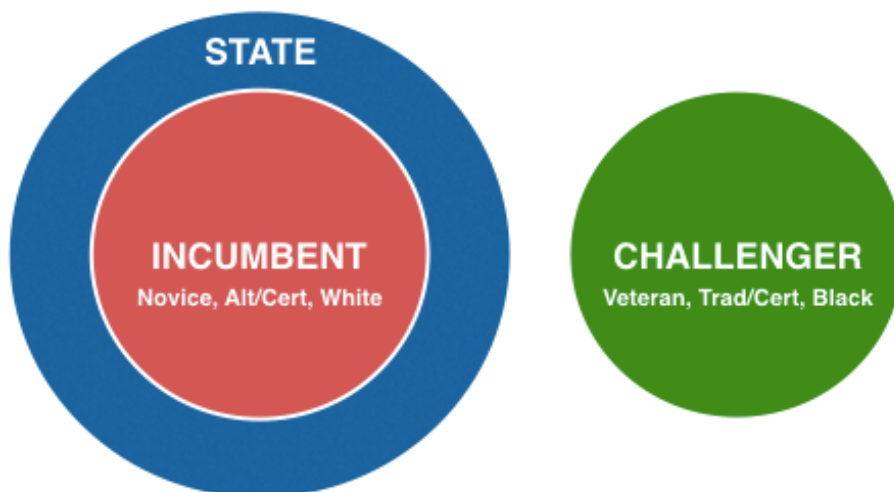
In this view, the field is in an era of settlement as it relates to the incumbent/challenger dichotomy. However, given the broader field context of teacher professionalization, incumbents have suffered some losses when we consider the denigration of teacher's unions.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, there was settlement among the incumbents and challengers within the field of teacher preparation. The majority of teachers were veteran, traditionally certified, and Black (see Figure 5.2).



*Figure 5.2. Pre-Katrina Field Settlement – New Orleans Context*

However, Hurricane Katrina not only represented an exogenous shock to the city, but it provided the real disaster that was necessary to usher in disaster capitalism that oversaw the transformation of the field of education (see Figure 5.3).



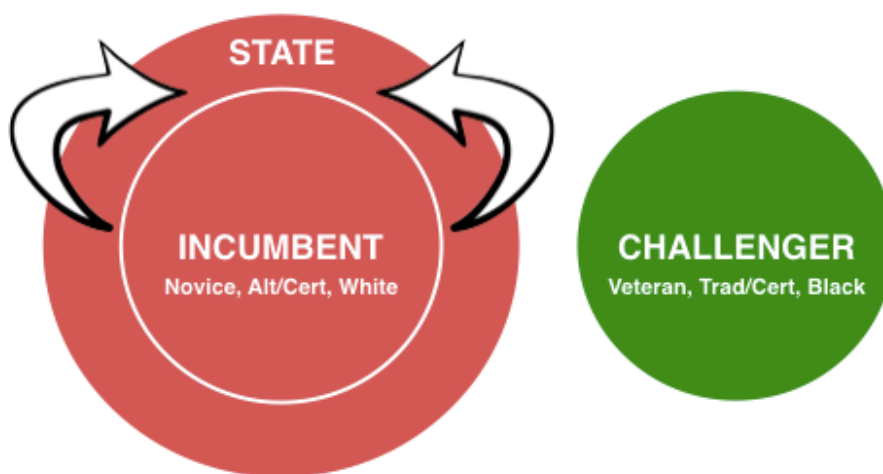
*Figure 5.3. Post-Katrina Field Contention from Exogenous Shock – New Orleans Context*

For Fligstein and McAdam, the introduction of a new wave of alternatively certified, and dominantly White, teachers in post-Katrina New Orleans represents an “invasion by [an] outside group” (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p. 15). According to SAF theory, “outside challengers often make the most effective competitors because they are not bound by the conventions of the field and instead are free to bring new definitions of the situation and new forms of action to the fray” (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p. 15).

The shifting focus of TFA away from teachers and teaching to producing alumni educational leaders has further cemented the new incumbent’s role as incumbent while highlighting the tendency of the state (now being overtaken by TFA alumni leaders) to reinforce and support the new incumbent in the context of New Orleans (see Figure 5.4).

