The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of Education

TEACHER PREPARATION AND CORPORATE EDUCATION REFORM:
LEARNING FROM CONVERSATIONS
WITH CRITICAL TEACHER EDUCATORS

A Dissertation in
Curriculum & Instruction

by

Michelle Knotts

© 2015 Michelle Knotts

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2015
The dissertation of Michelle Knotts was reviewed and approved* by the following:

**Kathleen Collins**
Associate Professor, Language, Culture and Society
Chair of Committee
Dissertation Advisor

**Anne Whitney**
Associate Professor of Education (Language and Literacy Education)

**Wanda Knight**
Associate Professor of Art Education and Women’s Studies

**Jacqueline Edmondson**
Associate Vice President and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education

**William Carlsen**
Graduate Program Head, Curriculum and Instruction
Professor of Education

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

This qualitative inquiry explores the practices and lived experiences of critical teacher educators who have taken a stance against the corporate reform paradigm of education in their scholarship, activism, and teaching. Participants are leaders in the movement to resist corporate education reform and teacher educators who prepare preservice teachers for working in the current sociopolitical context; they include: Dr. Wayne Au, Dr. Julie Gorlewski, Dr. Denisha Jones, and Dr. P.L. Thomas. The study focuses on the challenges of preparing teacher candidates in the current sociopolitical context and examines how participants enact a critical pedagogy of teacher education that includes authentic writing, critical literacy, and student-centered approaches in order to meet these challenges. The researcher describes four commitments shared by participants: engagement, scholarship, advocacy, and reflection. Those shared commitments are explored through two themes in order to demonstrate how participants 1) politicize teacher education and 2) humanize teacher education. Data were collected through interviews and documents, and the researcher analyzed the data using an inductive, thematic analysis, guided by a critical theoretical framework and the tenets of critical pedagogy. Findings from this study reveal how critical teacher educators’ lived experiences influence their commitments and how their stances toward corporate education reform influence their pedagogy. The researcher makes recommendations for teacher educators and teacher education based on the findings – namely that critical teacher educators should do more to make sense of and engage with the movement to resist corporate education reform and that teacher education can better prepare teachers for the current sociopolitical context with explicit attention to the issues that contribute to schools as they are and by fostering hope and courage to see new possibilities for schools as they could be. Implications for preservice teachers and their experiences as beginning teachers are also discussed. This study reveals how efforts to politicize and humanize teacher education can better prepare teachers as empowered scholars and reflective practitioners who are able to make sense of the corporate reform paradigm and envision alternatives to it. This research challenges conceptions of teacher education that emphasize technical training and compliance in this era of neoliberalism.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................. vi

LIST OF TABLES ..................................................................................................................... vii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................................... viii

DEDICATION ............................................................................................................................. ix

Chapter 1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1

Overview of the Study ............................................................................................................. 1

Problem Statement ................................................................................................................... 4

Current Sociopolitical Context of Education ......................................................................... 7

Corporate reform paradigm of education .............................................................................. 7

Neoliberal ideology .................................................................................................................. 11

Critical Approach to Theory and Practice ............................................................................. 16

Critical education theory and reconstructionism ................................................................. 17

Critical pedagogy .................................................................................................................... 19

Critical teacher education .................................................................................................... 22

Chapter 2 Methods ................................................................................................................ 28

Qualitative Approaches ......................................................................................................... 28

Role of the researcher ............................................................................................................. 32

Data Collection Process ......................................................................................................... 33

Interviews ................................................................................................................................. 34

Documents ............................................................................................................................... 37

Selection of Participants ......................................................................................................... 38

Data Analysis Process ............................................................................................................. 42

Chapter 3 Participants’ Lived Experiences and Commitments ............................................ 47

Dr. Wayne Au: Organizing for Social Change .................................................................... 49

Engagement ............................................................................................................................ 53

Dr. Denisha Jones: Advocating for Students and Families .................................................. 54

Advocacy ................................................................................................................................. 58

Dr. Paul L. Thomas: Building Disciplinary Knowledge ....................................................... 59

Scholarship .............................................................................................................................. 63

Dr. Julie Gorlewski: Creating a Safe Space for Dialogue ..................................................... 66

Reflection ................................................................................................................................. 69

Commitment to Critical Pedagogy ......................................................................................... 70
Chapter 4 Politicize Teacher Education

Raising Awareness about Contested Issues
Engaging in the Broader Context
Critical Pedagogy to Politicize Teacher Education
  Authentic writing
  Reading the word and the world

Chapter 5 Humanize Teacher Education

Humanizing our Teaching in a Dehumanizing Context
  Impact on students
  Preparing advocates
  Impact on prospective teachers
  Preparing reflective practitioners
Critical Pedagogy To Humanize Teacher Education
  Relationships
  Student-centered classrooms
  Transparency

Chapter 6 Ongoing Conversations

Recommendations for Critical Teacher Educators
  Take action
  Use your outside voice
  Collaborate and connect
Recommendations for Undergraduate Teacher Education
  Explicit attention to the current sociopolitical context
  Working simultaneously within and against the system
  Renewed focus on educational foundations and philosophy
Looking Forward

References

Appendix Interview Guide
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: Overview of the corporate reform paradigm of education ....................... 10
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1: Three Conceptions of Teacher Education ........................................... 26
Table 2-1: Participants .................................................................................................. 41
Table 2-2: Preliminary Themes ....................................................................................... 44
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge those who provided support and encouragement during this process.

Wayne Au, Julie Gorlewski, Denisha Jones, and Paul Thomas, who inspire me with their passion, intellect, and courage.

My committee: Dr. Kathleen Collins, Dr. Jackie Edmondson, Dr. Wanda Knight, and Dr. Anne Whitney. Thanks for believing in me and for challenging me.

My graduate school friends and colleagues: Nicole Olcese, Su Young Kang, Alaska Black Hults, Amy Ricketts, YuTing Kao, Ritam Dutta, Peter Licona, Kimberly Buescher, Colleen Shaughnessy, Wideline Seraphin, Donna-Marie Cole-Malott, Emily Rose Aguilo-Perez, Elsie Olan, Paolo Infante, Sabrina, and Luca; Cubbie Rowland-Storm, Trisha, and Dia. It’s been a pleasure to teach and write with you, to co-miserate, to wine and whine, and to share some sunshine, laughter, and music.

Jessica Pope, thank you for your friendship and your wisdom. Those hours and hours we spent on the phone were crucial to my success.

My mom, I am grateful for your unwavering love and support and so thankful for the fun times we spent together while I was working on this. You’ve kept me balanced. Thanks for listening and for giving really good advice.

My Morgan, who remembered to celebrate every milestone along the way with flowers, even IRB approval. Who sent me Dragon Naturally Speaking software when I cried because I could say my thoughts better than I could write them. Who reminded me to choose joy and to fall in love with life. You have been the best distraction. I love you, and I am so glad that you are in my life.
DEDICATION
This dissertation is dedicated to:

My niece, Gionna Greene, and my nephew, Jace Greene

Thank you for your courage to be the only students at your school to opt out of high-stakes standardized tests. Thank you for taking a stand for public education.

May your lives continue to be filled with authentic learning, civil disobedience, creativity, strength, hope, and wonder.
Chapter 1
Introduction

Overview of the Study

As a beginning teacher educator, I met with a pre-service teacher to discuss her field experience. During that meeting, she told me about how excited she was to finally discuss what she called the “the political aspects of education.” She enthusiastically shared details of conversations she had with her mentor teacher about resistance to the Common Core State Standards and standardized testing. Then, she also expressed her frustration that conversations about these issues had been missing from her coursework. She explained how she was trying to understand her own stances, but that she didn’t have much information. She talked about what she’d learned from her parents and what she was gleaning from her mentor, while she lamented not exploring these issues more in her teacher education courses. Perhaps her most telling comment was when she said: “Most of my professors here say they don't agree with standardized testing and that they don't like charter schools, but none of them have ever said why.”

Their bias was evident, but this student had no sense of how those opinions were formulated and supported. Her professors didn’t explain why, didn't explain their assumptions and didn't share information that substantiated their opinions. There was no talk of market-based approaches to education reform, no discussions about how the current era of accountability and standardization impacts public schools. We talked a little about these topics in that moment during the meeting, and I pointed her towards some resources for learning more about the issues and the arguments. She came to the
meeting fired up and slightly frustrated, and she left fired up and empowered to explore some of these issues on her own.

My reactions to our meeting were similar. I, too, was frustrated by her reports of missing out on conversations about the current sociopolitical context of education in her teacher preparation courses, but I was inspired to think more deeply about how to address these issues. This meeting and our conversation reinforced my belief that teacher candidates need opportunities to grapple with the underlying assumptions and sociopolitical factors that contribute to schools as they are in order to formulate their own stances and to develop visions for schools as they could be. This conversation reinforced my belief that teacher educators should explore possibilities for being more explicit about how current economic, social, and political factors impact becoming and being a teacher. This goal is especially crucial in this historical moment since the current context of education is dominated by the “corporate reform paradigm of education” (Thomas, 2013a). Education is currently situated within a sociopolitical context that is characterized by neoliberal ideology. This dominant paradigm has had a significant impact on education policy, including teacher preparation (Bullough, 2014; Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015, Zeichner, 2010). Standardization, high-stakes testing, and accountability are the norm, and teacher candidates need to consider what these mean for education and make sense of the philosophical and ideological underpinnings that are at the root of these norms.

In response to this meeting, in order to discover ways to actualize some of my realizations and goals, I immediately started to implement some practices aimed at exploring the corporate reform paradigm as the dominant influence of the current
sociopolitical context of education. I shared readings about standardized testing and other policies and practices tied to the corporate reform paradigm of education. I located blogs and web sites that highlighted the voices of teachers who described their experiences and the negative impact that the corporate reform paradigm had on their work and their schools. These counternarratives (Bullough, 2008), resistance to the grand narrative of corporate education reform, are readily available and accessible with the increasing use of social media and blogs. I maintain that these counternarratives are one approach for developing awareness about the current sociopolitical context of education and that sharing these counternarratives demonstrates alternatives to the status quo. More importantly, I think, these examples provide opportunities for teacher candidates to realize hope and possibility through solidarity, teachers organizing and collaborating in a movement of resistance to corporate education reform. Eventually, I encouraged my students to find more resources on their own by presenting an “article of the week” about contemporary issues related to education.

As I looked for other ways to make these issues a part of my course curriculum, I began to wonder: Are there other teacher educators that have taken up this debate and these challenges, and, if so, who are they? What inspires them? I also wondered: Are they enacting critical pedagogy to foster reflection and knowledge about the corporate reform paradigm of education? If so, in what ways? These questions, the opening anecdote, and the goals of teacher education that I have identified point toward the topics that I focus on in this study.

This is a qualitative study of four critical teacher educators who have taken a stance against the corporate reform paradigm of education in their scholarship, activism,
and teaching. The purpose of this research is to better understand how self-described critical teacher educators explain enacting a critical pedagogy of teacher education that addresses the current sociopolitical context of education. Additionally, I aim to understand more about what has influenced their commitments and critical stances. Participants include Dr. Wayne Au, Dr. Julie Gorlewski, Dr. Denisha Jones, and Dr. PL Thomas, and the study has two purposes: 1) To explore participants’ lived experiences and how those experience influence their commitments. 2) To describe their reported practices, analyzing how participants enact a critical pedagogy of teacher education to work towards realizing their commitments. The data, and my analysis of it, focus on the challenges of preparing teacher candidates for the political and moral responsibilities of teaching in the current sociopolitical context of education, a context that is dominated by the corporate reform paradigm of education. The study explores two research questions:

RQ1: How do teacher educators’ personal stories and lived experiences reflect their political and pedagogical commitments?

RQ2: How do teacher educators describe their enactment of critical pedagogy to encourage alternative thinking to the predominant corporate reform paradigm of education?

Problem Statement

This qualitative study focuses on critical teacher educators who have taken public stances against the corporate education reform paradigm. Contemporary scholars agree that teacher educators should take up the goals of addressing corporate education reform
in the current sociopolitical context, and that teacher educators can enact a critical pedagogy to challenge the corporate education reform paradigm (Canaan, 2013; Cody, 2013; Cruz, 2013; Elmore, 2013; Giroux & Giroux, 2006; Gorlewski & Gorlewski, 2013). Still, there is not much information about how and why teacher educators take up these issues. There have been a number of studies that consider how and to what extent preservice and beginning inservice teachers take up and transfer the goals of critical pedagogy (Bartolome, 2004; Early & Shagory, 2010; Genor, 2005; Reed, 2009) and even how they take up critical pedagogy explicitly within the context of neoliberalism (Picower, 2011). Those studies focus on the narratives and lived experiences of teacher candidates and/or beginning teachers rather than on critical teacher educators.

There is, then, a need to focus on teacher educators who use critical pedagogy to challenge the corporate education reform paradigm in order to understand their practices and their scholarship aimed towards these goals. Because personal experience influences who we are and who we are becoming as educators and scholars, it follows that it is also necessary to explore what inspires these critical teacher educators, to consider their biographies and their experiences, and to ponder how those are connected to their teaching commitments and goals.

My study fills a gap in the research by turning a lens toward critical teacher educators whose practice and scholarship reflect their use of critical pedagogy to encourage teacher candidates to critically reflect on the current sociopolitical context of education, namely the discourse and policies of the corporate reform paradigm that are, at present, the status quo. Exploring critical pedagogy that challenges the corporate reform paradigm of education and the lived experiences of the teacher educators who enact that
pedagogy is not a widely researched topic. Certainly there are scholars who have written about the intersection of personal and professional pursuits and commitments (Bateson, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Goodson & Sikes, 2001) and others who have written specifically about critical educators in various biographical or narrative approaches (Nieto, 2005; Miller, et al, 2008; Moss, 2009; Thomas, 2001; Torres, 1998), but this study charters new territory in that it will focus on the lived experiences and reported practices of critical teacher educators who enact critical pedagogy with explicit attention to challenging the corporate education reform paradigm.

Raising awareness about the ways that the current era of corporate education reform influences education is an essential component of teacher preparation in the current sociopolitical context. A recent study designed to “chart the contemporary landscape of research on teacher preparation” (Cochran-Smith & Vilegas, 2015, 201, p. 7) describes how trends have contributed to increased research about topics related to accountability and “the discourse of outcomes” (p. 10), conceptions of teacher knowledge, and teacher preparation for diversity and equity. In the framework for their study, the authors explain how these trends, and related research about teacher preparation, are inextricably linked to “the larger historical-social setting” that is marked by “a shift to neoliberal economics” (p. 8). My study also considers teacher education as “historically-situated” by exploring critical teacher educators’ responses to the current sociopolitical context of education and how that context impacts their commitments, goals, and practices.
Current Sociopolitical Context of Education

In short, the sociopolitical context of education refers to the social and political factors that influence education at any given time, including factors such as regulations, policies, political and economic trends, and ideologies. In what follows, I will provide a foundational understanding of what I mean by the “corporate reform paradigm of education” (Thomas, 2013a), explaining the discourse of this paradigm and explaining how that discourse impacts decision-making, policies, and the view of teachers and students. Then, I will explore neoliberal ideology to explain how the underpinnings of this ideology influence the current sociopolitical context of education. In order to make sense of the current sociopolitical context and to establish the urgency of taking up challenges to corporate education reform, I draw upon the work of contemporary scholars who define and critique neoliberalism (Apple, 1999; Cassell & Nelson, 2013; Chomsky, 1999; Munck, 2005; Saltman, 2009). More specifically, I situate the problem within teacher education by exploring the research of scholars who critique the impacts of neoliberalism on teacher education (Brass, 2014; Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013; Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner, 2010).

Corporate reform paradigm of education.

The current sociopolitical context of education is dominated by a discourse of competition, accountability, and standardization. Market-based decisions are made with a focus on the tenets of privatization and profit. In this way, schools are viewed as
businesses and public education is conceptualized as an industry rather than a public service. It is also referred to as “the human capital paradigm” (Spring, 2011, p. 11) because of its focus on outcomes and the notable shift from “student needs to student performance and from what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school” (Apple, 2001, p. 185). Teachers are similarly impacted by this paradigm, which includes policies that measure the value of teachers based on their students’ test scores (value-added measures) and other mandates that represent a shift from “teacher control of the curriculum toward a fundamentally technicist form of education” (Giroux, 1988, p. 178). The corporate reform paradigm of education positions teachers as technicians who supply predetermined goods and services to students who are positioned as consumers and “human capital” (Ravitch, 2013, p. 35).

This “corporate culture” of public education (Giroux & Giroux, 2006, p. 25) is especially evident in the discourse of accountability and standardization that is used to promote standardized testing and tying those test scores to school funding and teacher evaluation. Current national education policy in the United States is based on this discourse and assumptions. Race to the Top uses the language of corporate education reform to define “successful schools” as those that have high test scores and “effective teachers” as those whose students produce high test scores (Ravitch, 2013). This limited view, perpetuated by a language of economy, diminishes the complexities and nuances of individual humans in particular contexts. This language of efficiency, standardization, and competition fails to realize the humanity and the complexity of individuals in particular contexts. Figure 1-1 (see pg. 10) illustrates how discourse, decision-making,
polices and impacts on teachers and students are all a part of the corporate reform paradigm of education.

Market-based decisions, steeped in the discourse of the corporate reform paradigm, are especially evident in current national policies such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* and the impacts they have had on public schools. These policies mandate standardized testing - and force schools to compete for national funds and evaluate teachers - based on the test scores. Some of the assumptions behind these current policies can be traced back to 1983 and a report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*. This report fueled a belief that America’s public schools were failing, and it marked a turn toward policies that mandated standards and testing to measure outcomes in order to track student and teachers (Ravitch, 2013; Spring 2011).

Teacher preparation programs are facing similar policies that are tied to testing and accountability. In 2015 the Department of Education proposed amendments to the Higher Education Act (HEA) that would result in using the test scores of K-12 students as a way to measure the quality of teacher education programs. Another corporate reform policy that is increasingly prevalent in teacher education is the increased use of high-stakes assessments for teacher candidates. The most common of these tests is the EdTPA (Education Teacher Performance Assessment), which is designed and managed by the Pearson Corporation; it is currently mandated in ten states, and institutions in thirty-five states are in the process of piloting or taking steps to adopt the EdTPA.
It is not hyperbolic to say that America’s public schools, and the teachers and students in them, are under attack in this current era of corporate reform. Critics maintain that the corporate education reform paradigm is an assault on public education aimed at replacing “public education with a privately managed, free-market system of schooling” (Ravitch, 2013, p. 4). Community-based public schools and our sense of collective responsibility to provide access to education are threatened by the current market-based approaches to reform. As such, it is “of crucial importance” that teacher candidates are “prepared to understand the ideological and political restructuring that is going on all around them” (Apple, 2001, p. 195) in this era of corporate education reform. Similarly, it is imperative that they realize that these are political issues – not merely economic issues – and that these are contested and debatable issues. Prospective teachers also need to understand the moral implications of these issues, particularly the ways they that impact equity and threaten humanizing elements of education.
Neoliberal ideology.

