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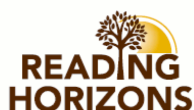


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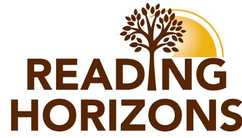


# Models of Resistance: Novice Literacy Teachers Negotiating Barriers to Best Practice

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine how graduates from three teacher education programs made decisions regarding literacy instruction and assessment as well as the extent to which they were able to implement practices learned in their education programs. Participants were interviewed and observed multiple times, and a variety of documents, such as lesson plans, assessments, and journal prompts, were collected. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method and Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, and habitus. Although the participants initially accepted the existing practices of their schools, they later implemented concepts learned in their education programs. The ways in which they resisted the barriers they faced included resistance with conflict, resistance with an attitude, resistance with relationship, and resistance by making a change.

**Keywords:** ***teacher decision making, teacher resistance, literacy instruction, literacy assessment, Bourdieusian analysis***

> *I know what is expected, I know what I have to do, and then I know where I can find some room to do what I think is best for my class and what I think is best for me as a teacher, which is really exciting.* (Julie, fourth-grade teacher)

As a novice teacher, Julie (all names are pseudonyms) had been maintaining the status quo, instructionally. She knew what she was expected to teach and how, and she did so with little complaining for fear of being reprimanded. However, by the end of her second year of teaching, Julie's confidence in herself was growing, as was her dissatisfaction with the instructional mandates of her school. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1987/1990) said, "To change the world, one has to change the ways of making the world" (p. 137).

Julie slowly came to the realization that instead of compliantly reinforcing her school's practices, she could work to change them. She was careful to continue doing what she must, but she began to resist reproducing what she saw as outdated, inequitable, and ineffective teaching methods and instead sought new ways of making the world. She began to resist simply reproducing how the other teachers taught and instead pursued ways to alter those expectations to better meet the needs of her students.

Although teacher resistance of instructional mandates has been documented, it has received little attention overall from researchers. Early studies, in fact, often portrayed teacher resistance as a psychological deficit (Cohen, 1990; Huberman & Miles, 1984; Sarason, 1971, 1990), in which stubborn teachers were set in their ways and remained unopen to instructional changes. More recent studies, however, have suggested that teachers often have good reasons to resist oppressive instructional requirements of their schools (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Bushnell, 2003; Eisenbach, 2012; Scales et al., 2018), especially when such mandates are deemed unhelpful and even harmful to their students' learning.

## Purpose

As teacher educators, we have an interest in seeing our graduates successfully implement what we believe is research-based best practice: a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction consisting of both skills-based and meaning-based strategies, as well as components such as reading and writing workshop, guided reading, assessment-based instruction, and authentic literature (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010; Tompkins, 2018). Although some teachers are successfully able to implement practices learned in their teacher education programs, especially as they gain experience (Deal & White, 2005; Grisham, 2000; Grossman et al., 2000; Massey, 2006), we know very little about how they are able to do so or how they negotiate barriers that arise. To address this need, in this article we share the stories of four novice teachers who were recent graduates from three teacher education programs in three different states. Our purpose was to answer the following questions: Drawing on Bourdieu's (1972/1977) concepts of field, capital, and habitus, how did these four teachers make decisions regarding literacy assessment and instruction? To what extent were they able to implement practices learned in their teacher education programs?

## Literature Review

Teachers draw on various personal, professional, and practical funds of knowledge to inform their teaching (Goldstein, 2008; Grisham, 2000), and the instructional decisions they make are the result of a complex combination of influences. Preservice teachers, when they enter their programs, bring with them preconceptions about what good teaching is, many of which are based on childhood experiences with school (Bramald, Hardman, & Leat, 1995; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Pajares, 1992). These preexisting beliefs are largely teacher centered (Asselin, 2000; Nettle, 1998; Pajares, 1992), with many preservice teachers viewing teaching as a transmission of knowledge rather than a process of actively constructing one's own understandings. In terms of literacy instruction, these teacher-centered preconceptions are often translated into teaching literacy as an isolated hierarchy of skills, with struggling students enduring skill-and-drill exercises (Asselin, 2000).

Although childhood experiences with school are a powerful influence in novice teacher decision making, teacher education programs have been shown to influence the instructional decisions novice literacy teachers make as well, promoting more constructivist and student-centered understandings of learning (Bauml, 2011; Flint, Maloch, & Leland, 2010; Grisham, 2000; Grossman et al., 2000; Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Pomerantz & Condie, 2017; Young et

al., 2017). However, for many novice teachers, the teacher-centered environments in which they teach often do not align with the practices they learned in their teacher education programs (Corcoran, 1981; DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; Mullins, Huddleston, Ohle, & Lowry, 2017; Mullins, Ohle, & Huddleston, 2016; White, Sturtevant, & Dunlap, 2003), thus novice teachers must often negotiate tensions that occur (Adoniou, 2015; Broemmel & Swaggerty, 2017; Corcoran, 1981; DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; Scales, 2013; White et al., 2003).