But, aside from the contextual example of New Orleans, TFA’s discourse surrounding test-prep pedagogy is aligned with the neoliberal state apparatus. As state and federal polices have shifted expectations that a teacher’s focus ought to center around student test score data, TFA’s similar disposition and its prescriptive test-prep pedagogy and strict behaviorism has

helped the organization gain power within the educational field. As TFA alumni continue to take leadership positions at the school, state, and federal levels, the state's support for TFA as the incumbent in areas like New Orleans or as a budding incumbent in other urban and rural areas like Atlanta, Chicago, New York, and Eastern North Carolina will continue to grow. TFA's ability to develop manufactured expertise as a provider of teachers and the ability of corps members to develop manufactured expertise serves as the necessary social skill within the SAF.



*Figure 5.4. New Field Settlement Post-Katrina – New Orleans Context*

As is the case of TFA, it is clear that within suburban contexts, TFA's absence has allowed traditional colleges of education and traditionally trained teachers and educators to fill the role of the incumbent. Within the suburban context, the only legitimate "challenger" in the field is the growing disintegration of teacher's unions. Thus, in this example, the challenger is a discursive one. In urban contexts, the presence of TFA and an ever-increasing neoliberal state has blurred the lines of who is the incumbent and who is the challenger in the field of teacher preparation. Within the larger state contexts, traditional colleges of education and traditionally

certified teachers retain the majority of control over resources and the discourse; however, in many urban school districts where TFA has experienced rapid growth, TFA as the challenger, has slowly become the incumbent in many ways. In the context of New Orleans, however, the exogenous shock of Hurricane Katrina and the resulting disaster capitalism (N. Klein, 2007) that ensued put the field in contention that ultimately found TFA and other alternatively certified, White, novice teachers as the newly minted incumbents and the once-incumbent traditionally certified, Black, and veteran teacher as the challenger. Fligstein and McAdam's SAF theory suggests that perceptions about the stability or crises of a particular field can foster contention with that field given that the state apparatus is beholden to an electorate. For example, societal contention about a field alters the state of the field as "if the crises in the economy and society get severe enough, they spread to the strategic action fields of the state. This creates the perception of a legitimate crisis, and this general perception can precipitate crises in other fields" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 76). The release of *A Nation at Risk* linked the country's current and future economic prowess to the "failed" state of education in the country. As such, public discourse surrounding the failed school and the bad teacher has likely kept urban and rural contexts

A premise of SAF is that the state provides resources that the incumbents and challengers compete over and, as a result, jockey for power and positioning within the field. Fligstein and McAdam suggest that the state, more often than not, sides or favors the incumbent in the event of subtle or overt contestation over resources. This characteristic of the state, according to SAF, is out of an effort to preserve stasis. And, while this is true, the advent of the neoliberal state has facilitated a shift in shared understandings of the purposes of education and teaching to align more with market-oriented field challengers. As such, while the state apparatus supports the

incumbent, the shifting discourse has provided more footing for the field challenger, and in the case of some urban contexts and particularly that of New Orleans, the shift in state discourse and exogenous shocks have resulted in the transfer of power from the former incumbent to the new incumbents who were once field challengers. This shift in discourse has facilitated the growth and expansion of TFA in urban and rural contexts and has also facilitated other market-oriented education reforms gaining more control and power within the field, thus blurring who is the incumbent or the challenger (deMarrais & Warshaw, 2013).

### **III. Potential Future Impacts of Policy Efforts**

Considering the impact of current and potential future policy efforts requires, still, a consideration of equality of opportunity versus equality of outcomes. Yet, it appears that current – and likely future – policies seek to continue the focus on equality of outcomes established under NCLB. This overt attention on equality of outcomes on standardized tests can even be seen in attempts to evaluate teacher preparation programs under the assumption that “good” teachers are sufficient in the quest for ending inequality by way of equal educational outcomes. Recently, the U.S. Department of Education released new evaluation parameters for evaluating a teacher’s pre-service university training by linking that training to the teachers produced and to the impact(s) that such teachers have on student outputs as measured on standardized tests. And while the new evaluation policy has garnered support from alternative certification organizations like TFA (Porter, 2015), Kevin Kumashiro (2015) asserts that the policy fails to take relevant factors into considerations (those factors examined in Chapter 2).