Neoliberalism “dominates the political horizon at the moment” (Munck, 2005, p. 60) and has been an increasingly influential factor in the sociopolitical landscape of the United States since the late 1970’s (Campbell, 2005; Chomsky, 1999). Other countries, such as Sweden and Chile, have only recently realized its influences and have, to a large extent, resisted its influences. Meanwhile Australia and New Zealand have “deliberately and thoroughly installed neoliberal practices and principles over the last 20 -30 years” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 250). Neoliberal ideology is a “system of thought” (Munck, 2005, p.61) that favors competition, efficiency, and accountability as well as a “particular organization of capitalism” (Campbell, 2005, p. 189) that is based on the tenets of privatization and profit. The consequences of neoliberalism are the privatization of what was once public and an emphasis on profit and efficiency in determining the “value” of individuals and institutions (Elmore, 2013). The corporate reform paradigm of education is rooted in neoliberalism, which is also often referred to as “free-market capitalism.”

Neoliberalism is often portrayed as a necessary outcome of globalization - increased international trade and world markets that promote the unrestricted transfer of goods and services among nations. Critics of the current wave of globalization maintain that this unregulated free market has benefited corporations at the expense of local initiatives and people (Elmore, 2013; Hursh, 2001). Another critique is that neoliberalism emphasizes how to adapt to globalization rather than take up questions and challenges about how to change the world or to rethink the principles and consequences of globalization and free-market capitalism (Hursh, 2001; Shannon, 2014). Shannon, (2014)
argues that neoliberals offer “technical suggestions” to encourage adaption rather than take up “philosophical debate” about the goals, policies, and principles that ought to shape our increasingly globalized world (p. 80).

These attempts to adapt to globalization have impacted education in the U.S. Reforms and changes in the American school system, such as the ones I described in my analysis of the corporate reform paradigm of education, have been made in order to promote global competition and “win the future” (Shannon, 2014, p. 85). Current U.S. education policies reinforce multiple levels of competition: among individuals, schools, states, and nations (Shannon, 2014). Schools in the U.S. are increasingly focused on meeting the demands for competing in a global workforce and competing with test scores in other countries.

There is a long history of corporate influence on American schools and national education policy; historically schools have been committed to contributing to the work force on varying levels. However, with the rise of globalization and neoliberal ideology, “the collaboration between corporations and education has become stronger.” (Hursh, 2001, p. 8). The current corporate reform paradigm of education can be traced to the rise of neoliberalism in the early 1980’s (Saltman, 2009). Hursh (2001) contends that, “since the reign of Reagan, education in the U.S. has been increasingly transformed to meet the competitive needs of corporations within globalized markets” (p. 7). Limited to these goals, the benefits and significance of education are determined strictly in terms of its contribution to the economy.

Neoliberalism forces discussions and debates about education to be taken up in economic terms, and it privileges privatization over public strategies and institutions as a
means for addressing social issues. Keynesian economic systems, which offered substantial funding and investment in education and other social institutions, were predominant in western governments throughout the 1960’s and 1970’s. Neoliberal economic policies mark “a shift away from Keynesian economic policies and concerns for general social welfare” (Hursh, 2001, p. 5) because “neoliberalism, unlike liberalism, withdraws value from the social good” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 254). Critics of neoliberalism argue that social issues cannot be separated from economic policies and issues (Apple, 2001; Elmore, 2013; Hursh, 2001; Davies & Bansel, 2007).

The corporate reform paradigm of education and its policies are based on a pervasive discourse of neoliberalism, which blames individual schools and teachers for the perceived failures of education rather than recognizing how broader structural and social factors have a negative impact on access, equity, and opportunity (Picower, 2011). Neoliberalism’s “emphasis on enterprise and capitalization” is detrimental to ideals about “collective responsibility for the vulnerable and marginalized” (Davies and Bansel, 2007, p. 252). Apple (2001) describes how neoliberalism is akin to “thin morality” that is founded on “individual and property rights” instead of the “thick morality” and “principled practices” that lead to policies based on the “common good” (p. 190).

Despite the history and the increasing pervasiveness and influence of neoliberal ideology, it is a concept that most people do not understand. Gorlewski & Gorlewski (2013) make the point that “very few educators – including teachers, administrators, and even teacher educators – are familiar with the term neoliberalism” (p. 120). They further argue that this lack of awareness means “educators are likely to be unaware of the effects of neoliberal policies on public education” (p. 120). Building knowledge about the ways
that current education reform discourse and policies are grounded in neoliberal ideology is an essential goal for teacher preparation in the current sociopolitical context (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2012; Picower, 2011; Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner, 2010). Shannon (2014) describes how neoliberal goals for education are aimed at changing the form of schools, teacher’s dispositions, and school substance.

The pervasive movement towards charter schools is one way that the forms of schools have changed under neoliberalism. Neoliberals argue that the best route for creating U.S. schools that can compete in the global economy is by out-sourcing public education to private for-profit companies. Friedman (2005) and other proponents of vouchers and school choice argue that competitive markets will improve our nation’s schools. In this way, “productivity is seen to come not from government investment in education, but from transforming education into a product that can be bought and sold like anything else” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 254).

Neoliberal goals aimed at changing teacher’s dispositions and school substance have been taken up by corporate enterprises like Teach for America and Yes Prep (Shannon, 2014), whose focus is on teacher training that emphasizes survival skills, routine, and rote practices. Furthermore, Shannon (2014) describes how the standards movement, particularly Common Core State Standards, has changed the purpose and goals of schools, replacing commitments to liberal education and civic education with test prep, uniform skills, and “career and college readiness.” Similarly, Hursch (2001) argues that, “schools are not evaluated for whether students become liberally educated citizens but whether they become economically productive workers” (p. 5) as a result of
the changes in education purpose and school substance. This shift in the purpose of education is a topic I look at more closely in the recommendations in chapter 6.

Neoliberal ideology permeates the current sociopolitical context and has far-reaching influences. It is so pervasive that some critics argue it has been taken up as “common sense” (Apple, 2005; cited in Cochran-Smith & Vilegas, 2015), and it is perceived as “conventional wisdom” (Aronowitz, 2003). Furthermore, there is a pervasive belief, which is perpetuated by political leaders and those who subscribe to neoliberal ideology, that there is no alternative (TINA) to neoliberalism (Munck, 2005, p. 60) because it is an “inevitable outcome” of capitalism (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 247), globalization, and economic forces (Aronowitz, 2003; Giroux & Giroux, 2006; Hursh, 2001; Saltman, 2009).¹ Bourdieu (1998) argues that “a whole set of presuppositions is being imposed as self-evident” (cited in Hursh, 2001, p. 5) and reminds us that “there is an alternative to the logic of neoliberalism and that we must reassert the possibility of a world and an educational system that focuses on more than economic efficiency” (cited in Hursh, 2001, p. 11).

The phrase “market rationality” coined by Jameson and Zizeck (cited in Canaan, 2013) reflects how our collective thinking can change as we uncritically accept the pervasive influence of market-based approaches to societal issues, including education. The continued uncontested acceptance of “neoliberal logic” (Thomas, 2013b) “reinforces

¹ The acronym TINA (there is no alternative) was coined by British Prime Minister Thatcher and is often referenced in writings about neoliberalism to point to its pervasiveness and the widely accepted belief that it is a “natural” part of capitalism and societal development and that it can not be avoided or stopped.
cultural norms that feature standardization, measurement and quantification, and 
accountability as objective—thus not political” (p. 208). An essential question posed by 
Davies and Bansel asks, “How does the calculated invisibility of neoliberalism work 
against our capacity to make a critique of it?” (p. 254). A goal of my research is to 
understand how teacher educators can counter this “market rationality” and “neoliberal 
logic” through teacher a critical pedagogy of teacher education and scholarship that 
critiques these tenets as natural or logical and provides alternative thinking.

**Critical Approach to Theory and Practice**

There are numerous critiques of the corporate reform paradigm of education and 
the ways that it is influenced by neoliberal ideology, and those arguments are grounded in 
different theoretical perspectives. I draw my arguments from critical perspectives (Apple, 
1999; Freire, 1970, 1985; Grioux & Giroux, 2006; Saltman, 2009) and align myself with 
critical scholars who support teacher education that advocates for the development of 
teachers a change agents (Ayers, 2010; Picower, 2011; Sachs, 2003) who will take up a 
renewed realization of the social responsibilities associated with the teaching profession 
(Apple, 2001; Brameld, 1956; Counts, 1932; Grioux, 1988; Kincheloe, 2004). I use 
“critical” to refer to a theoretical position that considers the sociopolitical context in 
which educational is situated and the realization that there are alternatives to constructs 
that are often taken for granted. A critical perspective critiques and challenges, and it also 
looks toward ways to change and improve society.
In this historical moment, challenging assumptions about the status quo requires critical examination of the corporate reform paradigm of education and an exploration of alternatives to it (Apple, 2001; Au & Apple, 2009; Cassell & Nelson, 2013; Giroux, 2012; Gorlewski & Gorlewski, 2013; Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013; Saltman, 2009; Sleeter, 2008). Critical stances against the status quo in the current sociopolitical context mean challenging an ideological concept that currently influences the dominant discourse of education reform and broader social agendas. Critique and disruption of ideologies that “work to distort reality” is a “central concept in critical theory” research (Glesne, 2011, p. 9). Teacher education does not stand alone; it is deeply connected to broader educational, economic, and social politics.

While I am specifically concerned with neoliberal influences on public schools, I view these institutional problems within a broader context. I take up a reconstructionist and critical theorist lens to emphasize the tensions between neoliberal ideology and public education in a democracy, and to make connections between teaching, learning, and social change. In the final sections of this chapter, I will describe the beliefs and assumptions of critical theory and reconstructionism and explain how those theoretical perspectives support the goals of critical pedagogy and critical teacher education.

**Critical education theory and reconstructionism.**

Critical education theory is a relevant theoretical framework of this study because it is based on the beliefs that schools should be transformers (rather than transmitters) of society and that teachers can and should act as change agents to reconstruct society
(Apple, 2006; Ayers, 2010, Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Giroux, 1988, 2012; Hinchey, 2004). Burbules & Berk (1999) maintain that critical theory includes “the ability to think outside of a framework of conventional understandings” (p. 3) and further argue that it involves practice - that it is not merely a way of thinking - it is also what one does. It is this emphasis on critique and action that make critical theory so well suited for my research. For critical theorists and reconstructionists, the goals of education, including teacher education, emphasize taking action because silence and inaction are akin to “conceding the world to the status quo, conceding our voices and our humanity” (Thomas, 2012, para. 12). Critical theory encourages individuals to work toward freedom and transformation by challenging dominant ideologies and taking action to create new possibilities.

Reconstructionist theory posits that social and political problems should be a part of the curriculum (Brameld, 1956, 1966). Infusing the teacher education curriculum with a pedagogy that explores corporate education reform and neoliberal influences on public education represents this key foundation of reconstructionism. This is not to say that “education by itself can create a new social order” (Brameld, 1966, p. 336), but that education can and should play a role in moving away from unquestioning acceptance and transmission of the status quo and dominant paradigms. Reconstructionists contend that systems have a tendency toward authoritarian designs that maintain the status quo, and they argue for the need to challenge these dominant paradigms and encourage rethinking constructs that are often taken for granted. In this way, critical theory and reconstructionism are responses and challenges to the tenets of the corporate reform
paradigm of education and the principles of neoliberal ideology, which are often accepted as the current norm.

Reconstructionists and critical theorists realize radical possibilities and reject assumptions that the established status quo is an immutable absolute. A reconstructionist perspective assumes that the inequities and injustices in society are caused by a schism between the ideal and what is taken for granted or natural, a schism between what is and what could be. Critical theorists and reconstructionists seek to disrupt dominant discourses, to critique what is accepted as the norm and to challenge the status quo (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009; Ayers, 2010, Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Giroux, 1988, 2012). Critical pedagogy is one way for educators to disrupt the status quo.

**Critical pedagogy.**

Critical pedagogy is attributed to the work of Paulo Freire (1970) who “was concerned with how people interpret their environments, read their worlds, and can act to change them” (Souto-Manning & Smagorinsky, 2010, p. 42). Critical Pedagogy is a philosophical and educational movement that combines critical theory and education with an emphasis on the connections among teaching, learning, and social change. Teacher educators can contribute to the development of teachers as visionaries through critical pedagogy. I take the position that critical pedagogy and teacher education for challenging the corporate reform paradigm are mutually supportive ideals. Critical teacher educators can realize their commitments and goals through critical pedagogy, instruction that encourages preservice teachers to make connections between curriculum and the world
and that empowers them to understand their role in creating positive social reform (Bartolome, 2004). Critical theory informs my research as it relates to the goals of critique and change. I understand critical pedagogy as approaches for realizing those goals.

Critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970, 1985; Giroux, 2001; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2008a), which highlights hope and encourages students to see beyond what is to what could be, represents one approach for challenging the status quo and realizing renewed possibilities. Critical pedagogy offers “both a language of critique and possibility” (Grioux & Giorux, 2006, p. 22) for linking heightened awareness to action. Conscientization (Friere, 1970) refers to raising awareness about contested issues, power, and the political nature of teaching, learning, and schooling. In the current sociopolitical context, that means raising awareness about standardization, measurement, and accountability in education reform and how these goals are aimed at the privatization of public schools (Ravitch, 2013). Critical pedagogy is imperative for understanding how the current sociopolitical context impacts students and teachers because teacher candidates must realize the political and ideological underpinnings of what is before they can fully imagine what could be.

As I stated earlier, much of the current research about critical pedagogy and teacher education explores how critical teacher education influences preservice and beginning teachers and their practices. However, there have also been some recent studies that focus on implementing critical pedagogy in teacher education to resist neoliberalism (Rodriguez & Smith, 2011; Webb, Briscoe, & Mussman, 2009). Similarly, there is a body of literature that advances arguments for a critical pedagogy of teacher education that
challenges neoliberalism (Apple, 2001; Cruz, 2013; Giroux, 1988; Giroux & Giroux, 2006; Gorlewski & Gorlewski, 2013; Hoben, 2013; Zeichner & Flessner, 2009). Critical pedagogy is “imperative for negotiating the social, political, cultural, and economic circumstances that shape the life of all citizens during this neoliberal epoch” (Cruz, 2013, p. 16). A critical pedagogy of teacher education that challenges corporate education reform provides renewed understandings and visions for public education.

Critical teacher education to challenge neoliberalism can be realized through critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy rejects the banking model of education (Freire, 1970), where the goal is to deposit knowledge into students. Instead, it calls on teachers (teacher educators) to develop students (prospective teachers) who are able to understand and critique the sociopolitical context and engage in actions, through their work as teachers, in order to change it. The goals of critical pedagogy – critical consciousness, political analysis, dialogue, empowerment – are a stark contrast to the goals of teacher education aligned with neoliberal ideology. Teacher education that “succumbs to a neoliberal discourse” moves away from the development of critical stances and alternative thinking toward “teacher training” (Elmore, 2013, p.107).

In later chapters, I will describe how the participants of this study “live critical pedagogy” (Goldstein, 2007, p. 9) and explore how they enact a critical pedagogy of teacher education to encourage alternative thinking to the corporate reform paradigm of education. First, I want to explain more about the connections between critical pedagogy and teacher education by describing my construct of critical teacher education (CTE).
Critical teacher education.

For the purposes of this study, when I discuss teacher education, I refer to the preparation of preservice teachers in a university context. I refer specifically to one slice of teacher education and to teacher educators as “those educators who provide formal instruction….and provide the professional education component of preservice programs” (Association of Teacher Educators, 2003) in a college-level teacher education program. Teacher education certainly encompasses a wider variety of contexts and experiences, including the professional learning of practicing teachers as well as alternatives to licensure and preparation. However, in this dissertation, I limit my definition of teacher education to: preservice teacher preparation, through coursework and clinical field experiences, in a university program. 2

Although I was a secondary English teacher for fifteen years, it was my experience as an adjunct instructor and a cooperating teacher - my work with preservice teachers - that ultimately inspired me to pursue a PhD. When I started teaching an English Education course, I was dismayed by how many of the students asked questions about discipline, grading, writing quizzes and how to hold students accountable – as if these were the most essential competencies for teaching. I wondered why they didn’t ask questions about building relationships with students, making curriculum relevant, and creating democratic classrooms.

2 “Alternative teacher certification” refers to a wide range of programs beyond university teacher education. These alternative programs are widely critiqued as part of the “neoliberal assault on teacher education” (Sleeter, 2008).
It is interesting to note that those preservice teachers were asking *how* while I pondered *why*. One critique of teacher education is that too often it emphasizes the *how* of schooling rather than the *why* (Hinchey, 2004; Giroux, 2012). They asked “how-to” questions - how to discipline students, how to write a quiz, how to assign grades - rather than asking why these were common habits in schools. I was discouraged by their “how-to” approach to teaching and learning. Looking back, I realize this experience also encouraged me – encouraged me to begin to think more deeply about the goals of teacher education. Learning to become a teacher is certainly challenging. The most important challenges, I think, are to engage with and make sense of the sociopolitical factors that impact becoming and being a teacher.

Teacher education is a complex and contentious endeavor. Those very questions that I asked in my first experience as a teacher educator are precisely the questions that teacher education researchers and scholars have been debating for more than a century (Bullough, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Lagemann, 2000). Teacher education “represents a sizable, if not entirely well respected, research enterprise” (Bullough, 2008, p. 27); as a field, it has been marginalized and is consistently plagued with debates about goals and approaches to teacher preparation and development.

Thomas (2015) argues that teacher education has never really developed as field because it is “mired in bureaucracy” (para. 15). The same tendency toward micromanagement that is prevalent in K-12 schools is evident in teacher education where the focus is often on certification rather than education. Teacher education scholars (Bullough, 2014; Cochran-Smith, 2006; Kincheloe, 2004; Kumashiro, 2010; Zeichner, 2010) advocate for a renewed realization of the complexities of teacher education in the
current historical moment; they urge resistance to “the commodification of teacher education” (Zeichner, 2010, p. 1444) and resistance to regulations aimed at standardization that threaten to dehumanize the field and diminish the complexities and relevance of our discipline.

In order to illustrate some of the different assumptions and beliefs that contribute to the complexities and debates in the field of teacher education, I have included a chart (see Table 1-1, p. 26) that illustrates the distinctions and shared attributes among three conceptions of teacher education: 1) Technical teacher training 2) Inquiry-based professional development 3) Critical teacher education. This chart demonstrates some of the key principles of three different concepts of teacher education. These categories are not meant to diminish the multiple conceptions of teacher education and the varied philosophies that comprise different teacher education paradigms. Other scholars (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Kincheloe, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner, 1983, 2003) have also used categorical approaches to explore different goals and assumptions of teacher education. I use these three distinctions as a way to organize my discussion of the range of views in teacher education and to make clear my biases and my understanding of the concept of critical teacher education (CTE).