Limitations created by federal, state, and district policies (e.g., adopted programs, high-stakes testing) can also create barriers for novice teachers who wish to implement instructional practices learned in their teacher education programs (Adoniou, 2015; Brown, Bay-Borelli, & Scott, 2015; Deal & White, 2005; DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; Flint et al., 2010; Grisham, 2000; White et al., 2003). When faced with this conflict, novice teachers often revert back to the more teacher-centered methods supported in their school environments (Perkins & Salomon, 2012; Scales et al., 2017; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). However, additional research shows that some teachers are able to resist reproduction and implement practices learned in preservice programs, even when the context is not supportive (Adoniou, 2015; Grisham, 2000; Scales et al., 2017; Towers, 2013; Young et al., 2017).

Although limited, researchers have documented some forms of teacher resistance, including those that vary from accommodation to more aggressive forms (Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002). Achinstein and Ogawa (2006) and Bauml (2015), for example, found that the teachers they followed practiced a form of "principled resistance" in which they rejected their schools' policies, either covertly or overtly, that they believed contradicted their professional principles (Bauml, 2015, p. 390). Other researchers have identified a form of resistance they call strategic compromise (Lacey, 1977; Lloyd, 2007; Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985) in which teachers meet basic directives while adapting the situation to create space for their own interests and identified needs.

Additional forms of resistance that have been noted include outright rejection of policy directives (Eisenbach, 2012; McCarthey & Woodard, 2018), diverging from scripted programs, supplementing them, or leaving the school altogether (Powell, Cantrell, & Correll, 2017). Nolan (2016), in a Bourdieusian analysis of two teachers' responses to imposed structures in a mathematics classroom, found that they exhibited resistance by staying quiet while making changes behind closed doors and by displacing the taken-for-granted directives they received, something Nolan called "invoking reflexivity on the dominant" (p. 325).

Despite this initial research, we still know little about how some teachers are able to resist while others are not. We lack details explaining how teachers negotiate barriers that arise, nor do we have many models of what resistance looks like in school settings. Moreover, the resistance process has yet to be fully theorized using a Bourdieusian framework, especially in the literacy classroom.

## Theoretical Framework

Bourdieu developed the theoretical concepts of field, capital, and habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990) to explain how various social structures are reproduced. Individuals are socialized by a variety of "institutional arrangements" (Lareau, 2003, p. 275). Bourdieu (1982/1991; Grenfell & James, 1998) used the term field to describe these structured social spaces that have their own rules and means of domination and assign value to the resources agents receive.

Within these social fields, individuals compete for and obtain different types of

resources or capital. Bourdieu (1986) distinguished between four types of capital individuals possess within a field: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. Economic capital consists of material goods that are directly convertible into money, social capital is the resources acquired through social networks and group memberships, and cultural capital consists of competencies, skills, and qualifications. Bourdieu described three types of cultural capital: embodied (e.g., knowledge, skills, linguistic practices), objectified (e.g., physical goods, texts, material objects), and institutional (e.g., academic degrees, awards, credentials). He argued that economic, social, and cultural capital all work together within certain fields to produce symbolic capital. Symbolic capital, for example, includes intangible but powerful resources such as honor, prestige, and attention.

The socialization that occurs within fields greatly influences what individuals recognize as feeling comfortable and natural and thus largely dictates how they respond in specific situations, what Bourdieu (1972/1977) referred to as *habitus*. For Bourdieu, the habitus represented the transfer of the objective structures of the field into the subjective structures of thought and action. If individuals within a field lack certain capital or the capital they possess is not valued, they often lack the capacity to push for change, thus ensuring that the status quo is reproduced.

Applied to the context of this study, the schools in which novice teachers teach are social fields with specific rules, some explicit and some implicit, regarding instructional practices for literacy. Although they bring some capital to their schools, such as current knowledge of research-based practices, novice teachers often lack important social capital possessed by more veteran teachers and administrators who may not be open to such practices. When these practices are not supported, novice teachers begin doubting the value of them and often accept the instructional practices of their schools. With little questioning or resistance, the status quo is accepted and reproduced, making change even more difficult.

Although Bourdieu's (1972/1977) work explains how often and predictably reproduction occurs, he did acknowledge that change, although difficult, is possible. Recently, there has been increased interest among scholars across multiple fields in the generative nature of Bourdieu's work (Albright & Luke, 2008; Huddleston, 2015), especially regarding issues of equity. Although individuals within a field are often complicit in the reproduction of social structures, Bourdieu (1982/1991) argued that they do have some agency in how they respond and can at times resist reproduction. Resistance is made possible when participants become aware of the social structures reproducing the status quo within a field and recognize that these structures are not immutable conditions inherent in their settings but can, in fact, be transformed through the social, cultural, and symbolic capital they possess, something each of our case participants attempted to do.