In practice, this new evaluation system embodies what the Heritage Foundation concludes, that is, “the inadequate training of teachers is the single most debilitating force at



work in American classrooms today” (Carter, 2000, p. 17) and “good teachers are a rare commodity in great demand and yet no system is in place to supply that need or encourage a greater number of qualified applicants” (Carter, 2000, p. 19).

Unfortunately, the heightened focus on reforming in-school factors like teacher quality and teacher preparation fail to incorporate evidence based research conclusions of the last sixty years that show that out-of-school factors have more impact on educational outcomes. As explicated above, a student’s SES plays a significant determining factor to the types of educational opportunities afforded to her as well as the expectations of those educative experiences she ought to have in school. And while SES is a strong historical indicator of connections between schooling and the reproduction of inequality, that link is likely to become more glaring considering that in 2015 more than half of all public school students are now living in poverty (R. Klein, 2015). As a result of this, policy prescriptions must seek to attenuate the impact of poverty before seeking to standardize in-school factors thought to influence outcomes. Ignoring these factors – and systematically ignoring them in the case of TFA – situates TFA into a position of reinforcing inequality.

Like the conclusion that Bowles and Gintis drew in the 1970s, policy efforts that continue to focus singularly on “reforming” schools while ignoring systemic socioeconomic inequalities are likely not enough to ameliorate inequality in the US. Given the vast power of family background on educational attainment, schooling cannot provide equal opportunity or result in equal outcomes while the practice of schooling is so firmly situated within a stratified economic system. Thusly, the continuation of free-market capitalism – with its requirements of winners/losers, haves and have nots, workers and managers – cannot be sustained if schools did in fact provide both equal opportunity and equal outcomes. Only those policy efforts that begin

to shift the US economy closer to democratic socialism will have desirable impacts on ending systemic inequality. Once that is achieved, schools can then serve the role of equality maintenance rather than mechanisms of inequality.

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APPENDIX

Table A.1.  
New Orleans Teachers by Years of Experience Before and After Katrina – Salary Expenditure Estimation

	0-1	2-3	4-10	11-14	15-19	20-24	25+	TOTAL
2004-2005	446	336	1136	414	409	501	1,357	4,600
Cost	\$13,326,655	\$10,497,443	\$39,362,188	\$16,566,935	\$17,103,831	\$21,502,439	\$59,537,018	\$177,896,510
2007-2008	676	317	356	88	101	90	214	1842
Cost	\$26,570,392	\$12,794,779	\$15,220,812	\$4,048,082	\$4,884,611	\$4,595,441	\$11,225,152	\$79,339,269

Note: Computation is based on teachers holding a bachelor's degree. Cost per grouping is based on an average of years shown. 2007-2008 salaries are averaged between OPSB and RSD salary schedules (Louisiana Department of Education, 2005, 2007). Currency rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

Table A.2.  
New Orleans Teachers by Pre-Katrina Years of Experience with Post-Katrina Population – Salary Expenditure Estimation

	0-1	2-3	4-10	11-14	15-19	20-24	25+	TOTAL
Pre-Katrina Percentage	9.7%	7.3%	24.7%	9.0%	8.9%	10.9%	29.5%	100%
Post-Katrina Population	179	134	455	166	164	201	543	1842
Hypothetical Cost	\$7,022,692	\$5,430,342	\$19,479,484	\$7,590,154	\$7,904,188	\$10,222,511	\$28,546,721	\$86,196,095

Note: Computation is based on teachers holding a bachelor's degree. Cost per grouping is based on an average of years shown. Salaries are based on 2007-2008 salary schedules and are averaged between OPSB and RSD (Louisiana Department of Education, 2005, 2007). Currency rounded to the nearest whole dollar. Population estimates rounded to the nearest whole number.