While the categories are presented as separate, there is some overlap. There are some shared features among them, and there are gray areas within and between each one. As such, I view them more as a continuum that demonstrates a range of conceptual approaches to teacher education rather than three distinct categories. Viewed as a continuum, scientific/behaviorist approaches are at one end and critical theoretical and reconstructionist approaches are at the other end. The first category focuses on skills; the
second category demonstrates how teachers can implement those skills and, at the same
time, question and revise them through inquiry and reflection. The third construction,
critical teacher education, attends to the contested social issues to encourage teaching that
“is understood in a broad way... [It] includes the pedagogical strategies and methods
teachers use, but also involves what they believe, how they think about their work and its
larger connections” (Enterline, et al., 2008, p. 270). My concept of CTE realizes the goals
of preparing skilled teachers as professionals and knowledge-makers, and it includes the
goal of preparing them as empowered scholars and agents of change as well.

One critique of the concept of CTE that I describe here is that it replaces
knowledge with dispositions or focuses too much on beliefs at the expense of knowledge.
Scholars (Apple, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2006; Kincheloe, 2004) debunk this myth and its
oversimplified duality. Viewed as building blocks, the categories I have outlined are also
useful for countering this myth. My version of CTE assumes that there are skills and
foundational knowledge but “in addition to learning the facts, this kind of learning
includes unpacking the values and assumptions that shape the facts” (Cochran-Smith,
2006, p. 198). Similarly, Apple (2001) recognizes the complexities of the varying
concepts of teacher education and the components that comprise them and, argues for
moving beyond “technical and managerial solutions to moral and political problems”
(Apple, 2001, p. 182). In this way, each concept is a distinct approach to teacher
education, but the separate categories, taken together, can also represent a holistic
approach that recognizes the complexities of teacher education.
Table 1-1: Three Conceptions of Teacher Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Epistemology &amp; Theoretical Underpinnings</th>
<th>Technical Teacher Training</th>
<th>Inquiry-based Professional Development</th>
<th>Critical Teacher Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Rationalist/Behaviorist</td>
<td>- Constructivist</td>
<td>- Social Reconstructionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Positivist/</td>
<td>- Pragmatist</td>
<td>- Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Post-positivist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions about Knowledge, Skills &amp; Competencies in Teacher Education</td>
<td>- Teacher training model</td>
<td>- Teacher as skilled worker; implements policies/procedures as prescribed by authority</td>
<td>- Teacher as Innovative classroom leader + political leader and change agent who contributes to broader social movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Transmission of a predetermined body of knowledge</td>
<td>- Teacher as inquirer, scholar, action researcher, innovative classroom leader</td>
<td>- Teacher’s goals are to contribute to knowledge production and to participate in policy and decision-making about education; goals are context-specific and can’t be standardized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mandated curriculum, neutrality</td>
<td>- Emphasis on personal development and growth; reflection</td>
<td>- Emphasis on personal and political/public; critical reflection and participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Practical pedagogy</td>
<td>- Focus on interpretations, decisions about strategies and practices in context</td>
<td>- Teacher’s goals are to work towards education reform, to contribute to social change and democratic ideals; to foster equity and transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Focus on strategies &amp; practices</td>
<td>- Inquiry pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Skills</td>
<td>- Skills and inquiry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assumptions about the Goals and Outcomes of Teacher Education**

- Teacher as skilled worker; implements policies/procedures as prescribed by authority
- Focus on what teachers (should) do
- Teacher’s goals and measure of effectiveness tied to student achievement (on standardized tests)
The third category is most closely aligned with my concept of CTE. Historically, many scholars over the past century have pointed to the political, intellectual, and ethical nature of teaching and how the realization and enactment of these dispositions can contribute to broader social change (Counts, 1932; Friere, 1970; Brameld, 1956; Giroux, 1988; hooks, 1994; Apple, 2006). To name oneself a teacher requires more than any specific skill set because teaching is not merely a technical endeavor. Critical teacher educators realize that to name oneself a teacher demands empathy, imagination, and the ability to make connections between an individual student in a single classroom and broader sociopolitical contexts. Realizing and enacting these qualities is challenging because it often requires reexamining assumptions that one has about what it means to be a teacher and the purpose of schooling.

Another challenge is that this kind of teaching often requires teaching against the norm, which can be especially challenging in the current sociopolitical context with its emphasis on strict regulation and compliance to testing, accountability, and standardization. Prospective teachers need critical teacher educators who can provide them with opportunities to consider these challenges and to imagine other possibilities. The participants in my study all align themselves with critical theoretical and pedagogical approaches, and all of them describe teaching goals, practices, and commitments that match the characteristics I have outlined for critical teacher education. In the next two chapters, I will describe how I selected the participants and provide additional details about their experiences and commitments.
Chapter 2
Methods

The purpose of this study is to explore critical teacher educators’ experiences and commitments and make sense of how those intersect with their teaching goals and actions. As I mentioned in chapter one, this study is guided by two research questions:

RQ1: How do teacher educators’ personal stories and lived experiences reflect their political and pedagogical commitments?

RQ2: How do teacher educators describe their enactment of critical pedagogy to encourage alternative thinking to the predominant corporate reform paradigm of education?

In this chapter I will develop my rationale for using qualitative approaches, including narrative inquiry, in order to meet the research goals and explore the questions of this study. In doing so, I will address the limitations of this kind of research and elaborate on the role of the researcher in qualitative research. Finally, I will describe my methods, outlining the steps I took for data collection, participant selection, and data analysis.

Qualitative Approaches

Qualitative methods are useful for research that moves beyond answering questions of who and what to investigating how and why. The research goals and
questions for this study required data that moved beyond the surface questions of who and what, questions that are often answered with quantitative approaches, in order to capture the complexity of individuals living and working in particular contexts. A qualitative approach is ideal for this study because it is designed to look at how participants describe their experiences, commitments, and practices and to understand the significance of these. I chose qualitative approaches in order to meet the research goals: to explore participants’ experience and to make sense of how these intersect with their pedagogical and political beliefs and actions. Qualitative approaches that are aligned with the tenets of narrative methodology and an epistemology of narrative knowing are especially fitting for exploring the research questions in this project because I explore how personal biography influences the “political and intellectual biographies” (Torres, 1998, p. 5) of critical teacher educators. I consider the lived experiences and stories of critical teacher educators in order to shed light on the relationships between their personal experiences and their enactment of a critical pedagogy of teacher education.

Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research that includes the collection, analysis, interpretation and/or exploration of the “storied lives” (Elbaz, 1991) of people. There has been a steady increase in the use of and the acceptance of narrative inquiry as a contemporary research practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kramp, 2004; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007), and many scholars maintain that narrative inquiry is particularly well-suited for education research because it can help us to more fully understand the complexities of teachers’ experiences and the contexts in which they live and work (Bieler, 2011; Bullough, 2008, Casey, 1996; Clandin & Connelly, 1996, Goodson, 2003; Lyons, 2007). In this study, I collected stories as data (Bieler, 2011; Brunner, 1994;
Bullough, 2008) through in-depth qualitative interviews in order to explore how the lived experiences of participants contributed to their commitments and reported pedagogies.

Bruner (1986) designates two types of knowing, paradigmatic knowing and narrative knowing. Narrative knowing, open to contradiction and ambiguity, is steeped in personal experience and meaning (Elbaz, 1991). This research assumes that there is significance and value in narrative knowing and that stories function as a fundamental tool for making meaning (Polkinghorne, 1989). Narrative knowing is foundational to this research because it explores how “teaching events are framed within a teacher’s life history” (Carter, 1993, p. 7) by linking an analysis of teacher educators’ lived experiences to their pedagogies, teaching goals, and commitments. My research goals are not to make conclusive decrees or to highlight any one narrative or any one practice as better than or “more truthful” than another; rather I am interested in investigating possibilities and potentialities.

This research is an attempt at “researching back, in the same tradition of writing back or talking back” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, p. 7). I view this research as an opportunity to talk back to paradigmatic knowing, which seeks to “know the truth” (Lyons, 2007, p. 614) and to talk back to what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as “the grand narrative of social inquiry” (p. xxv) and which Lagemann (2000) traces back to Thorndike’s ideas of “a science of education.” The grand narrative of education research stems from a positivist methodology, and personal narratives of teacher educators who challenge the status quo and the widely accepted corporate paradigm of education, are one way of “talking back” to this methodology in the current era of “political retrogression” (Barone, 2007, p. 454).
Critical teacher educators can talk back to corporate education reformers and reclaim the conversation about public schools and teacher education by sharing their stories and experiences. Hoben (2013) reminds us of the importance of talking back in this particular historical moment; he writes: “by writing one’s self into history and place, narrative can help us to create new forms of critical consciousness that at once challenge and redefine neoliberal and positivistic forms of right-thinking” (p. 91). This research is based on my beliefs about the value of narrative knowing and the realization that qualitative research derived from stories and individual lives can make meaningful contributions to our understanding of complex issues.

Generalizability is a concern in any qualitative study; this study may not have a high degree of generalization, but it provides significant insights about critical pedagogy and teacher education in the current era of corporate education reform through its investigation of individuals who are deeply committed to these ideals. Qualitative research involves inquiries that are “less about the pursuit of consistency and more about the fuller understandings” that can be reached through the particular (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 21). Qualitative researchers are inspired to consider how individual characters in specific contexts can contribute to a deeper understanding of essential questions and complex issues. My development as a teacher education practitioner-researcher has strengthened my commitment to the belief that the goal of research is not to “produce knowledge that leads to the prediction and control of human experience; [but to] produce, instead, knowledge that deepens and enlarges the understanding of the human experience” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 159). The purpose of this study and the findings explored in this research are aligned with those goals.
Role of the researcher.

Another critique of qualitative research is the potential for researcher bias and how this can limit objectivity and accuracy. The underpinnings of such critiques assume the unit of analysis is a “thing” that can be observed and measured (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 29). Another underlying assumption in this critique is the assumption that the “thing,” the participant and/or the research, is removed from any relationship with the researcher (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 29). Qualitative approaches do not make the elimination of bias a goal because the qualitative researcher is considered “responsive” and “participatory” rather than a “neutral data collector” (Mason, 2002, p. 78). Qualitative research built on narrative knowing rejects assumptions about bias and the role of the researcher and accepts the “blurred distinctions not only between form and content but also between researcher and researched” (Clough, 2002, p. 3).

Collaboration between the researcher and others, especially between the researcher and the participants, is a benefit to qualitative research that realizes the humanity of all individuals involved in the process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Moss, 2004; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). My own identity, the lens that I bring to this work, is both a constraint and an affordance. I share the same critical perspective toward the corporate reform paradigm as my participants, and, like them, I identify as a critical teacher educator. Their stories and their experiences resonate with me, which can enhance my interpretation of them. However, I also need to take care not to let our shared lens narrow my interpretations since we share similar assumptions about the goals of teacher education.
Qualitative approaches, such as the methods used in this study, emphasize collaboration between the researcher and others, especially between the researcher and the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Moss, 2004; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). As the principle investigator of this study, I was responsible for making all of the decisions, for collecting and analyzing all of the data, and for interpreting, making meaning, and drawing the conclusions that are reported in this research. This required that I continuously ask myself: How could I be wrong or how could this be interpreted differently? (Maxwell, 2005). The use of triangulation, among the interviews from four perspectives and between the interview transcripts and documents for each participant, was one way that I addressed this question. I also addressed this question by paying particular attention to data collection and analysis through memos and systematic organization. I maintained a detailed account of the research process and methods; this record details how the findings are consistent with the data. I also used peer review and outside readers to strengthen and corroborate my analysis and interpretations; I had committee members and colleagues read drafts of my initial analysis, and I sought perspectives from people outside these areas of expertise as well. I conducted member checks as well, and participants reported that their ideas were accurately and carefully portrayed in what I’ve reported here.

**Data Collection Process**

Data for this study were collected through in-depth participant interviews and document collection. Having this combination of data, transcribed interviews and
documents, provided a holistic view of participants’ commitments, lived experiences, and practices and added “authenticity” and “trustworthiness” to the study (Glesne, 2011, p. 48). The two data sets did corroborate; that is, what was reported in the interviews was also evident in the syllabi, course assignments and other documents I analyzed. At the same time, these two data sets were complementary to one another addressing the two separate research questions. The interview data included content that focused more on research question #1, and the documents were more relevant to specific ideas explored in research question #2.

I maintained digital folders and files of printed materials for each participant. These files included: select publications authored by the participants, participants’ CV, notes about preliminary readings and research I conducted before each interview, notes taken during the interview, audio files, interview transcripts, memos, and additional documents for analysis such as course syllabi. The additional documents included any that the participants chose to share with me via email as a follow up to our interview, so they represent an additional layer to the stories shared with me, the researcher.

**Interviews.**

The primary source of data for this study is the set of transcribed interviews that I created from an in-depth, semi-structured interview that I conducted with each participant. These interviews ranged in length from 45 – 90 minutes and were conducted over the telephone. I recorded the interviews with a computer application, Quick Time Player, and saved the audio files. I transcribed all of the interviews verbatim in order to
increase the “thickness” of this data set (Ochs, 1999). I used Dragon Naturally Speaking software for the transcriptions; this voice recognition program simplified the transcription process. It also increased my attention to detail and assisted in making sense of the content because I repeated each word - mine and participants’ - into a microphone.

I added punctuation as I spoke, to mark the pauses, inflection, and other verbal cues that were evident in the recordings. I used a comma to mark a very short pause, less than one second. I used end punctuation to mark natural stops in ideas, and I used ellipses ... to mark longer pauses. Really long pauses, where the speaker stopped to collect their thoughts, were marked with (pause), and other verbal cues such as laughter were also noted in parentheses. I used italics to show when the speaker emphasized a word in their speech. Because content is what is significant for my analysis, not linguistics, I did eliminate some verbal incursions that are common in natural speech, such as “um” or “ah.” Quotations that are reported here are generally verbatim, but I did make minimal changes in order to align common speech with the conventions of written language.

The interview protocol (see Appendix) is informed by the work of Seidman (2006) and Kvale (1996, 2005). The questions were guidelines; I asked many of the same questions in each interview, but I also asked questions that were specific to each different participant and questions that were more spontaneous and that emerged during the interviews. I conducted pilot interviews with a committee member and with another colleague before I approached potential participants. These pilot interviews helped me to see where I could adjust some of the questions, especially the order I asked them, and helped me to gain confidence and familiarity with the questions and the skills and demands of effective qualitative interviewing (Mason, 2002).
The guiding questions were designed to elicit stories in order to shed light on the experiences, practices, and teacher narratives of the participants. Elbaz (1991) writes that, “teachers live in storied lives” and those stories can be obtained through qualitative interviews – interviews that are similar to a discussion or conversation rather than an interrogation (Mason, 2002). Teachers’ stories represent the difficulties and the potentialities of their practice, and their stories are also useful for showing how they develop and grow over time. Questions in the interview guide move chronologically in order to get at participants’ experiences over time. Qualitative approaches aligned with narrative inquiry include a variety of options for data collection methods (Barone, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), so I made a conscious choice, consistent with the characteristics of qualitative interviewing, to move away from conducting formal interviews toward a “relatively informal style” (Mason, 2002, p. 62) akin to conversation (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007; Kvale, 1996; Torres, 1998). Conversations are a useful medium for learning, and they can contribute to co-construction and shared meaning-making. Torres (1998), in his discussion of collecting data via interviews, notes his preference for dialogues and conversation rather than rigid interview protocols. He writes:

I preferred to elicit the dialogues following the ebb and flow of the conversation. They are more a true exchange of gut feelings, intellectual preoccupations, and the passion for reflecting from and about our lived experiences than an attempt to follow an explicit thematic agenda. (p. 10)

This ebb and flow and “interactional exchange” (Mason, 2002, p. 62) were evident in the conversations I had with my participants. We shared resources and stories
about our work as teachers and easily discussed our successes and challenges as teacher educators and scholars. As a developing critical teacher educator, I viewed these qualitative interviews with participants – critical teacher educators who are deeply committed to the issues that I am passionate about – as dialogic and “discursive acts” (Mishler, 1986) where we shared in teaching and learning opportunities to explore the topics of this research project. The term interview suggests a hierarchy where traditionally the researcher is in control; in my data collection, I took up re-imagined possibilities for “grounded conversation” (Goodson and Sikes, 2001) that emphasized shared experiences and the development of both the researcher and participants (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007), engaged in a “dialogic relationship” (Mello, 2007, p. 210). In this way, I viewed my participants as fellow teachers and learners, and I look forward to the maintenance of our continued collaboration.

Documents.

Before I even conducted the interviews, I began collecting “text-based documents” (Mason, 2002, p. 103) that were public and readily accessible. I looked at participants’ curriculum vitae and some of their recent scholarship and publications to get a sense of their teaching and their work as an “activist scholar” (Glesne, 2011, p. 11). These initial “found” documents helped me to make decisions about which participants to include and informed some of the questions I asked in interviews (Glesne, 2011, p. 90). Additional documents were those that were shared by participants via email after our interviews, specifically course assignments and syllabi, and these documents were
included in the stages of my data analysis process. These documents corroborated some of the data collected via interviews, particularly by clarifying some of the participants’ interview responses, and they provided substantial evidence relevant to practices and pedagogy, shedding light on research question #2.

In addition to the documents I collected on my own or requested during the interview, all of the participants pointed me toward some of their published writings at different points during their interviews, referencing works that were relevant to the topics we were discussing. After the interviews, some of the participants included these pieces in the documents they sent me. One participant even shared a work in progress - an unfinished chapter with notes, editing marks, and varying fonts - because it was so relevant to some of the issues we discussed in the interview. After I transcribed the interviews, I made a list of the writings that participants authored and mentioned, located them, and added them to my files. I read all of these pieces, which included chapters, blogs, and articles, and I have cited several of them in this dissertation. However, as I will mention again in the description of my analysis, I did not use that set of documents for the systematic analysis process.

**Selection of Participants**

One of the most challenging parts of the research process was choosing participants; I used purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) to select participants who met the “predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton, 2001, p. 38) that I established for this study. Criteria for inclusion were: engagement with resistance to corporate education
reform and identification as a critical teacher educator who taught undergraduate courses to prepare teacher candidates. I wanted to be sure I had a range of voices, but I also wanted to ensure “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 46; cited Glesne, 2011) by selecting participants who shared these similar criteria. They had to be critical teacher educators, based on the definition and characteristics that I outlined in chapter one; they had to be explicitly engaged in opposition to the corporate reform paradigm of education; and they had to be engaged in the work of preparing future educators.