## Methods

This qualitative, multiple case study (Stake, 2006) was collaboratively conducted by researchers at three teacher education programs in the United States: one in the Midwest, one in the Pacific Northwest, and one in the South. Together we pursued the same research questions using similar methods of data collection and analysis. In the study we followed 12 novice teachers over the course of one year. Six of the teachers agreed to allow us to follow them for a second year as well. In this article, we report on findings from four of the original 12 teachers. These four case participants were selected to provide in-depth analyses because they all experienced tension with the instructional practices at their schools, and all four were able to implement, with varying degrees of success, practices they learned in their education programs.

**Participant Selection**

For the larger study, consent materials were sent to recent early childhood through Grade 6 graduates from our three teacher education programs who were teaching in their first or second year within a two-hour radius of our universities. All who consented participated in the study. The 12 participants included four from the Midwest, three from the Pacific Northwest, and five from the South. All were female, 11 of the participants were in their early 20s, and most were White. See Table 1 for detailed information about the four participants discussed in this article.

One of the teacher education programs was located in a small, Christian faith-based, liberal arts university in the rural Midwest serving about 1,000 students. Another was at a larger university in the Pacific Northwest serving a more diverse population of about 19,000. The third was located in a small, private Christian university in the South serving about 5,000 students. Although at different universities across the United States, all of the programs contained literacy courses that promoted a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction, emphasized both skills-based and meaning-based approaches, promoted reading and writing workshop, used authentic literature, and reinforced assessment-based instruction. Additionally, all three programs acknowledged and reinforced culturally relevant ways of knowing and used strengths-based approaches that pull from students' funds of knowledge.

Table 1
*Participant Demographics*

| Name (pseudonym) | Program level | Age | Race | Sex | Location | Years teaching | Teaching assignment | Sources of data |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Melanie | BA | Early 20s | White | Female | Pacific Northwest | 1 | 5th grade, Title I school | Observations, documents, interviews |
| Megan | BS | Early 20s | White | Female | South | 2 | 3rd grade, Title I school | Observations, documents, interviews |
| Julie | BS | Early 20s | White | Female | South | 2 | 4th grade, rural public school | Observations, documents, interviews |
| Arlene | BA | Early 20s | White | Female | Midwest | 1 | 1st grade, private religious school | Observations, documents, interviews |

### Data Collection

We collected data in three forms: interviews, observations, and documents. Each participant was interviewed three to four times throughout the school year using semistructured life world interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), which included questions such as these: What literacy practices have you been using? What literacy assessments have you been using? What policies influence the literacy instruction and assessment you are providing? The teachers' administrators were interviewed once as well when available. The interviews were approximately an hour in length and were audio recorded and transcribed.

We took field notes as we observed the teachers' literacy instruction and assessment three to four times throughout the year; this included reading, writing, and small- and large-group activities over the course of a class period. The field notes provided rich descriptions of the instructional practices used, how the students were engaged, and how the teachers interacted with students. Finally, we collected a variety of documents pertinent to our research questions, such as lesson plans, assessments, policy statements, and journals in which the teachers responded on a monthly basis to prompts about their literacy assessment and instruction, how they made decisions regarding it, and how successful they felt it was. Six of the original 12 participants were then followed for a second year with the same data collection methods. Of the four participants discussed in this article, Julie and Megan were followed for two years.

### Data Analysis

As we collected the data we analyzed them using the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006). Each researcher began by reading and rereading the data after each interview and observation. We then initially coded the data independently by inductively labeling the interview transcripts, field notes, and documents collected to identify recurring themes and patterns. This initial coding helped determine what additional data to gather as data collection progressed throughout the year. The collected data were shared via Google Drive, and we periodically met through conference calls and at face-to-face conferences to discuss, compare, and refine our codes. These codes were then defined and collapsed into more focused categories. Through this initial analysis we identified the categories of environment, support, and knowledge as major influencers regarding how our participants made decisions regarding their literacy assessment and instruction. We then wrote memos in which we further developed our emerging categories by providing examples, supporting quotations, and reflecting on their relationship to our research questions.

For each of the four case participants we examined in this study, we took the analysis a step further by conducting a Bourdieusian (1972/1977) analysis in which we selectively analyzed the data for the following three elements: (a) the field of education in which these teachers worked, (b) the various capital that these teachers brought to their teaching, and (c) the responses (habitus) of the teachers as they made decisions regarding literacy assessment and instruction (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

## Findings

Below we organize the findings into the categories of field, capital, and habitus. We briefly discuss the similarities among the instructional settings in which the participants taught, the rules they encountered that dictated their literacy instruction, and the resources they brought to their positions along with certain resources they were lacking. We then explore in greater depth how they responded within their environments, encompassing different models of resistance and further illustrating in greater detail the relationship between field, capital, and habitus.