Selecting the participants that I included in this study was a multi-layered process. During the proposal stage, I had a few ideas for potential participants based on my own research and my own involvement in resistance to the corporate reform paradigm. Along with criterion sampling, I also used “snowball or chain sampling” (Patton, 1990) by soliciting suggestions from committee members and even from my participants. At the end of each interview, I asked participants for the names of other teacher educators who were engaged in similar work. To begin the selection process, I asked faculty advisors to suggest other scholars who were focused on these issues, and I looked through recent programs from the annual conventions of the National Council of Teachers of Education (NCTE) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in order to identify scholars who were aligned with the criteria for this research project. I compiled a list of options and did some research about potential participants to identify ones who most closely met the criteria. I previewed some of their scholarship, looked for evidence of public stances, and searched their faculty pages and curriculum vitae to determine the courses they taught, their level of engagement with the relevant issues, and whether or not they were instructing undergraduate teacher education courses.
I took other factors into consideration as I made these choices, such as geographic location, institutional affiliations, along with variables such as race, gender, and age. The four participants that I selected meet the criteria, so they share obvious similarities, but they also represent a range of voices working in a range of contexts. All of them have taken public stances against corporate reform (see right column of table 2-1), and all of them are critical teacher educators who work with preservice teachers. It should be noted that I interviewed a fifth potential participant but excluded him from analysis and from what is reported in this study because he did not meet the criteria that I had outlined. I learned during the interview that he was not teaching undergraduate students. The table below (see p. 41) summarizes some key information about each participant, their teaching, and the data I collected for/from each one. The right column includes a partial list of the publishing, activism, and organizational affiliations that illustrate how they met some of the criteria outlined for participation in the study. I will introduce each of the participants in more detail in chapter 3.
Table 2-1: Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Scholarship, Public Stances, &amp; Organizing for Resistance to Corporate Reform of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor of Education at University of Washington at Bothell</td>
<td>Documents: - Syllabus, Curriculum, Instruction, &amp; Assessment in Secondary &amp; Middle Level Social Studies, History, &amp; English - Syllabus, Organizational Change &amp; School Reform - Autoethnography Assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Denisha Jones</td>
<td>Interview: Oct. 3, 2014 (62 min.)</td>
<td>- Education writer, <em>emPower</em> (online magazine) - Organizer and Consultant, United Opt Out - BATS Admin. (Badass Teacher’s Association) - National Education Policy Center (blog post) - Organizer, Save Our Schools march - Network for Public Education, invited speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Julie Gorlewski</td>
<td>Interview: Aug. 20, 2014 (46 min.)</td>
<td>- Reclaiming the Conversation on Education, video interview - Reclaim AERA organizer and leader - Co-Editor of <em>English Journal</em> - Numerous publications that outline the influence of neoliberalism on education and the negative impacts on teachers and teaching - Public writings and stances against EdTPA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Data Analysis Process**

Maxwell (2005) contends that “the experienced qualitative researcher begins data analysis immediately after the first interview or observation” (p. 95) and emphasizes the close relationship between data collection and data analysis. I used memos to track the collection and analysis process and to “test concepts and relationships” throughout the process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 11). I kept a notebook and wrote memos to track much of the research process, especially the steps and stages of analysis. I wrote my first analysis memos immediately after each interview; I described the tone and topics covered, highlighted notes I had taken during the interview, and jotted my initial impressions of the participant and the interview content in these early memos. I wrote additional memos as I moved through the analysis process.

I utilized an inductive analytical process, consistent with qualitative research design, in order to discover patterns and establish themes. I analyzed the collected data, interview transcriptions and the documents participants shared after the interviews, using open coding techniques and grounded theory methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Straus and Glaser, 1967). Grounded theory is a methodology where the researcher “analyzes the data for conceptual categories” and develops their interpretations and findings based on what is “grounded” in the data (Glesne, 2011, p. 21). In qualitative research, coding refers to the ways that researchers or “index” and “categorize” the data in an attempt to “create a thematic organizational framework” from all of the data collected (Glesne, 2011, p. 194). Coding requires a close reading of the data, systematic
steps for labeling and naming concepts evident in the data, and then discovering patterns, connections and other ways to make sense of the prevailing themes.

Using the interview transcripts and the documents provided by participants, I engaged in a systematic process of analytic coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) in order to determine patterns. I started my process with the interview transcripts, and used those codes to analyze the documents. I analyzed data for each participant individually at first, to look for themes within each case, and then I did an analysis across cases to identify common themes among them. I engaged in deliberate, organized phases of analysis, working in stages that moved from line-by-line marginal notes toward the identification of the themes that I describe in the reporting. Even as I moved forward through the stages, I maintained an iterative process and kept going back to compare and rethink new discoveries with each layer of analysis. In the first round, I suspended my lens and tied to write notes that indicated a line-by-line summary of big ideas for each of the interview transcripts. Then I looked for common themes that were repeated within each interview transcript and across the participants.

Based on these preliminary stages of analysis, and guided by the research questions and my theoretical perspectives, I identified eight concepts that represented a thematic approach to making sense of the initial line-by-line coding of the interview data: 1) broader social issues 2) contested issues in education 3) reading/connecting 4) frustrations in the field 5) critical 6) goals of teacher education 7) practices in teacher education 8) context. These eight categories represent topics that were discussed most often in the interviews; the chart below (see table 2-2) explains how I understand each of these themes and some of the ways that they were represented in the data.
In the next round of analysis I used different colors and markings to track each of these eight themes in the interview transcripts; this tracking hinted at some ways the themes overlapped and intersected. I ended up marking some sections with two – three colors and codes. These places of overlap helped me to begin to make sense of how to organize the data into a manageable number of themes and subthemes for reporting.

Table 2-2: Preliminary Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Themes</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broader Social Issues</td>
<td>Sociopolitical issues related to education, but not explicitly about ed.</td>
<td>Poverty, bi-partisan politics, workers’ rights, equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contested Issues in Education</td>
<td>Current debates explicitly about topics in education</td>
<td>Assessment, curriculum, testing, charter schools, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading/Connecting</td>
<td>How scholars, mentors and colleagues influenced their inquiries and beliefs</td>
<td>Awakenings from graduate school readings, attending conferences, colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrations in the Field</td>
<td>Challenges encountered during experience teaching K-12</td>
<td>“Pink slips” and layoffs, testing, discipline/classroom management expectations, lack of respect for service and scholarship, standards, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Explicit references to critical – used to align themselves and/or describe their practices and beliefs</td>
<td>Critical identity, critical theory, critical pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals of Teacher Preparation</td>
<td>Their commitments and objectives for their preservice teachers</td>
<td>Social justice, critical reflection, engagement, scholarship, advocacy, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices in Teacher Preparation</td>
<td>Explicit descriptions of classroom procedures, assignments, etc.</td>
<td>Case studies, authentic writings, course readings, discussion strategies, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>References to geographic location and/or their work environment</td>
<td>Shared values and beliefs, collegiality, influences of conceptual framework, type of institution, local politics, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I used the eight themes that emerged from the interview transcripts to code the documents for analysis, including course syllabi and assignments. In this way, the
Document analysis provided a way to triangulate what was reported in the interviews with other sources and a way to crosscheck my analysis of the interviews. The documents illuminated more details about practices and pedagogy that were not fully revealed in the interviews; as such, analysis of the documents was especially useful for exploring research question #2. Similar to later rounds of the transcript analysis, the document analysis also revealed how the eight themes overlapped and intersected, and a plan for reporting began to emerge.

Finally, I did a relational analysis across all of the transcripts and documents to look for relationships and connections among the eight big ideas. At this stage, I wrote memos and created diagrams/webs to visualize ways to categorize the themes. I also consulted with committee members and colleagues about how to organize and report the data before I finally made sense of an organization that included two major themes and subthemes. In the chapters that follow, I explore these two themes: 1) Politicizing Teacher Education and 2) Humanizing Teacher Education. I explore how participants’ commitments are realized in these themes, and I the look at the ways participants reported enacting a critical pedagogy of teacher education to meet the goals and ideals represented by these themes.

First, I will introduce you to each of the participants in more detail in the next chapter, sharing some of the experiences they discussed in their interviews and explaining how those connect to their commitments as teacher educators and scholars. In introducing each of them this way, I shed light on research question #1: How do teacher educators’ personal stories and lived experiences reflect their political and pedagogical commitments? The stories of the participants, collected through interviews, are one data
point that is especially useful for making sense of how lived experiences contributed to participants’ pedagogies and commitments to critical teacher education.
Chapter 3
Participants’ Lived Experiences and Commitments

This chapter focuses on the research question #1: How do teacher educators’ personal stories and lived experiences reflect their political and pedagogical commitments? An emphasis on their lived experiences functions as a response to the discourse of the corporate reform paradigm of education because it highlights how individuals in a specific context are so significant (Barone, 2007; Carter, 1993; Goodson, 2003; Moss, 2009). Exploring the stories of the critical teacher educators who participated in this study is one way to counter the “grand narrative of social inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxv) that Lagemann (2000) traces back to Thorndike’s ideas of “a science of education.” The grand narrative of education research stems from positivist methodology founded in an “academic bias against subjectivity” (Palmer, 1998). My participants’ stories are counternarratives to the “grand narrative” (Lyotard, 1984) of standardization and measurement. Their stories remind us that “teaching cannot be reduced to technique” because it is “rooted in the identity and integrity of the teacher” (Palmer, 1998, para. 8). The biographical and narrative data reported in this chapter provide a glimpse into my participants’ identities and the personal integrity that influences their commitments to politicizing and humanizing teacher education.

In this chapter, I will describe some of their experiences and then discuss how those reflect their commitments and how those represent the goals and ideals of critical
teacher education. I will introduce each participant with a brief narrative profile, sharing details of their professional and personal paths and stories from the interview data. For each participant, I describe how they came to teaching, some of their experiences in becoming and being a teacher, and their movement toward and work in teacher education. Then, I elaborate on how these lived experiences influence participants’ commitments to some of the key tenets of critical teacher education: 1) Engagement 2) Advocacy 3) Scholarship 4) Reflection. I use these different concepts to highlight each individual participant in this chapter. In chapters four and five I will explore these concepts in more detail and describe how participants work toward these goals.

These four ideals, illustrated by the individuals’ stories and lived experiences, overlap and intersect; collectively, they represent some of the main goals and beliefs of the conception of critical teacher education that I defined in chapter one. These categories are not meant to impose narrow understandings of individual participants’ deep and complex beliefs; nor are they meant to simplify the range of goals and commitments that comprise critical approaches to teacher education. These four ideals are not meant to be reductive, but they do offer a way of reporting this complexity. Collectively, these ideals represent a conception of teacher education that is committed to preparing future teachers as leaders, visionaries, change agents, advocates and knowledge-makers. In chapters 4 and 5, I explore more about how participants realize these commitments by enacting a critical pedagogy of teacher education to politicize and to humanize teacher education. I end this chapter with a discussion about my participants’ shared commitment to enacting critical pedagogy to meet these goals.
Dr. Wayne Au: Organizing for Social Change

Dr. Au described a vivid memory that he has of sitting with a friend in honors ninth-grade world history class. He recalls discussing with his friend how they could “teach the class better.” He continues, “So, I guess I’ve always had it in my head that I wanted to be a teacher.” (personal communication, October 1, 2014) His parents were both educators as well, his dad a college professor and his mom an early childhood teacher. He attended The Evergreen State College, “a progressive, public liberal arts and sciences college in Olympia, Washington” (from the college website, http://www.evergreen.edu/), where he earned a Bachelors Degree in Liberal Studies and a Masters in Teaching. He started college with the belief that teaching was a “viable path” that “suited” him. He clarifies:

I needed work that was going to be with people, and I needed work that was fundamentally going to be about improving the world, and so teaching was a good fit for me. And I also knew from the beginning that I wanted to work with the toughest-to-reach kids as a high school teacher. And, so I started working for Upward Bound Programs. (personal communication, October 1, 2014)

He described his work with Upward Bound as a “litmus test.” Through that experience, he realized he “loved the students and loved working with them,” and at that point, he knew for sure that he could be a teacher. When asked about professors or readings that influenced him during his teacher preparation, he replied, “Evergreen is Evergreen, and so it tends to have a very critical focus. For instance, in one of my first introductory courses, I remember reading Freire. And that became important for me later. I’ve done a
whole bunch of scholarship on Freire” (personal communication, October 1, 2014). Still, he maintains that it was his experiences - more than course readings or professors - that were the most influential.

In addition to his work with Upward Bound, he credits his field experiences during his undergraduate education as being the most influential on his teaching:

They were really accommodating in terms of student teaching placements, so I was able to pull off working with Linda Christensen… And for an earlier placement here in Seattle, where I live now, they placed me in a school for dropouts, which was right up my alley in terms of my goals as a radical teacher, so those experiences probably shaped me more than any of my individual faculty relationships. (personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Dr. Au had what he describes as the “special opportunity” to do his student teaching with Linda Christensen, a renowned secondary English teacher in Portland, Oregon who has published widely with *Rethinking Schools* about critical literacy and teaching English for social justice. Upon completion of his undergraduate teacher preparation degree, Dr. Au worked as a secondary English and social studies teacher in California. During that time, he began writing for *Rethinking Schools*, and he was also involved in state and national activism:

I was organizing a huge campaign back then called Education not Incarceration, protesting the budget cuts and that the budget prioritized funding for prisons at these really high rates, and increasing funding for them at the same time they were cutting funding for public education. I was very involved in organizing around some of those issues…And around that time I also became involved with
the National Coalition of Education Activists, an organization which had a goal of organizing parents and teachers together… and we were doing a lot of racial justice and social justice work, so I could see the bigger things, the things beyond my classroom. (personal communication, October 1, 2014)

It was ultimately his involvement in organizing, coupled with his growing frustrations as a teacher, that led him to pursue a PhD and to move toward teacher education. He describes this move as both a push and pull. He was pushed by budget cuts in California:

I never planned on being a professor. I never planned on getting my PhD. A lot of that was just part of the circumstances of being in California during the last round of budget cuts. I nearly got laid off several times, and I lost my seniority. You know, it was just really disrespectful. I did feel pushed because of the budget crisis in California, being laid off, that sort of disrespect. (personal communication, October 1, 2014)

He also felt pulled to pursue a PhD as a result of his work in organizing:

Organizing helped give me energy in different ways. It helped me understand the power of being an educator in different ways, and so that kind of organizing came together with my desire to want to understand things better - what was happening at my school and some of my interests in critical pursuits. All of this made me think, maybe I should check out a PhD program and find one that would support who I am and the kinds of things I want to do and who I want to be. (personal communication, October 1, 2014)
He found what he was looking for at the University of Wisconsin, where he studied Curriculum Theory and Education Policy Studies with Dr. Michael Apple. Upon completion of his doctorate, he took a position as Assistant Professor in the Department of Secondary Education at California State University, Fullerton and is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Education Studies at the University of Washington at Bothell. When asked how his students at the University of Washington at Bothell would describe him, Dr. Au replied:

I think they would describe me as radical but they would say that in a positive way, not an insult… And I think they would describe me as being involved. I mean I keep them apprised of what’s going on with me. I’ll tell them I’m speaking here or I’m going to this event to this conference. (personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Dr. Au’s experiences, and his openness about them, contribute to his students’ identification of him as the “involved radical.” His experiences as a teacher-activist for social justice influence his beliefs and approaches to teacher education. When asked about what commitments he hoped students gleaned from his courses, he replied:

I want my students to come out of this and to be critically conscious in a Freirean sense. You know, having the drive to work with the students who are least served and to really understand the full politics of what it meant to be a teacher…I expect them to come out with the disposition of critical self reflection and that’s my fundamental thing and that’s our program’s fundamental thing - that if they’re going to be successful teachers, they need to understand kids, they need to
understand the kids’ communities and then bring that back. (personal communication, October 1, 2014)

**Engagement.**

*I came to understand social justice work on a more national level and to see how people working together could be more powerful in making change.* (Wayne Au, personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Dr. Au’s experiences as an activist and organizer influence his commitment to preparing future educators who reflect on the complex problems that confront us as teachers and citizens of the world. Engagement in this sense refers to involvement, how people living in a democracy have a right, and a responsibility, to engage with issues that affect them and society as a whole. Dr. Au considers civic engagement a goal for teacher preparation and teachers, but he admits that this might not mean taking to the streets with a bullhorn or even resisting a state mandated test. “It might mean seeking the right kinds of books for your students even if those aren’t on the list or in the standards.” Dr. Au hopes that his students realize their power to make change and their responsibility for engagement in a democratic society.

These ideals are shared by other participants. Dr. Jones and Dr. Gorlewski also have experiences in organizing and described how their activist stances impact their commitment to fostering engagement as a goal of teacher education. Dr. Jones is involved in numerous activist organizations aimed at eliminating standardized tests, and like Dr. Au, Dr. Jones also explained how she shares this work with her students as one
way to encourage their engagement: “So, that’s one way, sharing when we have events, letting students know what kinds of things are happening and encouraging them to attend on their own” (personal communication, October 3, 2014). Participants described how their own activism and organizing for change inspires their goals as teacher educators, and they make a case for modeling engagement as one way to realize this goal in teacher education. I discuss this commitment to action and the importance of modeling that for students in more detail in chapter four.

Dr. Denisha Jones: Advocating for Students and Families

Dr. Jones says she “grew up wanting to be a teacher” but adds with a laugh, “there was time when I was twelve and I was a little unsure if I wanted to be a teacher, or a doctor, or lawyer. The funny thing is I’ll be all three eventually. I have my PhD, and now I am working on a law degree” (personal communication, October 3, 2014). Dr. Jones started on her path toward teaching during high school, where she was part of “teaching cadet program” that included childcare classes and an afternoon internship in a first grade classroom during her senior year. She worked in preschools and took some courses at community college before she went on to complete her B.A. in Early Childhood Education at the University of the District of Columbia. She was immediately accepted to graduate school in the McNair Scholars program, a program that supports underrepresented students in graduate school, but she deferred for a year and taught kindergarten. During that year, she missed teaching preschool where “she didn’t have to
follow all of the same rules as public schools.” She explains some of the frustrations she encountered during that year in a kindergarten class in a public school:

We had to start preparing them for the first grade tests, get them ready for this practice test, and that seemed really ridiculous, teaching them how to bubble, teaching them how to set up their area with folders to cover their tests. I was giving spelling tests in kindergarten. It just seemed really, really crazy. (personal communication, October 3, 2014)

She explains how these expectations related to testing compounded the typical “struggles” of a first year teacher. While she anticipated trying to figure out classroom management and some of the other typical concerns of a beginning teacher, she was especially frustrated working in a system that focused on test preparation. A lot of her frustration stemmed from the fact that the school’s structures and expectations conflicted with her own beliefs about child development and education.

I love teaching, but I did not like working in the public school system that year. I was not okay with a lot of the things I was being asked to do to 5-year-olds: Make them be quiet, prepare them for tests, spend less time playing, institute bad behavior management plans because they were too rowdy. (personal communication, October 3, 2014)

She tried to find ways to reconcile her beliefs with the expectations of the public school she was working in. For example, her principal required a reward system. Dr. Jones explained, “I was reading Alfie Kohn, and I was learning about alternatives to reward systems, but my principal insisted, so I put one in place that I could feel good about.”
Despite finding ways to work within the system that year, she still says about the experience: “I doubted myself as a teacher” (personal communication, October 3, 2014).

She wanted to be an advocate for students, but the context she was working in made it difficult for her to reconcile her beliefs with the norms and expectations of the school. One particular story from that year especially highlights her frustration. She describes an incident where she did advocate for a student:

And there were other issues. For example, there was this one little boy who was always late to school, and I had a hard time getting him to work when he got there late because he was hungry, and we still had over an hour until lunch, so I would send him downstairs to get the breakfast, which the state paid for, and they wouldn’t give it to him because he was late. You know, I had to spend time fighting with cafeteria workers, to say I don’t understand. The cereal is sitting right there, the milk is sitting right there, you’ve got an hour until lunch. He’s hungry; this shouldn’t be an issue. I didn’t want to become the kind of person who would think that that was okay, to deny a five-year-old breakfast because his parents chose to bring him late to school. (personal communication, October 3, 2014)

She didn't become the kind of person who would think it was OK to deny a five-year-old breakfast; instead she became the kind of person who advocates for less testing and a more humanizing approach to teaching in public schools. And, she became the kind of teacher educator who encourages future educators to be an advocate for their students and families. The frustrations she encountered prompted her to pursue a doctoral degree and to become a teacher educator.
I had all of these doubts about it, and so I went to grad school, and they immediately had me start teaching undergrad classes, and that’s when I discovered that I actually am a really good teacher, when I’m not forced to make students and learners do the types of things that I don’t think they should be doing. I felt better as a teacher. My students would come to me and they would say you have an amazing way of making things clear and breaking it down and they were really grateful for that… So I realized that teaching at the college level is definitely where I’m supposed to be. (personal communication, October 3, 2014)

She earned her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from Indiana University, and is currently an Assistant Professor of Education at Howard University. When I asked how her students at Howard would describe her, she said, “I think they would say that I see the problems in education, and I want to prepare them for that” (personal communication, October 3, 2014). She elaborates:

I tell them that being an early childhood educator means *constantly advocating* for your students and their families. As children, or as parents of young children, they don't really have a voice about what’s happening, and you, as a teacher, you understand child development and you understand what kids need at that age, so you have to advocate. (personal communication, October 3, 2014)
Advocacy.

_I don't want you to go out there and just teach to the test and do things that you don’t agree with...you have to do what you know in your heart is right for students and their families._ (Jones, personal communication, October 3, 2014)

The frustrations that Dr. Jones experienced as a kindergarten public school teacher have a profound impact on her goals as a teacher educator. She was often conflicted about the expectations of her administrator and of the school’s norms around test prep. She felt like some of the mandates were developmentally inappropriate and that the school had lost its sense of humanity by denying access to breakfast and time for play and other things she believed were essential for kindergarten students. These experiences influence her work as a teacher educator and are reflected in her commitment to advocacy. Dr. Gorlewski expressed a similar conviction; she explained that teachers must “be committed first and foremost to the students, parents, and communities in which they work.” (Personal communication, August 20, 2014).

Similar to engagement, advocacy means taking a stand and taking action on an issue of import. However, engagement, as described above, is more often associated with broader social action, and the kind of advocacy that Dr. Jones and Dr. Gorlewski describe is more localized. In this way, a commitment to advocacy is a commitment to preparing teachers who will take a stand for students and parents within their schools and communities. An important aspect of this kind of advocacy is building trust and building relationships with students and families. Teacher educators can prepare teachers to build
these trusting relationships by humanizing teacher education, a concept I will explain more about in chapter 5.

**Dr. Paul L. Thomas: Building Disciplinary Knowledge**

Dr. Thomas graduated high school “all set to major in Physics.” He said, “I always just assumed I was a Math and Science person, so when a British Lit professor asked me to tutor English it didn't really make any sense to me” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). But that’s exactly what happened when he started junior college, and he agreed to do the tutoring and discovered it was “extremely satisfying.” So, when he transferred to his four-year college, University of South Carolina – Spartanburg (now Upstate), and they asked him what he wanted to major in, he said, “education.” He explained how the advisor had to walk him through it because he was “clueless” and they had to let him that know that he needed to choose a grade level and a content, so “literally on the spot I said education, high school, English. And, they put me in a secondary education program and that’s it” (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

He describes his undergraduate preparation and explains how he thinks that was impacted by trends in education at the time:

I remember what I would call excessive focus on lesson planning and formatting lesson plans, the silliness of writing very detailed objectives and having the right verbs. So, you could already feel that coming. I could already feel the creeping focus that was going to come about testing, and I think my undergraduate
program was impacted by that... the whole idea of what I would call sort of mechanistic and prescriptive standards. (personal communication, August, 2014)

These trends, the movement towards standards and increased testing, were also evident in his first years as a teacher. Dr. Thomas started teaching in 1984, which he describes as “the very first year that South Carolina committed to the whole standards and accountability movement.”

He taught English at Woodruff High School in Spartanburg, South Carolina, the same school that he had attended as a student. He taught there for eighteen years and was department chair for thirteen of those years. He started a doctoral program at the University of South Carolina in 1995, but he was “irritated” by the fact that most people in the program were getting their doctorate in order to get out of the classroom. He says, “I was determined that I was going to get my doctorate and that I was going to keep teaching high school” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). And, he did just that. He completed his Ed.D in 1998 and continued to work at that same high school until 2002, and all that time he “had absolutely zero interest in leaving.” (personal communication, August 14, 2014)

So what prompted his move to teacher education/higher education?

When I asked Dr. Thomas what inspired that move, he laughed and said, “I think that’s really important, but I wouldn’t use the word inspire” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). Similar to what Dr. Au described, his move was as much as push as it was a pull. He was pulled by the desire to engage in scholarship, but he was doing that as a high school teacher and enjoyed teaching 10th graders and coaching. However, he was pushed by frustrations related to the “anti-professionalism and anti-scholarship” ideals
that he felt were prevalent in education. One incident in particular, his first time presenting at a national conference, illustrates this point:

I’m a high school teacher, and I’m going to present at a national conference. And, you know, I had never done anything like that, and I didn't arrange the trip or anything. I didn’t really see what was happening, but when I got back, I found out, after the fact, that the school had actually docked me both my pay for the days that I was gone and charged me for the substitutes, never said a word about it. And, I really became (long pause) …aware of the anti-professionalism and anti-scholarship that was just entrenched in k-12 education. (personal communication, August 14, 2104)

So, in the summer of 2002, Dr. Thomas applied for a position at Furman University, and he has been there ever since; he was awarded full professor at Furman effective August 2015. He says he “applied for that position in part out of anger for how I was treated over going to the conference and doing something scholarly and also because I didn’t have to leave” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). Furman University is near Spartanburg in South Carolina, and Dr. Thomas never intended to pursue a career in higher education if it meant uprooting his family.

It is worth noting here that the position he took at Furman was one that was vacated by Lynn Harrill, a man that Dr. Thomas described as the “most influential person in my life, next to my father.” Harrill had been Dr. Thomas’ high school English teacher, and he has written about how Mr. Harrill inspired him to read something more than comic books. Dr. Thomas first took the high school English position that Harrill left at
Woodruff High School and then went on to take his position at Furman; literally following in his mentor’s footsteps.

He describes the transition to higher education as “really, really hard for a lot of reasons.” He took “a pretty significant pay cut” and would still rather be teaching tenth graders, so, he continues, “I wasn’t inspired to leave. I was pretty much kicked out, was driven out.” Still, the move was a good one for many reasons; he explains:

University work represented for me a professional, scholarship advantage that was extremely compelling in 2002. The teaching and teacher education have proven to be incredibly disappointing. I don't have very many students. I regret that. I love students, and I love to teach...but the professional and scholarship aspects of higher education are outstanding. (personal communication, August 14, 2014)

Although he laments not having very many students and not having them for very long, a topic I’ll discuss more in chapter 5, he is passionate about teaching undergraduates, particularly sharing with them his commitment to scholarship. When I asked him how his students at Furman would describe him, he said, “They will tell you I’m passionate and almost all of them will start with that… So I get credit for passion, and I get credit for knowing what I’m talking about…. I’m a relentless verification person” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). One point that he really tries to make with his students is that even though he is an “overly passionate, overly intense person,” his opinions are based on long-term, well researched, verifiable evidence. He tells them, “Just because I am passionate about it, doesn’t mean I am being emotional about it.” His passion stems from his expertise, and he shares this expertise, gleaned over
thirty years of experience as a teacher and a scholar, with his students and with the public.

**Scholarship.**

*I consider my public work an extension of my teaching. I’m just teaching the public instead of teaching the students at Furman. So I think they need to be taught how to do that. They need to be taught how to be scholars, and they need to be taught how to engage with the public as scholars....You know, I tell my undergrads that the first letter they send home to parents should have citations in it...We have to build these things into our courses. (personal communication, August 14, 2014)*

Dr. Thomas’ experiences fuel his current passion for public scholarship and preparing teachers as scholars. His commitment to preparing teachers as scholars is due in part to the “anti-scholarship” he experienced as a teacher, and it is also a reaction to his own teacher preparation. He laments that all he got to read in his undergraduate and master’s degrees were “synoptic texts.” He explains: “They would tell you about Dewey and maybe give you brief passage in a text book, but you weren’t reading the original, or the full thing. And, that really bothers me. I try to make up for it when I teach undergraduates” (personal communication, August 2014). He describes how he assigns Freire and Foucault to students in his introductory course. He tells them the reading will be difficult, but he assures them they will keep coming back to it and gives his students time and room to make sense of it – and time and room to agree or disagree.

Sharing these seminal readings from prominent thinkers in our field is also a way that Dr. Thomas encourages his student to see that “education is a real discipline,” which
is essential for countering the anti-scholarship and de-professionalization of our field. He makes a case for putting an emphasis on education over certification:

I want to end teacher certification and increase education as a discipline. I think people should major in education. I think we need to drop all the certification junk and let education be a real discipline…We’ve got to build, I think those of us who feel this way, have to build disciplinary based courses that are rich and that deal with the disciplinary knowledge and those disciplinary moves that make our field a field. And we’ve got to help our future teachers be scholars. (personal communication, August 14, 2014)

A commitment to scholarship in teacher education is one way to encourage teacher candidates to realize their beliefs and to begin to build a conceptual framework that supports those beliefs. As such, scholarship is certainly tied to the concepts of engagement and advocacy described above. Teachers need to be prepared as scholars who can and will educate colleagues, parents, and the general public about the pertinent issues in our field. Again, Dr. Thomas laments how this was missing from his own undergraduate experience, and explains how what he missed is what he is now passionate about sharing with his students at Furman:

What I am really upset about is that I fumbled around teaching for about 10 years not realizing that there were entire fields of people and ideas that I agreed with floating around out there, and I was teaching at a little rural high school where I grew up, considered an oddball and thinking that I just was, you know, out on a limb. I didn't have any real framework for the ideas that I had, so I did a lot of stupid things and a lot of contradictory things because I didn’t have the
disciplinary understanding. I wish in my undergraduate program, the whole idea of the politics of teaching had been brought up to me. I do that now, and that’s why I’m maybe overly passionate about that now. (personal communication, August 14, 2014)

Other participants also talked about finding scholars, ideas and readings that helped them to make sense of their beliefs. Dr. Jones describes a similar experience about hearing Alfie Kohn at a conference during her first year of teaching:

He was the keynote for one of our events. It was an amazing talk, and I remember I bought a bunch of his books. So, it didn’t really come through my undergraduate education. I don’t remember reading anything that really stuck with me more than what I started reading during my first year and in grad school. It was in grad school where I started reading Paulo Freire, Maxine Greene, and Deborah Meier. (personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Making these connections helped them to name their ideals and to develop their commitments and their academic voice. One way that they found a way to deal with their frustrations in the field was to “find their people,” to identify and learn from scholars who echoed their own developing ideas and beliefs.

Other participants also reported a similar commitment to scholarship and described how they made connections between their scholarly activities and engagement, a connection I will explore in more detail in chapter 4. Writing is action; Dr. Au and Dr. Gorlewski both described how they were publishing as teachers and how this inspired their move into teacher education and influenced their work as teacher educators. As Dr. Thomas notes, education is a discipline and teachers are the ones with advanced degrees
in the field. Preparing teachers as the ones who can “refute misguided policy,” requires that they are knowledgeable about contested issues in our field and begin to make sense of them as they develop their own informed opinions. I will discuss these goals in more detail in Chapter 4 and in the recommendations in chapter 6.

Dr. Julie Gorlewska: Creating a Safe Space for Dialogue

Dr. Gorlewska describes how she came to teaching “in a round-about way.” When she began college at State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo, she was determined not to be an English teacher, like her mother. She had five majors: musical performance, music education, industrial engineering, English literature, and finally, she earned her bachelor’s degree in English education. She began her career teaching secondary English, and she noticed that “students were disengaged and unmotivated and had somehow changed from being five year olds who were excited about school to fifteen year olds who dreaded school” (personal communication, August 20, 2014). This observation, along with the more practical reason of marketability, prompted her to get her Master’s degree in elementary education, in order to try to “figure out what was happening.” She spent some time working in elementary schools, but she “found that it still didn't answer” her questions.

She took ten years off to raise her children and worked as a parent advocate during that time. She “took on a lot of leadership roles a parent advocate” in order to address some of the issues she saw related to the “stratification of schools” that mirrored the stratification of society based on class and how that contributed to issues of inequity
and unequal access among different schools. She tried to address these roles as a parent advocate and when she went back to teaching, she took on other leadership roles in order to try to address these issues:

When I went back to teaching full time, I became a department chair and coordinator of instructional technology, and got involved in professional development and more and more felt the need to address the challenges that face our field from a position that might offer more impact. I wanted to have more of an impact on the field as a whole and thought that I might be able to that better as a teacher educator. (personal communication, August 2014)

Her leadership, increased involvement, and heightened awareness of the inequities inspired her to want to understand them more: “So, I ended up, while I was back teaching high school, getting my PhD in Social Foundations of Education to try again to figure out the intersections between and among students, teachers, schools, and society.” (personal communication, August 20, 2014) She describes her transition to teacher education as “seamless” and explains how it “kind of grew organically” because she was also working as a coordinator of student teaching and an education adjunct, and she was publishing while she as a high school teacher. One of the pieces that she published about her high school teaching experience was a story about the day that police officers with drug-sniffing dogs came into her classroom, the same day she was following up on a lesson with a discussion about the themes of “power and powerlessness” in The Crucible.

That discussion was interrupted by a “Code 10;” she describes a Code 10 as a “post-Columbine drill to preserve safety under critical circumstances” (Gorlewski, 2006,
Shortly after the “lock down” drill, there was a knock at her classroom door; she opened the door, and “the principal and two police officers, accompanied by a dog, entered the room” (p. 73). At one point the dog became agitated and “its paws swam through one female student’s folder and papers, creating a mess” (p. 74). Another student sitting nearby “glanced at the officer and muttered, “asshole” and was escorted from the room. Julie reflects on this experience in the essay she published about it:

As a teacher, I had never felt more powerless in a classroom. Questions haunted me: Should I have asked the officers to be more respectful of students’ supplies?... Were the officers’ actions inappropriate? ...Was this search constitutional? And, most importantly, what was my role in this situation as a teacher who tries to create a safe space for democratic dialogue? Do I, in school, have the power to create a safe space for critical pedagogy? (p. 74)

She wonders if “she failed” herself and her students that day, when their “safe space” was “violated” (p. 74). She concludes that, “in a sense, it is not our space – if it ever was.” And that “our classroom is a product of our culture” and that “the culture of fear prevailed over the culture of critical pedagogy” that day. (p. 74) This story highlights some of the issues that Dr. Gorlewski was concerned about as a teacher and what she hoped to understand more about in her doctoral program, issues related to the ways that schools mirrored society and how she worked to challenge that and to transform that in her classroom.

She completed her PhD at SUNY Buffalo, and she is currently in her fifth year as an Assistant Professor of Education at SUNY New Paltz. When I asked her about the goals she has for her students at SUNY New Paltz, she says: “One of the things that I
want to teach them about teaching is that teaching itself is a political act, that that it involves power” and one of her main goals as a teacher educator is reflection. She often shares the story of “The Crucible and the Drug Sniffing Dogs” with her teacher candidates as a way to show them how “teaching is filled with thousands of dilemmas every day” and she tells them that “sometimes you are going to make decisions that feel wrong but you always have to reflect on your practice.”

**Reflection.**

*I describe teaching in a school of education as like being in a mirrored world where you are always unpacking, unpacking, unpacking and looking at what you’re doing and reflecting on that from different standpoints.* (personal communication, August 20, 2014)

Dr. Gorlewski’s questions about power and equity and the inquiries she has engaged in over the years demonstrate her reflective approach to her own development as a teacher, her constant becoming. Her experiences and realizations about the stratification of schools, inequity, and power fuel her commitment to encouraging reflection in her students. Her goal to create “safe” places for critical pedagogy demonstrates her commitment to critical reflection, and her willingness to share her experiences and be vulnerable and honest with her students demonstrates her commitment to self reflection. Reflection requires that we ask tough questions, and confront ourselves and society and our place in society. It is imperative that we, as critical teacher educators, create safe spaces for dialogue in order to encourage students to embrace complexities, make sense
of issues, reflect, and ponder possibilities. Critical teacher educators must model a critical pedagogy of teacher education, so as to show rather than merely tell.

**Commitment to Critical Pedagogy**

Dr. Gorlewski’s description of critical pedagogy highlights the intersections among the personal, political, and pedagogical. Catone (2014) describes pedagogy as “the conceptual ethos that surrounds the practice of teaching.” Teachers’ personal experiences and political and moral commitments are a part of that “conceptual ethos.” The concepts that inform and “surround” my participants’ teaching include: scholarship, engagement, advocacy, and reflection. They live these commitments in their public stances and writing and teach these commitments in their preparation of future educators. They all share similar dispositions that contribute to the “conceptual ethos” of critical pedagogy. They describe themselves as radical, passionate, transparent, kind, honest, and deeply committed to their students and their teaching.

Critical teacher educators need to “walk the talk” and demonstrate our beliefs, goals, and ideals through our approaches to teaching. Ladson-Billings (cited in Torres, 1998) reminds us that (p. 202) “it is incumbent upon us, those of us who call ourselves critical, that we have to be good teachers, because that’s the access that the majority of the students have to us - through our pedagogy, not just through our scholarship.” Similarly, Apple (cited in Torres, 1998) reminds us of the significance of teacher educators as teachers: “I am still a teacher, and all of us, no matter what we are in the academy, are teachers, first and foremost. No matter how much we write, we are
teachers. That’s our profession” (p. 29). A professor of education is a professor of pedagogy, one who is committed to the art and science of teaching.

In addition to their commitments to the ideals I have outlined in this chapter, all of my participants described their sincere passion for teaching, and all of them explicitly described their teaching in terms of critical pedagogy. They described how they encourage students to read and write the world and how they blur the lines between teacher and student to engage students in questioning and the co-construction of meaning. They described how they are transparent and open with their students and how they strive to create classrooms that model excellent teaching as well as living with respect, integrity, and compassion. Their commitments to engagement, scholarship, advocacy and reflection – and the approaches they take in their teaching to realize these goals – exemplify the ideals of critical pedagogy that were outlined in chapter one. The approaches to critical pedagogy reported by participants are varied and in no way indicate any limited ideas about what constitutes “best practices.”