### Field

Bourdieu (1972/1977) defined the field as a structured social space with specific rules that dictate how things get done. All four of these case participants taught in similar but different social fields. Arlene taught at a private religious school in the Midwest, Melanie taught at a public charter Title I school in the Pacific Northwest, Julie taught at a rural public school in the South, and Megan taught at a public Title I school in the South. All of their schools were similar in that they provided mandated curriculums the teachers were expected to follow. Arlene's school required that she adhere strictly to a commercialized program that heavily emphasized isolated skills. Melanie's school provided a commercial literacy program that emphasized isolated skills, a scope and sequence, a commercialized fluency program, and a scripted reading intervention. At Julie's school, there was no scripted program, but her principal gave the instructional decision-making power to the veteran teachers, and everyone was forced to do what they decided. Megan's district had adopted a balanced literacy program that emphasized guided reading, although implementation was inconsistent.

### Capital

Bourdieu (1986) distinguished between various types of capital or resources that individuals bring to the field. Despite being in different settings and participating in different teacher education programs, the participants each brought similar capital to their teaching positions, and they lacked capital that is typically not possessed by most young teachers. As novice teachers in their first years of teaching, these participants had acquired little economic capital or social capital. They were newcomers, still in the probationary stage of their contracts, earning introductory pay, and they had not established the social networks or group memberships the veteran teachers had. Despite these limitations, however, they were well equipped with competencies, skills, and qualifications, what Bourdieu referred to as cultural capital. As mentioned above, they were newly certified teachers fresh out of our teacher education programs. We had the pleasure of watching them develop a strong background in literacy instruction and assessment in our courses, and in our interviews together, they communicated an eagerness to implement what they had learned.

### Habitus

For Bourdieu (1972/1977) habitus is how the participants respond within a given field. All four participants initially responded by readily accepting the mandated requirements of their schools. This appeared to be largely due to the fact that they were new teachers with little capital in a new environment trying to gain confidence.

This was well illustrated when Kathryn was interviewing Melanie about her use of popcorn reading, an instructional approach Melanie despised and swore she would never use when she was a teacher education student in Kathryn's classes.

Melanie: I hate popcorn reading!

Kathryn: So why are you doing it?

Melanie: I don't know! I feel like I have to! I just…

Kathryn: Who tells you you have to?

Melanie: Peer pressure! (laughs)

Kathryn: Is that because other people are doing it?

Melanie: Yeah! And like they go, "Popcorn read," and I'm like, "I don't popcorn

> read," and they're like, "You need to popcorn read so they all get a chance to read out loud and do it."

Melanie accepted the structures of her school setting with little resistance and without much conscious thought until she was questioned about it. Similarly, Julie remarked about how the new teachers at her school quickly got "brainwashed" into doing what everyone else was doing, and she could feel herself getting drawn in as well:

> It's just hard because sometimes those new teachers get brainwashed really quick; it's kind of scary. There are some people who have only been here a year or two longer than me, and they are doing what everyone does always because that's what it's always been done, and it's like, "Wow, they got taken over quick," and you know I feel like that's just what happens out here sometimes.

As our study progressed, however, all four teachers gained their footing and began implementing some of what they had learned in their teacher education programs. The ways in which they resisted the barriers they faced fell into the following categories.

**Resistance with conflict.** While participating in our study, Arlene was a new first-grade teacher at a predominately White, upper-middle-class religious-affiliated school in the Midwest. Because it was a small school, Arlene was the only first-grade teacher on the school's campus. She was hired late in the summer, just 3 weeks before school started, giving her little time to prepare. Arlene noted that she felt pressured to accept the job given the close proximity to the start of the school year and an uncertainty as to whether she would receive any other offers. Nonetheless, she believed the school would be a good fit. She appreciated the faith-based educational focus, and during the interview the principal indicated that she would be able to implement cooperative learning and differentiation techniques, both of which Arlene highly valued from her teacher education program.

However, upon being hired Arlene quickly realized she did not have the instructional freedom that she expected, and many of the school's instructional practices she described as being at odds with what she was taught in her teacher education program. Arlene explained that one day early in the school year, in dramatic fashion, the principal entered her classroom, and upon seeing the students' desks arranged in groups, she forced Arlene to rearrange them into rows in the middle of class. Arlene explained:

> I had my students working in groups, and she [the principal] was like, "I don't like that," or changing it and moving all the desks to face the front of the room with me in the room, and I had to help her do it….All of a sudden she was like, "No you have to do it this way. You have to be teacher directed."

Putting the desks in rows limited Arlene's ability to successfully implement cooperative learning and centers.