The commitments and ideals that I introduced in this chapter are clearly aligned with some of the key tenets of critical pedagogy, which is “constructed on the belief that education is inherently political” and “grounded” in a “vision of justice and equality.” (Kincheloe, 2008b, p.9). Some of the “inherently political” tenets of critical pedagogy include co-construction of knowledge through dialogue and problem-posing (Freire, 1970) and the goals of confronting and resisting the status quo (Kincheloe, 2004, 2008a). Love, respect, and compassion for people are also key tenets of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994). There are several characteristics of critical pedagogy. First, it is critical; that is it exposes and challenges power relations and injustices. Second, it
encourages hope through alternative thinking about unjust realities and new understandings about how to change them. Third, it is dialogic and transactional; teachers do not transmit knowledge. Teachers and students work together to engage with ideas and concepts. Finally, critical pedagogy’s ultimate goal is transformation for teachers, students, and society.

A critical pedagogy of teacher education calls teachers (teacher educators) and students (prospective teachers) to action. In the next two chapters I explore these key tenets of critical pedagogy through two broad themes: politicize teacher education & humanize teacher education. All of my participants identify as critical pedagogues and described enacting a critical pedagogy of teacher education that that is aligned with their commitments. In the next two chapters, I provide more details about the concepts introduced in this chapter and delve into research question #2: How do teacher educators describe their enactment of critical pedagogy to encourage alternative thinking to the predominant corporate reform paradigm of education?
Chapter 4
Politicize Teacher Education

In critical pedagogy the theoretical domain always interacts with the lived domain, producing a synergy that elevates both scholarship and transformative action. (Kincheloe, 2008a, p. 12).

This theme encompasses what I broadly refer to as participants’ political commitments, especially as they relate to scholarship and engagement, two of the ideals that I introduced in chapter 3. That is their commitment to raising awareness about contested issues in education and the social responsibilities of teachers to engage with those issues. To politicize teacher education is to recognize it as a part of a larger social movement with the goals of supporting teacher candidates in their development as autonomous professionals and agents of change who have a prominent role in education reform debates and broader social issues. Pre-service teachers must grapple with education debates and “also concern themselves with issues beyond the classroom walls” (Au, Bigelow, & Karp, 1994, p. 5) because the issues are often inextricably linked. To politicize teacher education is to take up a renewed realization of the social responsibilities associated with the teaching profession. Political teacher education encourages critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) about education and social issues with the ultimate goal of action (Ayers, 2010; Counts, 1932; Picower, 2011; Sachs, 2003; Schniedewind & Sapon-Shevin, 2012) and engagement in participatory democracy (Apple, 2001; Grioux, 1988; Miller, 2012).
Participants described *political* within the context of teacher education as 1) controversial or contested issues and 2) the realization that teaching, and teacher education, are part of the broader sociopolitical context. The goals relevant to these issues include the preparation of teachers as informed professionals and agents of change. Dr. Jones (2013) pays special attention to these goals in her syllabus for Foundations & Urban Education, describing the aims and purpose of the course, she writes about preparing her students as “educational leaders who... function effectively...under highly politicized conditions” (p. 2) and as “change agents for social and societal transformation” (p. 1). Other participants described similar goals in their syllabi and interviews, and they reported how they give attention to these goals through authentic writing and critical literacy. In this chapter, I will outline some of the literature that supports taking a politicized approach to critical teacher education, and I will share participants’ explicit descriptions of how they understand political stances in teacher education in order to analyze how their voices mirror and expand the literature. Finally, I will share some of the ways that participants actualize their commitments by describing some of the ways that they enact critical pedagogy to take up the goals of politicized teacher education.

**Raising Awareness about Contested Issues**

*All things are subject to interpretation. Whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth.* - Friedrich Nietzsche
One shared goal of participants, and a crucial aspect of politicized teacher education, is to prepare teachers as visionaries and scholars in the field by providing them with opportunities to explore contested issues that are often taken for granted as truths. In this way, teacher candidates are encouraged to think critically about multiple perspectives and to form and defend their own opinions as conscious “consumers and generators of research” (Jones, 2013, p. 2). Exploring debates, rethinking neutrality, and challenging assumptions are key tenets of critical-political teacher education. To politicize teacher education is to eschew neutrality and give attention to the different ways that ideological and philosophical viewpoints influence our understandings of teaching and learning. Developing teachers as informed leaders and political actors demands an awareness of contemporary debates about school reform and education policy. Because any theory is “grounded in a certain set of values and beliefs” (Torres, 1998, p. 3), there is no such thing as “neutral.” Exploring the debates and encouraging prospective teachers to take stances is essential in order to raise awareness about the political nature of the profession and to illustrate how teachers can engage in the politics of their profession.

Critics of political teacher education maintain that neutrality should be the goal of teacher preparation. This presumption of neutrality assumes that the teaching profession is more akin to the ideals and goals of the “teacher as technician” model where policies and structures are accepted and implemented without question. Dr. Gorlewski describes how she counters this presumption and encourages her students to see how they can engage with curriculum and assessment as experts rather than uncritically accept and deliver a product:
I try to teach them that curriculum is a contested thing; that it is contested, that it involves power; it involves engagement. It is not something that is just a product that is handed to you and that you deliver to students. I want them to understand that assessment is also a conversation; again not a product. That’s one of the first things I think it’s very important for them to understand…I want them to understand that teaching itself is a political act. (personal communication, August 20, 2014)

Her emphasis on engagement and conversation illustrate her commitment to preparing students to reconsider their views of educational concepts like curriculum and assessment as “products” to be consumed by teachers and to imagine how they can engage with these constructs as autonomous professionals and knowledge-makers rather then mere consumers and distributors. Proponents of politicizing teacher education, like the participants in this study, realize that issues like assessment and curriculum cannot be neutral because education and teacher education are situated within significant historical, political, and societal contexts and “that obediently following the mandated curriculum is not neutral, but rather is siding with the status quo” (Picower, 2011, p. 1114).

Understanding the politics and debatable issues of education means understanding how power contributes to assumptions about the status quo and truths we have taken for granted. Dr. Thomas explains, “I badger them that everything is political. We start with that, and I come back to it every class. Politics just means negotiating power. If you have humans involved, it’s political” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). Similarly, Freire (1985) reminds us that, “washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral” (1985, p. 122).
Students need to be reminded that to “side with” the dominant structures is taking a stance, so going along with the status quo is not neutral. That is not to say that prospective teachers might not still choose to “stand with” the ideals and policies of the predominant corporate reform paradigm, but to politicize teacher education is to encourage them to critically reflect on the status quo and engage with other perspectives in order to make informed decisions about where they stand on contested issues. Heightened awareness about debatable issues and understanding challenges to the status quo are goals of critical political teacher education, which seeks to illuminate possibilities beyond readily accepted constructs.

Participants described how teacher education can raise critical consciousness about power and contested issues as a way to encourage pre-service teachers to realize that issues which are often taken for granted are actually contested issues. In this way politicized teacher education emphasizes why questions over how questions and endeavors to prepare educators as visionaries and leaders in the profession who are poised to challenge the status quo and equipped with a heightened awareness of alternative possibilities. Dr. Thomas elaborates about the importance of asking why instead of how in his comments about the so-called grammar debate in teaching English Language Arts. He says:

I love that in 1946 Labrant says we now have hundreds of studies that show isolated grammar doesn’t work. I mean, think about that, in 1946 we had hundreds of studies!... I have a colleague who I care for deeply who argues with me that I should present both sides of the debate about teaching grammar. I keep telling him there are not two sides, that there is over 100 years of evidence which
shows that teaching grammar in isolation doesn't work, so there are not two sides. So, when I present this to my classes, telling them here, this what we know…they struggle with it. They find that very upsetting. (personal communication, August 20, 2014)

He implies that he wants students to ask why grammar is taught in a particular way – an approach that has been largely debunked by research – instead of merely asking how to teach grammar. He describes how he encourages students’ critical analysis of particular policies, practices, and assumptions that are often taken for granted in schools. Furthermore, he explains how he hopes that students will make decisions and take stances based on informed decisions, not assumptions and certainly not because he told them to. This clearly indicates two related ideals shared by other participants: 1) preparing teachers as informed scholars who can engage in public debate with reasonable warrants to support their claims and 2) encouraging pre-service teachers to formulate their own informed opinions based on evidence rather than assumptions or indoctrination. Dr. Jones explains:

I am always letting them know that we’re open to discussion… I let them know that they can challenge me. That’s the one thing I want them to know that I am presenting a view, but they don’t have to adopt my view. I just wanted to say this is one perspective, and I want them to challenge. It’s not about whether you agree with me or you disagree with me, but I want you to be able to voice your opinions, to explain why you do or don’t agree with what you see happening in the classroom and in these news reports. (personal communication, October 3, 2014)
This quote reinforces and shows the connection between those two important ideals prevalent in this theme. Informed teachers should voice their opinions, and those opinions should be formed based on their own exploration of the evidence. Dr. Jones elaborated on this with another example:

You know, there are the Common Core Standards, and I don’t think the standards are so great. I have them [students] compare Common Core Standards to Virginia standards and Maryland standards, so they can get a feel for what’s different, and develop their own thoughts about it. (personal communication, Oct 3, 2014)

Dr. Au describes a similar approach to the same topic: “I’ve written a couple of pieces that are critical analysis of Common Core policies and standards, and I want them [students] to read those and know that they can be critical about what I think.” He explained, “I’m very open with my politics with my students, but I don’t demand that they share my sensibilities.” These comments indicate participants’ heightened awareness about the need to pair critiques with support for students’ development of their own conclusions. Dr. Thomas also described his commitment to this ideal:

One of the most influential folks for me was Joe Kincheloe...He says, ‘Critical pedagogy wants to know who is indoctrinating whom.’ I love that line because we are the ones accused of brainwashing or being ideological. The traditionalists are being ideological, but it looks like the norm of what’s accepted in society so it seems objective.” (personal communication, August 14, 2014)

These efforts to encourage teacher candidates to make informed decisions – and to express them as leaders in the profession – is especially important in the current era of the corporate reform paradigm because the discourse of education reform is often
presented as truth in the media and those “truths” are likely to be claims made by supporters of the reform agenda without any input from professionals and experts in the field (Malin & Lubienski, 2015). As such, it is imperative that prospective teachers thoughtfully engage in debates as critical thinkers and knowledge-makers rather than merely consumers of what is presented as the status quo and truth in media forums that largely ignore the experiences and opinions of teachers and professionals in education.

Informed, and armed with a nuanced understanding of multiple perspectives, teachers can add their voice to the public debates about education policy, specifically corporate education reform.

To politicize teacher education also includes the recognition of how schools and their policies, practices, and assumptions are tied to broader social norms in order to begin to make sense of the social factors and ideologies that contribute to the policies and the practices. Carr & Kemmis (1986) echo these convictions:

Too often, schools take the structure of society for granted rather than treat it as problematic, even though it is a human and social construction. For schools to accept the assumption that our social structure is ‘natural’ or ‘given’ is to rob education of its critical function and to deprive schools their critical role. (p. 222)

Our current predominant cultural values, which privilege corporatization and privatization over collective public entities, are evident in schools and the policies that guide them. As such, in addition to challenging teacher candidates’ assumptions about assessment and curriculum and other contested issues, political teacher education also needs to provide preservice teachers with opportunities to consider why those policies
and structures persist and to question the broader political ideologies that are behind
them.

Engaging in the Broader Context

_The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action._ - Herbert Spencer

Another goal of political teacher education is to prepare teachers who recognize
the connections between the norms of schools and social constructs and to engage with
these broader social issues as informed educators and agents of social change. These
goals are based on the belief that schools should be transformers (rather than transmitters)
of society and that teachers can and should act as change agents to reconstruct society
Apple (2013) asks, “Can education change society?” Participants’ response to this
question is a resounding yes.

Rethinking constructs that are taken for granted can disrupt the “social and
cultural reproduction in education” (Torres, 1998, p. 15) and ultimately move towards a
more ideal society. A critical perspective assumes that the inequities and injustices in
society are caused by a schism between the ideal and what is taken for granted or
“natural,” a schism between what is and what could be (Ayers, 2010). This is not to say
that “education by itself can create a new social order” (Brameld, 1966, p. 336), but that
education can and should play a role in moving away from reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977)
towards reconstruction (Brameld, 1956). Rather than reproducing social norms and
inequity, political teacher education disrupts these by raising awareness that leads to
critiques (thoughts), as discussed in the section above, that may ultimately lead to engagement and action. Dr. Au describes his commitment to these goals and how they are connected:

I always thought of teaching as a political act. I see it as a form of organizing essentially, organizing your students, and so I want to raise political consciousness among my students… I want my students to come out of this and to be critically conscious in a Freirean sense, to really understand the full politics of what it means to be a teacher. (personal communication, October 1, 2014)

These goals, aimed toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, assume that schools are agents of socialization – as such, they are prone to reinforcing power structures and norms from society. Dr. Gorlewski describes how uses she uses one question to support her students’ understanding of these connections:

The large research question that I’ve been using is: How are classrooms, students, and teachers affected by *Race to the Top?* So they engage with it from a level that is on multi-layered perspectives…and that is what's happening in classrooms and how is that connected to the larger policy. And, they uncover things that are almost always related to inequity.

Dr. Jones explained how she uses readings by Kozol, Anyon, and Freire to encourage her students to explore issues of class and classism and to “examine all of the various societal factors that contribute to our current state of education” (personal communication, October 1, 2014). Developing teachers as political actors assumes that critical engagement with contested issues in education is inextricably linked to critical engagement with broader contexts and systems. Educators need opportunities to explore
how social issues, political agendas, and education policy intersect in order to be better prepared to engage with these issues at broader levels. Teacher education does not stand alone; it is deeply connected to more general tendencies in educational, economic, and social politics, and education itself is a socio-historical and political event.

Making sense of broader social issues is ultimately tied to the goals of engagement and scholarship and the realization of teachers as empowered scholars who will work towards societal transformation. Dr. Thomas describes his commitment to these ideals:

So, for me, I love the Paulo Freire idea that our job, no matter what discipline you’re in, is literacy, and, trying to tell everybody read the world, re-read the world, write the world and re-write the world. I love that frame because my big argument as a teacher is I want students to act on the world instead of having the world done to them. (Personal Communication, August 14, 2014)

These ideals of critiquing and acting, as described by the participants, illustrate their beliefs about politicizing teacher education by raising awareness about contested issues and power and encouraging prospective teachers to take stances against the ways those are reproduced in schools. The goals of politicized teacher education ask students to do more than grapple with the contested issues; it demands that students consider how they can engage with and act on those issues. Dr. Jones describes how she “take[s] that angle that we’re not necessarily just being critical but that were being advocates for children and for their families” and she encourages her students to think about how they can move beyond blame and to consider how they can act as change agents once they have a critical consciousness of the issues:
It’s that these are the issues, and we have to ask how do we change them? How do we make things better without throwing blame?...You have to ask, what are we going to do?... And so I ask how do we inspire that change? What does that look like? How do we do that?” (personal communication, October 3, 2014)

There is a long history of preparing teachers as political actors and change agents. George S. Counts (1932), a contemporary of Dewey, “likened teaching to social activism” (Breault & Lack, 2009, p. 155) espousing ideas in the early 1900’s that are similar to the goals outlined here. A 1944 study sponsored by the Commission on Teacher Education of the American Council on Education included similar notions and recommended teachers’ “acceptance of social responsibility” (cited in Bullough, 2008, p. 31), and Bramweld (1956), influenced by Dewey and ignited by reconstructionist ideas, also advocated for schools that worked towards social reform. Yet, despite the historical prevalence of these goals for teaching and teacher education, the concept of developing teachers as political actors, as change agents committed to reform and public democracy, remains divisive. It is especially contentious in the current climate of corporate education reform, which labels schools as failing and often positions teachers as the very ones to blame for social ills (Apple, 2001; Schniedewind & Sapon-Shevin, 2012; Sleeter, 2008) rather than as change agents who are working to transform schools and society.

Participants echoed these sentiments about how the current context is especially toxic and difficult for teachers. Dr. Gorlewski described the current context as “the worst time to be a teacher” (personal communication, August 20, 2014) and Dr. Jones tells her students, “I still hope you want to be teachers but I want you to know it might be hard to handle the current environment we are in, where you’re constantly being blamed for
things” (personal communication, October 3, 2014). She doesn't say this to “frighten them away” but to prepare them for the current realities and to let them know that they can do something about it. She published and shared an essay with her students early in the semester titled, Welcome to the teaching Profession. Are you ready to go to War? In that piece, she describes how becoming and being a teacher in the current political context means taking stances against the corporate reform paradigm that de-professionalizes teaching and positions teachers as the ones to blame for society’s ills.

Because of these particular challenges and the heightened tensions and outright hostility that teachers are inundated with in the current context, participants described their commitment to modeling activist stances for their students. Dr. Au describes how he models this and he points toward our cultural tendency to be apolitical if not anti-political.

I also share stories about my research and speaking engagements...they don’t really have models of what it means to be a person who is really involved in civic life you know? That’s something that I think exists in other countries but here mainstream society is very apolitical in some ways. Were anti-political even, and I want my students to see me as a model through those stories, with me sharing my experiences of what I’m doing, I want them to understand what does it look like to be a at least a semi-active political person in the world. (Au, personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Movement toward civic engagement and action is an antidote to conceptions of teacher education that view teaching, even just living in a democracy, as apolitical. Dr.
Jones expresses a similar sentiment about our desire to eschew the political and how she addresses this with her students:

We want to say it’s not political, but it’s very much political, and if you’re going to reject your political responsibilities, then you’re doing the children in your classroom and their families a disservice. So, I have them research an issue that’s important to them and research organizations that are working on that issue legislatively and then write a letter to either one of their elected officials back home or to Congress Woman Eleanor Holmes Norton, Washington DC representative, about the issue. (personal communication, October 3, 2014)

Here, Dr. Jones describes the “political responsibilities” of teaching and begins to discuss one way that she enacts critical pedagogy related to the politics of teaching, moving towards answering research question #2: How do teacher educators describe their enactment of critical pedagogy to encourage alternative thinking and to challenge the predominant corporate education reform paradigm?

**Critical Pedagogy to Politicize Teacher Education**

“It is difficult for many teacher candidates to understand and embrace the idea of teaching as a political activity and the teacher as a political actor who has the potential to be involved in larger efforts to challenge structural inequities of schools in schooling. This has important implications for how the curricula and programs of teacher education are designed and for the expectations we have for teacher candidates and new teachers.” (Enterline, et al., 2008, p. 278).
In addition to explaining their political commitments, participants also reported how they encouraged teacher candidates to “understand and embrace teaching as a political activity and the teacher as a political actor” by enacting critical pedagogical approaches to meet these goals. What is reported here does not address teacher program design, but it does shed light on how the curricula of teacher education courses can be aligned with a commitment to politicizing teacher education. As described in this chapter, conscientiation and action, confronting the status quo, are some of the key tenets of critical pedagogy that are most relevant for politicizing teacher education. Participants provided additional evidence and details about how they enact critical pedagogy to meet these goals during the interviews, and in the syllabi and assignments they shared. What is reported here illustrates what works for these critical teacher educators in their specific contexts as they find ways to address the goals and content of politicized teacher education; the assignments and approaches described below are not prescriptive and should not be perceived as “best practices.” I explore how participants report enacting a critical pedagogy to politicize teacher education through two approaches: authentic writing and “reading the word and the world” (Freire, 1970).