Arlene also learned that she was required to follow the district's adopted commercialized literacy program that heavily emphasized isolated skills. Students were required to spend hours of seatwork time completing phonics and spelling worksheets and practicing handwriting, all of which contradicted how Arlene was taught to teach these areas in her teacher education program. In addition to the focus on isolated skills, the curriculum lacked an emphasis on fluency, which troubled her. At the beginning of the year, the principal told Arlene to feel free to ask questions and that there was no such thing as a stupid question. However, when Arlene asked her about the lack of fluency instruction, she was "blown off" and was told she could not deviate from the curriculum provided, even when she believed that accommodations were necessary for her students. "You do the

program, and that's it," Arlene explained. "It's her [the principal's] way or the highway."

The relationship between Arlene and the principal was marked with conflict, and as the year progressed, that tension only escalated. Arlene believed the curriculum was failing her students, and her resistance to it caused her to fear the possibility of losing her job. "She [the principal] tried everything; she tried to find an excuse to get rid of me because I did not agree with her teaching philosophy," Arlene explained. "Like I will stand by…everything that I did for this curriculum, and it failed my students, and she didn't want to accept that."

In retaliation for her resistance, the principal forced Arlene to sign an agreement stating that her classroom management techniques were incompetent. Arlene, however, doubled down and informed the principal that she was willing to "fight for [her] students if [she] sees that they're not getting what they need." Her principal replied that she was "just too passionate about [her] kids," to which Arlene responded, "Isn't that what teaching is?" Arlene argued, "I'm not going to keep quiet if it goes against my morals. I'm not that type of person."

Early in the spring semester, the school board called Arlene into a conference meeting where she was informed that a replacement had been found for her because she failed to follow the curriculum. She was told that she was to take one week leave of pay, and they would meet at a later time to discuss the matter further. However, before she could be fired, Arlene resigned. In hindsight, Arlene noted that she rushed into accepting the position and did not thoroughly research the school and its practices beforehand. She said that in the future she would not take what was said in an interview as the only source of information about a school.

**Resistance with an attitude.** Melanie was a new fifth-grade teacher at a diverse Title I campus in the Pacific Northwest. She also taught in a highly regimented environment, although not as strict as Arlene's. Like Arlene, Melanie was also hired late in the summer, just one week before school started, and thus felt pressured to accept the job. Melanie's educational preparation was in early childhood; upon being hired, she was told that she would be in a fourth-grade placement but ended up teaching fifth.

Melanie was required to follow a mandated curriculum implemented by her school that focused on grammar and vocabulary in isolation. There was a strong emphasis on fluency, and fluency exercises were used in lieu of read-alouds in the curriculum. Weekly spelling and vocabulary tests, reading passages with corresponding questions, and occasional grammar tests were all mandated in the curriculum as well.

Initially, Melanie followed the mandated program. She said, "I didn't want to come in as the new teacher and be like, 'I'm not going to use your stuff.'" However, as the year progressed she grew increasingly agitated by the program, its rigidness, and its failure to address important areas such as writing.

Melanie began addressing her concerns by adding materials where she found the mandated program to be lacking: "I'm teaching what the state is requiring me to teach,- what the academic plan says, and then I'm throwing in, like, extra supplemental things." Recognizing her students' lack of engagement with the program, Melanie began adding literature circles, books that reflected the students' cultures, interactive games in lieu of worksheets, centers, cooperative learning, and read-alouds, and she made time for writing. This allowed her to meet the district's demands of using the program while at the same time addressing some of its limitations. Toward the end of the year, when Melanie had

worked through the entirety of the curriculum, she had even more freedom to make her own curriculum decisions during the few remaining weeks of school. She used this time to create her own grammar centers, implement smaller writing assignments, and pick out her own vocabulary.

One of Melanie's biggest points of dissension was with a scripted intervention program she was required to use with her struggling students. She disliked how "super scripted" it was and how it limited her decision-making ability as a teacher. It also took away time from guided reading with the whole class, and it focused solely on basic phonemic awareness, phonics, and sight words skills, many of which were not things her students struggled with given that they were in fifth grade and reading connected text. However, what disturbed her the most was that the script limited the extent to which she could give thorough explanations to her students when they struggled with a concept. In an interview with Kathryn, Melanie explained:

> Like today they made a mistake, and I was only allowed to say, "The vowels at the end of it…what does the long vowel say?" Like, I should just get a recording and press play and step back because it, that's what it sounds like. It drives me nuts.…And they said, "You just have to do it. It works. We have testing results that show it works," and I was like, "I don't care about your dumb testing results. This does not fit me, and it does not fit my class."

Melanie knew that she was required to use the scripted intervention program, but she was unclear what latitude she might have in following the script. Much like she did with the mandated curriculum for the entire class, without asking permission, Melanie supplemented the script with games, centers, novel studies, and thorough descriptions regarding comprehension as her students needed them.

Throughout her first year, Melanie resisted the limits to her instructional decision making primarily through supplementation, but she did so with what both she and her principal called "an attitude." Her "attitude" was one Melanie had developed in her teacher education program and that was encouraged by her professors. It consisted of being student centered and passionately advocating for her students' needs. Melanie developed good relationships with her coworkers, but as she grew more confident in her resistance, tension developed and escalated with her principal. The tension culminated in a conversation toward the end of the year in which the principal addressed her concerns:

> She [the principal] pulled me into her office one day and told me that I have an attitude. Like I was like, really? And she couldn't give me any example either.…I was like yeah, I'm a little bit spunky, like what do you mean? I was like what kind of attitude are we talking?

Melanie's principal perceived that Melanie had a bit of a chip on her shoulder, one that Melanie did not deny. Although the tensions persisted, Melanie was able to complete the year along with three additional years at that school.

**Resistance with relationship.** Julie was beginning her second year of teaching at the start of our study, and we followed her through her third year. She taught fourth grade in a rural, predominantly White, middle-class public school in the South. Unlike Arlene and Melanie, Julie was very familiar with the school where she accepted her teaching position. She grew up attending school in that district, and she completed her student teaching in the same grade and school where she was hired.

Julie's school did not follow a district-wide curriculum. Instead, the principal

assigned the veteran teachers the role of making decisions, and the newer teachers were expected to follow their instructions. "So my young teachers right or wrong," the principal explained, "I tell them just to step back and evaluate, observe; we will take your opinions after you earn your wings." Such instructional alignment, he argued, would prevent "lone wolf" teachers from doing their "own thing" and "creating instructional gaps." The principal then enforced the veteran teachers' decisions with the new teachers. The key components of the curriculum that were mandated by the veteran teachers at Julie's school were isolated grammar practice, formulaic essay writing, weekly spelling tests, and daily test preparation worksheets that began in October.

In her first two years of teaching, Julie largely complied with the wishes of the veteran teachers. She would occasionally share an idea or make a suggestion but was careful not to push it when her contributions were not acknowledged. This response was reinforced when she witnessed another young teacher at her school get in trouble for not following the veteran teachers' lead: "She [the other young teacher] is real bubbly and exciting, and she would come and show all the reading teachers, 'Here are all these great things,' and they were just like, 'We don't want to do that.'" The veteran teachers reported her to the principal, who reprimanded her. Julie explained: "She got in a lot of trouble because she wasn't doing what everyone else was teaching even though what she was doing was so much better." The experience caused Julie to be even more cautious about making sure she was "on the same page" as everyone else.

However, late into her second year of teaching, Julie slowly began making changes: "There's so many things …I just want to figure out how to do. And you know we don't have to be so rigid, and we don't have to be so rote, and you know do what we've always done." Julie implemented, with tacit approval from the veteran teachers, a less formulaic approach to teaching essay writing where she began free Fridays, in which the students were allowed to choose what they wanted to write about and then share it with others at the end of class. After state testing, she engaged the students in several "fun writing" projects such as fractured fairy tales, an animal research report, and creative buddy writing with eighth graders.

Two changes in her third year helped her gain the confidence to make these adjustments. First, a different veteran teacher replaced the previous lead teacher in managing their team meetings. This teacher was more flexible in her approach, which reassured Julie that she could implement some new things. Second, Julie began working with a close friend on the writing team who helped her share ideas and push for change in their team meetings: "So this year we were like okay, let's get together before, and let's really come up with some good things. That way when we come into the meeting we can say you know, 'Here's what we need to be doing.'"

Another friend served as important social capital for Julie. She had used numerous types of centers in another district and was able to encourage Julie to implement writing centers in which the students collaboratively used various task cards to work on different writing skills such as journal writing and letter writing. The writing centers were highly successful, and a couple of the other teachers saw the students' engagement with them and decided to implement them as well. When the principal became aware of the change, he tracked down Julie as the initial source, but rather than reprimanding her, he complimented her on initiating a suggestion the veteran teachers approved of.

Throughout these changes, maintaining a positive relationship with both her coworkers and her principal was of utmost importance for Julie, and she sought their

approval in implementing them: "I don't want to like step on any toes, and I don't want to just say, well, I'm going to do this. You know, no one likes that teacher. You don't make friends that way." Such concern enabled her to preserve those relationships but prevented her from pushing firmly enough to implement additional changes she wanted to. She encouraged her team to spread some of the fun writing projects throughout the year rather than simply reserving them for after state testing and to not begin test preparation worksheets so early in the year:

> You know, and I didn't want to like fuss, but I just kind of complained a little and every time we brought it [test preparation beginning in October] up like, "Aw, we have to do that so early, you know?" I thought someone might stop and say, "Well, do we want to push it, you know?" No one did.

Julie recognized that to push any harder on these issues could likely damage the relationships she had, a risk she was not willing to take.

**Resistance by making a change.** Megan was beginning her second year of teaching at the start of our study, and we also followed her through her third year. She taught third grade in a diverse, Title I public school in the South. In her first year of teaching, Megan taught fourth grade. She was familiar with the district when offered the position, having completed her student teaching there, although in a different school.