**Authentic writing.**

In her description of the letter writing assignment described above, Dr. Jones goes on to explain more about the outcome; she excitedly describes how her students got responses, “an actual response that said things like: I appreciate what you said in your letter and let’s talk about this… And so, over the long run, I think they’ve started to
realize that it’s a valuable opportunity” (personal communication, October 3, 2014). The value they realized of this opportunity is due, in large part, to its authenticity. Authentic writing, writing that is crafted for a genuine audience and purpose, is one way for pre-service teachers to realize the goals of critique and action. The authentic writing assignments described by participants represent a commitment to scholarship and engagement, and they model “problem posing” (Freire, 1970), a prominent idea in critical pedagogy. Problem posing involves exploring issues through a dialogic approach and then the acting on those ideas. In the assignment Dr. Jones described, students formulate their own ideas, rather than rely on ideas that are transmitted by the teacher, and then share their ideas in authentic writing, a form of action.

Dr. Thomas describes a similar assignment that has an authentic audience and positions teacher candidates as knowledge-makers who can engage with the public about their professionalism and beliefs; he explains, “Their mid term is writing a public commentary in a blog format, so they use hyperlinks. They take an issue the public misunderstands in literacy and explain why it is misunderstood” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). He elaborates on the purpose of this assignment and explains how important assignments like this can be “because they [students] need to be taught how to do that. They need to be taught how to be scholars, and they need to be taught how to engage with the public as scholars” (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Both of these assignments represent engagement; students engage with a contested issue and engage with the public about that issue through action, through writing. I draw from Palmer here in my understanding of “public;” he writes that to “go
public is to enter one’s convictions into the mix of communal discourse” (Palmer, 1992, p. 6). Dr. Thomas’ and Dr. Jones’ students do just that: they add their voices to the mix with these authentic writing assignments that require students to formulate their opinions and share them in such a way that they are in conversation with the public. Dr. Thomas describes how this authentic writing “helps our profession.” He tells his students that, “if they can go into the public and present themselves in a scholarly way, it raises their value” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). He asks his students to be “proactive” and suggests that they anticipate counter arguments by presenting themselves in a “scholarly manner” from the beginning. He suggests that they take up this proactive stance with their letter home to parents on the first day, which he suggests should include a list of citations.

In another from of authentic writing, Dr. Gorlewski describes an assignment that encourages her students to “write a letter to your future self.” In this letter, students are to synthesize course readings and demonstrate how those “inform your teaching practice” (p. 8). This assignment, which connects reading and writing, also demonstrates how we can prepare prospective teachers as empowered be scholars who can clearly articulate how their beliefs and practices are informed and supported by research and theory.

**Reading the word and the world.**

When I asked participants to describe some lessons or projects or resources that exemplified their commitments to a political-critical pedagogy, all of them described the readings that they use in their courses and discussed how those contributed to discussions
and helped them to address political issues. Dr. Thomas replied: “It’s what I have them read. That’s the common thread.” He added: I’m very text-based when I think about how to organize an education course. It’s designed around the reading list.” Similarly, Dr. Jones remarked that she reaches many of these goals through “the readings that we have and then the discussions about them that we have in our class” She continues:

I taught that course [Urban Foundations] trying to get them to examine all the various societal factors that contribute to our current state of education, so we explored issues of class and classism. I had them read Jonathan Kozol a couple of chapters from Savage Inequalities, and had them read Jean Anyon. Her research was just phenomenal, to understand how class issues are reproduced in the school systems. Also, I did have them read some Paulo Freire and Pedagogy of the Oppressed. We discussed the banking theory of education and what that looks like. (personal communication, October 3, 2014)

Dr. Au describes how he uses course readings to inspire understandings about the debates in education policy, particularly, the corporate reform paradigm:

I used Karl James’ book So Much Reform So Little Change. We also read Ravitch’s Reign of Error, and we used Apple’s book on education and society. And so I wanted students to understand the issues in public education more deeply, to look at the discussion and debates around reform, and then thinking about what your power is as an educator. You know, what can you do to change things? (personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Dr. Au explains how he sees the ways that these readings can be tied to raising awareness and to action because he asks the students to consider their power in changing
things based on what they learn from the readings. Just as important as what they read is how they read. Dr. Au described how his students read the books listed above with a critical lens and to consider how they can take action.

Another approach to reading with a critical lens – to read the world and re-read the world – is by providing students with multiple perspectives and multiple genres. Dr. Thomas explains some of the ways he does this:

I immediately think of how different works, especially different media and genre, inform or can be about the same topic. So, we do a lot of that...I bring in different types of texts, and it’s kind of in tune with the idea of taking a critical view of the world. (personal communication, August 14, 2014)

“Taking a critical view of the world” means making room for multiple genres and medias and especially for multiple perspectives. He says, “I use a lot of Maxine Green. I like her because she blends literary references with scholarship” (personal communication, August 2014). Dr. Jones describes how she also provides opportunities to explore different perspectives and alternative interpretations of complex issues, so that her students can begin to make sense of their own opinions:

I would share news with them about things related to corporate education reform.

I also had them watch some documentaries. They all thought Waiting for Superman was a great film, and then I had them watch The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman, and then we could have a really honest debate about it. (Jones, personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Multiple perspectives and multiple genres provide opportunities to formulate opinions and make sense of issues, especially multi-faceted, contested issues in
education. Another way to critically read is by making multiple connections to a single text with an interdisciplinary approach. Dr. Gorlewski and Dr. Au explain how they use a single text to reach numerous goals of critical literacy within the interdisciplinary courses they teach.

In my curriculum and assessment course, which is both undergraduates and graduates, students are required to create a unit. The units themselves are interdisciplinary – which in itself is kind of shocking, most public schools don't have the opportunity to do that. These units are based on a text, a particular text. It is based on the idea that all of the teachers in the school have been asked to create lessons and a unit that has been inspired by a particular text. I got this idea from my colleague, Tom Meyer. And so the first thing you can do is choose a text that is somehow engaged in the political process in a direct way. And the text I’ve been using most recently is *Eating Animals* by Jonathon Safran Fromer, which is a nonfiction book about the food industry, and it’s also a memoir. So, everyone reads the book and we talk about our connections to the text and then the students create a lesson and unit based on that. And, because the book itself is an illumination of the corporate infiltration into our food and therefore into our lives and our bodies, it sets itself up to explore those kinds of things. (personal communication, August 20, 2014)

This interdisciplinary approach, and the title she chooses, provides students with multiple ways to read the word and the world. Opportunities to make personal connections, to explore critiques of corporate infiltration, and the freedom to design a unit that connects these ideas to content demonstrates key ideals of critical literacy. Dr.
Au teaches an interdisciplinary English & history education course, and he uses a single text to cover methods and pedagogical approaches and, at the same time, to introduce critical perspectives:

This quarter I’m teaching my methods course, and it is actually an interdisciplinary social studies language arts course that I’m teaching, and I’m using Linda Christensen’s book, *Reading Writing and Rising Up*… So we’re working through that kind of [social justice] stuff in conjunction with the teaching and how to work with reading comprehension and having good discussions in class… So there ends up sort of being a parallel thing where I’m asking the students to look at how the quality of teaching plays out in classrooms and in practice… School stuff… At the same time that I am asking them to think about methods, I am also introducing critical perspectives along the way. (personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Participants described how the purpose of the assigned readings is to encourage students to think for themselves, and also to realize that thinking and meaning making come from participation in dialogue with others and from exploring a range of perspectives. By encouraging prospective teachers to read and write the world, critical teacher educators prepare empowered teacher scholars who learn to challenge the world as it is and use their knowledge to change it.
Chapter 5
Humanize Teacher Education

*Critical pedagogy believes that nothing is impossible when we work in solidarity and with love, respect, and justice as our guiding lights. Indeed, the great Brazilian critical educator, Paulo Freire always maintained that education has as much to do with the teachable heart as it does with the mind.* (Kinchenloel, 2008b, p. 22)

At the risk of oversimplifying the complex issues explored in these two themes, one could argue that the goals and practices described in chapter 4 – to politicize teacher education to develop teachers as engaged scholars – had “much to do” with the mind and that the “teachable heart” is the focus of this chapter. To humanize teacher education is to realize the ways that teaching is relational, contextual, and personal and to prepare prospective teachers for teaching with “love, respect, and justice as our guiding lights.” This theme encompasses what I broadly refer to as participants’ principled commitments to teach with integrity and to teach in a way that “honors the dignity of all humans” (Thomas, personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Participants’ commitments to these ideals are actualized in the ways they enact an engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994) and a pedagogy of kindness (Thomas, 2014) in order to demonstrate how empathy, justice, mutual respect, and compassion are also key tenets of critical teacher education (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Kinchenloel, 2008a). Engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994) is teaching that transgresses the social hierarchy of schools and moves beyond the typically prescribed boundaries for the role of teacher and student. It is teaching “in a manner that respects and cares for the soul of our students” (p 13). Engaged pedagogy fosters freedom and dialogue as students and teachers interact with
one another in caring, empathetic, and honest relationships. Thomas (2013c) describes similar attributes and goals in what he calls a pedagogy of kindness, which rejects paternalistic, deficit views of students because there is “something sacred about childhood, about innocence. Something sacred that deserves and should inspire all humans toward kindness” (October 27, 2013, para. 30).

Within this theme, I explore participants’ commitments to advocacy and reflection and how those are realized through a critical pedagogy of teacher education that embodies the ideals of an engaged pedagogy and a pedagogy of kindness. To humanize teacher education is to foster continuous reflection and whole-hearted advocacy with the goal of preparing teachers who are focused on equity, relationships, and student-centered classrooms. Participants described humanizing teacher education in their commitments to preparing teachers as advocates for students and their families and as reflective practitioners, which includes self-reflection and critical reflection. Participants’ pedagogies for humanizing teacher education are evident in the interview transcripts and in their syllabi and assignments, which illustrate commitments to building relationships, fostering student-centered classrooms, and being open and transparent with their students.

In this chapter I will explain how the corporate reform paradigm contributes to a dehumanizing context for education, and I’ll describe how advocacy, self-awareness, and critical reflection are antidotes to those dehumanizing affects. Then I will end this chapter with some of the ways that participants describe enacting critical pedagogy to humanize teacher education. Participants described pedagogical approaches aimed at realizing
theses goals in terms of: 1) the ways they build relationships 2) the ways they model student-centered approaches and 3) the ways they are transparent with students.

**Humanizing our Teaching in a Dehumanizing Context**

*I became a teacher because I didn’t want isolated work. I wanted to work with people, and I wanted to impact the students and impact communities, but with more scripted curriculum and more test-based curriculum, you lose the heart of what it means to be a teacher. (Au, personal communication, October 3, 2014)*

In the quote above, Dr. Au describes how it is becoming increasingly difficult to humanize our teaching in a dehumanizing context. Preparing educators to “work with people” – to build relationships and to advocate for those who have been historically marginalized – is essential in order to hold onto “the heart of what it means to be a teacher.” The dehumanizing affects of the corporate reform paradigm and its “test-based curriculum” have a negative impact on students, teachers, and prospective teachers. In this dehumanizing context, students are narrowly viewed as test-takers who demonstrate their value through the test scores they earn, and teachers are reduced to dispensers of content and technicians who dutifully administer top-down mandates purported to raise those test scores.

**Impact on students.**

Students are impacted by these limited views, which narrow the curriculum and have a negative impact on student-centered approaches and other ways to humanize
students’ learning experiences (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Kincheloe, 2008b; Ayers, 2010). Students who have been historically marginalized or come from poverty are even more likely to encounter these limitations as teachers feel more pressure to raise test scores (Au, 2009; Berliner, 2013; Sleeter, 2014; Kohn, 2011, 2014; Thomas, 2013c). Kohn (2011) argues that test-driven reform efforts lead to schools where, “The rich get richer, and the poor get worksheets” (para. 13). Haberman (1991) refers to this as “the pedagogy of poverty” and argues that students from low socioeconomic status often attend schools that prepare students for tests – for compliance and complacency – instead of the dialogue and critical thinking that are part of an engaged pedagogy.

While corporate education reformers talk about equity and maintain that their polices are aimed at equalizing students and schools, the policies they advocate often mean that low-income students in schools with low test scores are subject to a narrowed curriculum of test preparation that undermines authentic learning. When I asked Dr. Gorlewski how she would describe the current context of education, she referred to the problems of this “two-tiered system” in her response:

I would characterize it as a neoliberal, capitalist enterprise that gets more and more neoliberal and more and more oppressive the further down the power food chain you go...a two-tiered system with the schools that are elite embodying the traits that we know would work for all students. The schools that serve children and families of people who are less privileged are oppressive and not engaging. (personal communication, August 14, 2014)

The discrepancy between affluent schools and those that serve students from low socio-economic status is deepened by the current corporate reform paradigm’s focus on
testing. The “oppressive” and “less engaging” approaches are often effective in raising test scores, but this drill and kill approach comes at a cost of student-centered, engaged learning. In this way, it is “possible for the accountability movement to simultaneously narrow the test-score gap and widen the learning gap” (Kohn, 2011, para. 19). Students in the “elite” schools enjoy a student-centered, engaged pedagogy and high levels of authentic learning. Students in the other tier are denied authentic learning in order to focus on skills and ways to game the system with the sole purpose of raising test scores.

This narrow purpose and focus on testing also has a negative impact on other student experiences in school, and particularly impacts those in the bottom tier of this two tiered system. An overemphasis on raising test scores can lead to decreased lunch and recess time and fewer opportunities for art, music and physical education. Dr. Jones described how she has noticed the ways this affects elementary students’ opportunities for social interaction:

I hear from teachers things like they are not allowed to talk in the cafeteria, not allowed to play, not allowed to talk to each other. I see these kids when they get on the bus at 4 o’clock. They are starved for social interaction. It’s horrible that we think that’s okay. Nothing is wrong with these kids, you know, they are being denied basic things that we all had. We act like we can deprive our kids for some need for global competition … It’s horrible. (Personal Communication, October 3, 2014)

Schools need to realize the fullness and richness of students and their humanity in order to make room for them to develop as social beings not test takers. School should be a place where students learn to cultivate social skills and build relationships. Limited
approaches to teaching and learning, and attempts to focus on academic development at the expense of social development, might succeed in raising scores on standardized tests, but they fail to honor the dignity of students. Thomas’ pedagogy of kindness is a subversion of the values of the corporate reform paradigm:

*Teaching the whole child* is often trivialized, and mostly marginalized—even mocked. But the great paradox of honoring the cognitive growth of children and students is that we must create lives and classrooms filled with kindness and compassion *first* before those cognitive goals can matter. Recess, friendships, laughing, reading by choice, art, band, chorus, clubs, athletics—these are the moments of formal schooling that remain with children and teachers because they are filled with emotional and interpersonal *meaning*. (Thomas, 2014b, para. 22).

A pedagogy of kindness honors the affective domain of student learning, and it challenges educational contexts that are dehumanizing and unequal.

**Preparing advocates.**

*I see education as a human right and when educational opportunities are limited or inequitably distributed, then you are infringing on the human rights of people in society and that is a fundamental degradation of social justice.* (Gorlewski, personal communication, August 14, 2014)

Critical teacher educators need to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to make sense of the ways the corporate reform paradigm is a social justice issue that perpetuates inequity in schools and leads to dehumanizing experiences for some of our students. Gerald Hankerson, the President of the Seattle NAACP chapter, also describes
how high-stakes testing, the most public and pervasive policy of the corporate reform paradigm, is connected to issues of social justice. He encourages parents and teachers to refuse the tests for that reason:

The Opt Out movement is a vital component of the Black Lives Matter movement and other struggles for social justice in our region. Using standardized tests to label Black people and immigrants ‘lesser,’ while systematically under-funding their schools, has a long and ugly history in this country. (quoted in Network for Public Education Blog, May 5, 2015)

Corporate reformers insist that their policies are designed to reduce the inequities, especially the opportunity gap, by highlighting schools that are failing. However, their policies, which lead to ranking and sorting, have actually widened the gap, and schools are becoming more segregated and inequities are more pronounced as “failing” schools are closed or taken over by corporate charter schools (Au, 2009; Berliner, 2013; Ravitch, 2011). These dehumanizing policies have resulted in the closing of neighborhood schools, especially in rural areas and urban neighborhoods where schools are often the heart of the community.

Teacher educators have a responsibility to prepare teacher candidates to take up the role as advocates for their students. Cochran-Smith (2009) asserts that:

The bottom line of teaching is enhancing students’ learning and their life chances by challenging the inequities of school and society... Teachers can and should be both educators and advocates who are committed to diminishing existing inequities in school and society. (p. 350)
One way that prospective teachers can be prepared as advocates for students, families and communities is by developing a disposition for empathy in order to understand their students and the complexities of their lives. To be an advocate is to realize the importance of building trusting relationships between teachers and their students and families. Cochran-Smith (2004) defines these kinds of “reciprocal relationships” as “working with individuals, families, and communities” (p. 72).

Building relationships of reciprocity with students requires empathy, and it requires an understanding that teachers may need to take extra time and effort to build trusting relationships with students and families from marginalized communities (Gorski, 2013). Instead of placing blame on parents or students who may seem to be disinterested in schools, teachers who are committed to a pedagogy of kindness must realize the need to work harder to regain trusting relationships with students and their parents who felt marginalized, maybe even traumatized, by their experiences in school.

**Impact on prospective teachers.**

The discourse and policies of the corporate reform paradigm are dehumanizing for teachers too; they are robbed of their professional autonomy, and the narrowed test-prep curriculum leaves little room for co-learning and building relationships. The corporate reform paradigm is a top-down approach that limits teachers’ voices in making decisions that impact their classrooms and their students. Under this paradigm, teaching is de-professionalized, and teachers are expected to take up a technical and transmission
approach to teaching, instead of realizing their creative potential as professionals and knowledge-makers.