Even though Megan's district had recently begun a balanced literacy initiative, her fourth-grade team during her first year of teaching did not consistently implement it. Megan was also frustrated with the lack of collaborative planning among her fourth-grade team. Overwhelmed as a new teacher with limited lesson planning time, she initially followed the plans her grade-level team provided. At the end of the year, however, she was frustrated with how little she implemented from her teacher education program:

> It was my first year so I didn't know what was right and what was wrong. I did what my team told me to do. Really, I mean it was like survival mode basically. There were things I was doing that I definitely went in, went back to my college courses and was like, "I can't do that." Or, you know, "I need to do something different."

Megan's model of resistance differed from the other three participants in that, rather than having to resist a school-wide policy she was at odds with, she instead sought to resist the limitations put on her by her grade-level team. As her first year of teaching came to an end, she was informed of an upcoming opening in the third grade at her school. Aware that the third grade teachers were more collaborative in their planning and open to the district's balanced literacy initiative, Megan strategically requested a transfer. Her administrators supported her desire to implement more balanced literacy practices, and they felt that her experiences in fourth grade would serve her well in teaching third graders.

With the support of her new teammates, she successfully implemented reading and writing workshop and guided reading: "I think I'm very fortunate to be here not having to do anything that I'm ... I'm not being told to do something that I don't feel comfortable with or passionate about." On a typical day, Megan would start reading with a mini lesson, then move into independent reading, small-group time, and then end with work in centers, all of which were components she learned about in her teacher education program. She believed that stamina and choice were critical to student success, therefore she provided ample time each day for independent reading with books students had chosen. Reading responses were implemented once a week. Her writing instruction followed a similar

approach, with a mini lesson, independent writing/conferring, share time, and grammar instruction using mentor sentences.

Megan experienced congruency with the district's philosophy toward preparation for the state test as well. The teachers were encouraged to teach the state standards through the balanced literacy initiative. Test scores, although important, were not heavily emphasized, and specific test preparation was limited to a few weeks before the state test in the late spring: "We started [test preparation] in March. I mean, we really tried to stick with at the beginning of the year even through January and February, just teaching them like reading strategies, getting them to like love reading, and things like that."

Megan also implemented literature circles in her regular routine. She divided the students into small groups, had them select roles, modeled the literature circle routines, and then gradually allowed them to implement them on their own. Although this was not encouraged or required by the district, it was a practice she learned about in her teacher education courses, and the district's balanced literacy framework provided her with the flexibility to implement it.

Relationships with both administrators and other teachers also was an important factor in Megan's success in implementing practices she learned in her teacher education program. The assistant principal at her school was an especially helpful resource, reminding Megan that "nothing was a dumb question." Megan noted that she felt comfortable going to her because she was knowledgeable, personable, and she always had an open door. Along with her assistant principal, Megan had a close relationship with another graduate from her education program who taught at another school in town and served as important social capital. Megan relied on this teacher as a resource for a number of literacy-related questions she had, and together they planned a number of lessons:

> Like I said, my personality, I ask questions all the time, and I think about what's valuable for me. My assistant principal, I go to her all the time with questions or other teachers. I'm constantly talking with my friend who works at another school.

## Discussion

In each of the cases above, we could initially see Bourdieu's concept of reproduction at work (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990). Given the limited capital they possessed within their fields as novice teachers, our study participants initially accepted, with little thought, the instruction their schools were already providing. This, they concluded, was what actual real-world teaching outside of the university looked like. They accepted the taken-for-granted structures of their fields (e.g., instructional mandates) and helped reproduce them. However, as the year progressed, they gained their bearings, and their confidence increased, providing them with the mental space to assess the effectiveness of their practices. It was at this point that they recognized the tensions between the practices they inherited and those they committed themselves to in their teacher education programs. They began to imagine new possibilities and used their available capital to implement changes to their instruction.

All four teachers resisted the instructional mandates of their schools in unique ways, and all four exemplify approaches with both strengths and limitations. Arlene's and Melanie's passion was evident, and they used that passion to vigorously resist instructional mandates that they believed prohibited them from meeting their students' needs. However, although their passionate determination was admirable, it caused such tensions with their administrators that at times it limited their ability to implement the instructional practices

they felt were necessary. In the case of Arlene, it cost her job and her ability to provide any instruction at all for the rest of that year.

Julie also had a passion for implementing the practices she learned about in her program, but she had positive working relationships with her coworkers and administrators and desperately wanted to maintain them. At times, she was able to make recommendations to her co-workers that were heard and accepted because of the good relationships they had. Her implementation of centers was an example in which she was able to suggest and implement a change that was respected and supported by all, including her principal. However, in other instances, such as test preparation and the timing of "fun writing projects," her suggestions fell on deaf ears, and her concern for maintaining positive relationships prevented her from pushing any harder to implement the changes she desired.

As a first-year, fourth-grade teacher, Megan initially accepted her teammates' skepticism of their district's balanced literacy initiative. Toward the end of the year, however, her frustration was growing, and she requested a transfer to third grade with a more balanced literacy–focused team. The congruency she experienced with her third-grade team and the district's balanced literacy initiative enabled her to flourish in her teaching. However, we do not know how she would have responded or what her instruction would have looked like had she remained teaching in the fourth grade or taught in a district that was not congruent with her beliefs.

## Implications

As we mentioned in the literature review, only a handful of studies have documented how teachers resist instructional mandates that they find both ineffective and potentially harmful to their students (e.g., Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Bauml, 2011). We know little about how some teachers are able to successfully resist such barriers while others are not. This study contributes to this line of research by providing additional models of resistance in school settings and illustrating how teachers negotiate barriers to best practice. The Bourdieusian analysis provides a theoretical framework for understanding not only how pedagogical reproduction occurs, but also how it can be thwarted. Moreover, this Bourdieusian analysis offers a set of theoretical tools that teachers can draw on to recognize and address pedagogical reproduction in their own classrooms. Additional research needs to be conducted to determine whether and how teacher educators could introduce both preservice and in-service teachers to Bourdieu's (1972/1977) concepts of field, capital, and habitus for the purpose of implementing change in their own classroom settings. Such action research would be beneficial for developing a professional development approach to addressing pedagogical reproduction.

Each of these four models of resistance, with both their strengths and limitations, offers additional implications for teachers and teacher educators. The cases of Arlene and Melanie emphasize the importance of teaching preservice teachers how to look for and find teaching positions that are a good fit for them. Both Arlene and Melanie accepted their jobs late in the summer, just days before school started, and knew little about their schools' instructional expectations. When congruency exists between the practices novice teachers learn about in their teacher education programs and the schools in which they teach, and when, as in the Megan's case, the schools provide staff development, goal setting, and ongoing feedback related to those practices, novice teachers are much more likely to implement them than if such congruency and support are lacking (Adoniou, 2016; Deal & White, 2005; Grisham, 2000). Arlene emphasized the importance of this lesson learned in one of her interviews:

> You should just look them up….For me, lesson learned, that I need to really check in before I just get in there because I feel like a lot of first-year teachers don't take the time or are so anxious or worried of just about getting a job that we don't even think about that.

An important implication of this study for teacher educators is the need to specifically teach students in preparation programs how to resist effectively. While conducting this study, we realized that although we thoroughly address with our students how and what to teach, we have not adequately prepared them for what to do when research-based practices are not allowed or supported. It is necessary to provide our students, throughout their coursework, with case studies such as these for discussion. Such models can provide students with options to consider and prompt them to imagine additional approaches they could take.

Talley (2014) advocates for an approach to resistance that we believe is worth sharing with preservice teachers; she calls it being "appropriately subversive" (p. 159). When instructional mandates are not in the best interests of students, good teachers, she argues, are "a little bit (or a lot) subversive in the most wonderful and appropriate ways. They follow the rules just enough to do the real work of teaching" (p. 160). Such an approach encourages teacher candidates to actively seek out ways to subvert the system to benefit their students, but to do so in a professional and respectful manner that, when possible, attempts to maintain relationships while challenging the status quo. Talley says, "In other words, nod your head politely at meetings, work within the system, follow all of the rules, and then CLOSE YOUR DOOR AND GET DOWN TO THE REAL BUSINESS OF TEACHING" (p. 160).

Additionally, it is important for teacher educators to maintain relationships with graduates as they enter the teaching profession. For Melanie, it was not until Kathryn questioned her about her use of popcorn reading that she recognized she had succumbed to peer pressure and unintentionally began using a practice she did not believe in. Kathryn was able to raise her awareness in a way that helped ignite a number of additional changes Melanie made. Teacher education programs could do this by hosting professional development opportunities for alumni to support their development as novice teachers. They could also provide support groups for alumni who obtain jobs near their university communities.

Finally, schools and districts have a responsibility to support the novice teachers they employ. This can be achieved through providing strong induction and mentoring programs for new teachers, something most of the participants in our study lacked. School districts also have a responsibility to ensure that their school-wide policies and instruction programs align with research-based best practices. In our study, those graduates whose district policies aligned with the practices they learned in their teacher education programs were much more successful at implementing practices they had learned than those who were in districts that lacked such congruency. Those who experienced congruency also expressed greater satisfaction with their jobs overall.

We are interested in reclaiming activism and resistance in teacher education. It is our mission to equip our students with the tools to resist reproduction in school settings and instead reclaim spaces where they can effectively implement the research-based best practices they have learned in their teacher education programs. This study contributes to the limited knowledge on this topic by highlighting the importance of congruency between teacher beliefs and district objectives and by providing models of resistance that both preservice and in-service teachers can learn from as they seek to "change the ways of making the world" (Bourdieu, 1987/1990, p. 137).

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