This movement toward standardization and accountability, particularly in the form of high-stakes testing, has had a similar dehumanizing impact on teacher candidates. The EdTPA (Education Teacher Performance Assessment) and PPAT (Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers) are two tests that are being used with increasing incidence in teacher preparation, despite a growing number of challenges to them. Earlier this year The Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators (PAC-TE) wrote a position statement taking a stance against these types of “third-party, for-profit assessment systems,” and NAME (National Association for Multicultural Education) has also written a position statement in opposition to the EdTPA. NAME’s opposition pays particular attention to how this test dehumanizes our work and how it threatens social justice education. Dr. Gorlewski has been especially vocal in her critiques of the EdTPA, and you can find an articulate summary of her critiques on Diane Ravitch’s blog.³

Similar to some of the concerns that I have described about standardized tests in P-12 contexts, there is a concern that these packaged, corporate-run tasks will become the “curriculum” of methods courses, student teaching, and internships. Dr. Au wrote about

³ You can read the PAC-TE statement here: https://www.pacte.org/uploads/pdf_news/562
You can read that Dr. Gorlewski’s critique here: http://dianeravitch.net/2013/06/03/what-is-edtpa-and-why-do-critics-dislike-it/
his experiences with this, and Dr. Jones described how she saw this impact on one of her students’ assignments. Dr. Au described his experiences in an article he wrote for an issue of *Rethinking Schools* (Summer 2013) that was dedicated to conversations about high stakes performance tests for teacher candidates:

Instead of focusing on good teaching, our conversations are quickly turning to how to prepare our students for the EdTPA. Our student teaching seminars increasingly emphasize the test's logistics, choosing the right kind of video segment for the test, choosing the right kind of unit for the test, making sure everyone is using the same language as the test...Without a doubt, the edTPA is standardizing our teacher education program, and I'm not sure it has been for the better. (Au, 2013, p. 25)

One of the main critiques of these required high stakes tests and increased standardization for teacher education is the ways that they lead to a narrowing of the goals and curriculum of teacher education. Dr. Jones explained how newly adopted standards at Howard University have had this affect on the action research projects that her elementary preservice teachers engage in during their field experience. She explained how new standards mandated by CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) require teacher candidates to demonstrate how they have an impact on student achievement. She explains:

Now all of our action research projects have to be that way. No more studying things like behavior and relationships. It’s got to be quantifiable impact on student achievement. Pre and post-test for everybody... I’m sad that we have to make
them do that. They should have their choice to study something that’s of interest to them and not be limited to that. (personal communication, October 3, 2014)

Narrowing the focus of the action research projects in this way highlights the negative impacts on teacher education and prospective teachers. This narrow view of what “counts” as action research puts an emphasis on measured scores, and students are reduced to numbers. It also narrows what “counts” as professional development for prospective teachers with “reductionistic proficiencies and competencies” limited to quantifiable objectives (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 10). Dr. Jones’ teacher candidates can no longer study affective topics or other issues that explore themselves and their students as complex humans and the relationships they develop with their students. The narrowing of teacher education expectations, described by my participants, demonstrate the ways that standardization and reductionist technical training can negatively impact the development of teachers who will take up an engaged pedagogy and a pedagogy of kindness.

Outsourcing the assessment of our teacher candidates to strangers negates the significance of context and human relationships, and it sends a message that assessment is a product rather than a conversation. Dr. Gorlewski, along with Barbara Madeloni, also contributed to that same issue of Rethinking Schools. In their article, they share their experiences with the EdTPA and their arguments against it because of the ways it dehumanizes teacher education. They call for resistance to these tests as a way to “create new spaces for imagination” and to make room for questions and alternative possibilities in teacher education. They write:

We do not need more technocratic efficiency, simulated objectivity, or corporate incursions. The troubles of teacher education are human troubles, requiring
human answers: conversations, time, space for conflict, space for appreciation and love, space for humor and uncertainty. Teacher educators, like all teachers, must be free to disagree and develop questions that are not standardized. Teacher education can create possibilities for radical imagination in which we rehumanize the classroom and develop the theory and heart to practice education as freedom. (Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013, p. 21)

Madeloni and Gorlewski point to the ways that resistance and public challenges to the EdTPA can help us to (re)humanize teacher education and to reclaim the heart of teaching. Critical teacher educators need to make time and space to think, challenge, question, and imagine. We need to open dialogues about the ways these incursions counter the goals of critical teacher education and make room for our teacher candidates to explore issues of import and the complexities of teaching and learning. Teacher candidates need the freedom to fail and learn from experience. That freedom is stifled when the goal becomes meeting the formulas that are imposed by a single assessment.

Furthermore, teacher candidates need time and space to explore the ideological and philosophical underpinnings of these tests. What message does it send to teacher candidates when we outsource their assessment to strangers who are paid by a corporation? What does this say about the significance of context and human relationships? How do we encourage our teacher candidates to critically reflect on the implications of purchasing an assessment that is to be used to determine teacher quality?

Participants in this study expressed their disillusionment with these tests and other dehumanizing structures, but they also described how they address these challenges in their work as teacher educators. Specifically, they explained how self-actualization and
critical reflection work together to prepare teachers to question, challenge, and imagine.

Developing teachers as advocates for equity requires individual transformation through self-actualization and a commitment to institutional and societal transformation through critical reflection. Individual transformation begins by challenging students – in teacher education and in K-12 schools – to recognize injustices in our dominant, structural paradigms and to question why those injustices exist.

**Preparing reflective practitioners.**

*I want students essentially to interrogate their own identities within larger social structures and see how their experiences are an expression of broader social processes, and with the constant thread of having the need to understand their kids too. And so it’s trying to make the connection that the personal is political, which is the core of reflection, so that they can see themselves... That’s my goal, to give them a bigger picture of themselves, to make those connections, to see the bigger picture of experiences of their students and even their fellow teachers.* (Au, October 3, 2014)

Reflection demands an examination of experience and questioning existing circumstances to engage in meaning-making (Dewey, 1938). Critical reflection is a collaborative act with an emphasis on rethinking assumptions; it involves learning to make decisions about teaching and learning based upon moral and political implications and an awareness of alternatives (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Generally, the literature indicates the importance of fostering critical reflection around two salient topics: the historical and sociopolitical contexts of schools (Cave & Perencevich, 2008; Morrell & Collatos, 2002; Nieto, 2006; Cochran-Smith 2006) and issues related to culture, equity and diversity (Miller & Kirkland, 2010; Nieto, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Some of the
ways that participants fostered critical reflection about sociopolitical issues was covered in chapter 4. Certainly those issues overlap and intersect with issues related to equity, but I focus on equity in this chapter as one way to make sense of how we can humanize our teaching.

Individual transformation is often the first step towards contributing to institutional and societal transformation (Nieto, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Reed, 2009). Pre-service teachers need opportunities to reflect on their own lives and experiences and to make sense of the world and their place in it. In her syllabus, Dr. Jones describes how, “Students will be challenged to critically reflect on how their own schooling experience, socio-cultural identity, and philosophical beliefs regarding education might impact their pedagogy and success in education contexts” (Jones, 2013, p. 6). Participants in this study are committed to fostering an understanding of self in relation to others in the world. Dr. Au explains how students need to:

Understand themselves as social beings, as cultural beings, to know their identities… And then to bring that altogether to be really reflective about what it means to be a teacher and how they can engage with their students... thinking about the relationships between institutions and people. (Au, personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Prospective teachers need opportunities to explore themselves as practitioners and as human beings if they wish to teach students in a non-threatening, anti-discriminatory way. Critical teacher educators need to prepare prospective teachers to look past a deficit view of culturally and linguistically diverse students and students living in poverty in order to realize ways that they can humanize education for those who have been
dehumanized by their experiences. Rather than “blame” parents or students, students need to critically reflect on the ways that economic and social structures impact students and families.

Reflecting on one’s experiences and moving toward self-actualization are goals of critical teacher education that is committed to preparing prospective teachers to develop meaningful relationships and compassionate understanding of their students. Palmer (1998) describes how knowing oneself is crucial to teaching. He writes:

Teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror, and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge—and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. (Palmer, 1998, p. 1)

Participants are committed to fostering this type of self-knowledge, but they describe how students have difficulty in not “running from what they see.” Speaking about the teacher candidates she works with, Dr. Gorlewski said, “They’re very good students, and I tell them early and often that they are going to have to guard against judging their own students because the system has worked for them” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). She described how she works against “confirmation bias” with her students who think the system is fair, just because the system worked for them. This is particularly challenging because “to question the system is to question their own success, and that's a hard thing to get them to do. I remind them, you have to stretch to reach beyond the boundaries of what worked for you” (Gorlewski, personal communication, August 14, 2014).
Dr. Thomas shared similar experiences in working with his students at Furman: “They are very affluent students who have made straight A’s, and they are very privileged and short-sighed, so the kind of discomfort I cause them is somewhat different.” If students are able to “stretch” and realize the source of their “discomfort”, this self-searching and examination of experiences and assumptions can lead to critical reflection about structural inequities in schools. In this way, self actualization and critical reflection are ways to combat myths about meritocracy, to challenge deficit thinking about students, and to recognize how schools perpetuate the two-tiered system described earlier in this chapter. Through self and critical reflection, pre-service teachers can begin to make sense of structural inequities and to understand how they become advocates for equity and advocates for students. Dr. Au explains how he sees the connections among critical reflection, self-awareness and preparing teachers as advocates:

The thing is if you’re going to serve your kids, then you’re going to have to embrace some form of creative maladjustment because arguably these structures are dehumanizing, and if you’re in that space, then you have to do that, really all of that is just part of having a more humanizing education. So we prep them to be critically aware and self-aware teachers, and then our assumption, which is based on our politics for sure, is that they will have to pick up some sort of creative maladjustment in order to survive as good teachers and to be true to themselves as teachers. I think it’s one of the biggest issues that everybody is facing right now is that teaching is becoming an increasingly boring and relegated job. (Au, personal communication, October 1, 2014)
The “creative maladjustment” (Kohl, 1994) that Dr. Au refers to indicates how teachers need to be resourceful in order to develop new ways to realize the goals of humanizing education in a context that is increasingly dehumanizing. Dr. Au maintains that critical reflection and self awareness are useful for highlighting the ways that education is dehumanizing and to prepare teacher candidates to “survive as good teachers” in an “increasingly boring and regulated job.”

Another important part of what Dr. Au describes here is the belief, the “assumption” that teacher candidates will “pick up” some of the commitments and goals of critical teacher education and apply those to their work as teachers. This assumption, this hope that what we do in teacher education will transfer and be actualized in teaching is one that is shared by all of my participants. Teaching, and especially teacher education, are “future-focused” endeavors because part of our job is to “prepare our students to prepare their students to construct a world that does not yet exist...In a very real sense educators’ work is not for ourselves; ethically, morally, and materially our focus is the future” (Gorlewski, personal communication, 2014). As such, there is a shared hope that modeling a humanizing teacher education can (will) lead to teachers who work to humanize education in P-12 contexts. Participants model humanizing teaching in the ways they are committed to building relationships, creating student-centered courses, and being transparent with their students.
Critical Pedagogy To Humanize Teacher Education

In this section I describe some instructional strategies and approaches that indicate how participants humanize teacher education. But, it is important to note that a humanizing pedagogy moves beyond methods and strategies to encompass the dispositions, underlying beliefs, and personal traits that influence approaches to teaching and learning (Bartolome, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995). A humanizing critical pedagogy rejects “one-size-fits-all” standardized approaches to education and embraces the relational nature and the complexity of teaching and learning. Critical teacher educators who are committed to a humanizing education are passionate and enthusiastic about teaching and learning and work to build relationships and foster student-centered classrooms. They are also open with their students; they are transparent and honest as a way to stay human in their classrooms. In this section, I share examples of how participants describe building relationships, how they foster student-centered classrooms and their commitment to transparency as ways to enact a humanizing pedagogy of teacher education.

Relationships.

Teaching is relational. Peter Taubman writes brilliantly about that, the idea that there is no one algorithm that tells you how to engage with a person in a teaching-learning relationship. (Gorlewski, personal communication, August 20, 2014)
The corporate reform paradigm’s emphasis on standardization, efficiency and competition diminishes the significance of complex individuals negotiating human relationships in specific contexts. To humanize teacher education is to build learning communities where students develop trusting relationships with each other and with the teacher. Critical teacher educators who aspire to prepare teachers to realize the significance of human relationships in teaching and learning need to take steps to build and honor the relationships they have with their own students. Relationships between teachers and students in educational contexts are not easily developed; they are often complicated by the dominant norm that positions the teacher as the one with more power and more knowledge. Forging relationships in these contexts, particularly relationships between teachers and students, requires a suspension of these power dynamics in order to “enable students to move from object to subject position” (Bartolome, 1994, p. 177). As the quote above from Dr. Gorlewski indicates, participants described their commitments to building these relationships.

These commitments are evident in some of their practices and actions, as described in more detail in the following sections, and they are evident in their syllabi, which are imbued with a friendly and personal voice and explicit attention to building a classroom community. Dr. Jones’ syllabi includes a “welcome” section where she introduces herself personally, sharing details about herself and her experience along with what we usually expect to see on a syllabus, course expectations, assignments, etc. Similarly, Dr. Au and Dr. Thomas write to their students in their syllabi, not just for their students. They use a conversational voice to write to their students about the course, even assuaging what they presume might be some students’ anxieties about the class - or in Dr.
Au’s case - what students might dread about the topic. He writes, “Now, in my mind’s eye, I can already see some (many?) of you rolling your eyes on what looks to be a boring class on education policy. Well, you are right, and you are wrong” (Au, 2014, p. 2). In the syllabi for all of his courses, Dr. Thomas includes as section where he addresses his students and invites them to be engaged learners and teachers:

This is your class, a series of moments of your life – where you make decisions and act in ways you choose. Freedom and choice, actually, are frightening things because with them come responsibility. We are often unaccustomed to freedom, choice, and responsibility, especially in the years we spend in school. (Thomas, furman.blogspot.com)

Ladson-Billings (1995) indicates the importance of developing “fluid and equitable relationships” between teachers and students, a key tenet of engaged pedagogy. Modeling this development is an important aspect of humanizing teacher education; critical teacher educators build these relationships as one way to prepare teachers to realize this goal. However, it is especially challenging, often due to time constraints, to establish these meaningful teacher-student relationships in teacher education. Dr. Thomas described how meeting daily over 180 days is more ideal for developing and maintaining relationships. He explained how it was usually in the second semester that he and his secondary students really got to know each other, and he lamented that he didn't have that opportunity for long-term sustained time with his undergraduate students (personal communication, August 18, 2014).

Despite the challenges, participants described steps they take to build relationships with their students. Both Dr. Jones and Dr. Thomas include a required
meeting with the professor outside of class as part of their syllabi. Dr. Thomas describes this explicitly as a way to be successful in the class, to conference about writing, but these one-on-one meetings also imply a commitment to humanizing teacher education by building relationships with students. This may not seem too far out of the norm, but recent statistics indicate that one third of college freshmen report that they never talk to professors outside of class, and one quarter of seniors report the same (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2014). Talking to professors beyond class is certainly one way to build relationships, and it can also inspire students to consider new ways of thinking about the student teacher relationship as well as course material and other conversation topics. This dissertation was, in large part, inspired by a conversation with one of my students outside of class, a required one-on-one meeting that I described in the opening paragraphs. And, it’s worth noting that we met outside of class one additional time – which was not required – to discuss her job search and career path.

These meetings are essential in Dr. Thomas’ courses because he does not assign grades during the semester; he gives feedback and expects students to draft and revise and rethink over the entire course of the semester. In a blog he addressed to his students he writes: “In my quest to honor the essential dignity of each one of you, then, I have fought the good fight against what I feel is deeply dehumanizing—grading” (Thomas, 2014, para 12). He reluctantly assigns a grade at the very end of the semester when students turn in a portfolio of their work: “That portfolio is your argument, your final artifact of representing not only you but also the you that you have become this semester” (Thomas, 2014, para. 14). These practices, the outside meetings and the portfolio,
demonstrate commitments to building relationships and engaged pedagogy that blurs the lines between teacher and student.

Dr. Jones begins the semester by inviting students to write a letter to her on the first day of class, to introduce themselves and to share any anxieties they have. It is worth noting that she shares her own similar letter with them on the first day of class, introducing herself personally and professionally. This assignment demonstrates one way to “honor the dignity” of her students and highlights her commitment to building relationships. By asking about their lives and experiences, she gets the chance to know them as complex individuals, not just students for a semester. By inviting them to share their anxieties, she makes them a part of developing the course curriculum from day one.

During our interview she explained how in the most recent semester, she noticed that her students were writing a lot more about “their anxieties around standardized testing,” so she took their cue to make this a “more prominent aspect of the course” (personal communication, October 3, 2014). Drawing on students to guide the curriculum is an integral part of critical pedagogy. Frerie (1970) refers to this concept of taking ideas from students’ knowledge and interests as “generative themes.” The increased incidence of testing as a topic in their letters demonstrates how generative themes reflect the ways that the “personal lives of students intersect with the larger society” (Kincheloe, 2008b, p. 11). Dr. Jones’ students voiced concerns about an issue that impacted them personally and professionally, and Dr. Jones took their cues to make it a part of their conversations. This practice illustrates how to build relationships and how make room for students’ contributions in order to foster student-centered classes.
Student-centered classrooms.

My first big goal is honoring the dignity of all humans. I don’t want that to sound too lofty. I’m not that nice a guy, but it is specifically honoring the human dignity of children...If we just honor the dignity of every human, things will be so much better. So, that’s one I really want to instill for future teachers. I am student-centered to a fault. My newest book that I am working on now is pedagogy of kindness and that’s what it comes from. (Thomas, personal communication, August 18, 2014)

Student centered classrooms shift the focus from teacher-directed instruction to learning and self-directed learners. Participants share a commitment to creating dialogic classrooms where the lines of teacher and learner are blurred and building a “safe space” where students are empowered to ask questions and where teachers are empowered to teach in ways that realize the co-construction of understanding. One way to humanize the educational process is by building classroom community. This kind of teaching replaces mechanistic strategies with approaches that honor the complexities and richness of individuals working together.

Participants described how they created educational contexts in order to “follow the students, rather than lead them” (Gorlewski, personal communication, August 14, 2014). Dr. Au models this with something he calls “class lead” where small groups of his students are responsible for teaching the class on a particular day. Dr. Au also described how he infuses his methods course with “interactive activities” like “Socratic seminars, role plays, tea parties” and other examples of “those mixer type things that we do in schools...Things that I think are pedagogically sound and are critical pedagogy” (Au, personal communication, Oct 1, 2014).
One of the main ways that participants encourage a student-centered classroom is through the variety of ways they encourage students to engage with and respond to course readings. Dr. Gorlewski explains how the “response journals” in her course are “intended to create an ongoing dialogue” (2011, p. 3). She requires students to “insert a page break after each entry so that your professor and peers can respond to your ideas” (p.3). Another way that she fosters dialogue is by asking students to prepare the questions that drive the discussions of readings. Dr. Au includes “story responses” and tells his students that “on some weeks, instead of a straight up reading response, I will be asking you to tell a personal story that connects to the issues raised by one of the readings” (Au, 2014, p. 3). These story responses model student-centered approaches and demonstrate a strategy for meeting the goal of fostering self-knowledge.

The ways that participants encourage alternative thinking about relationships and student engagement are evident in some of the practices and approaches outlined in the two previous sections. However, these goals and the purpose might not be clear to students. As such, a critical engaged pedagogy also requires transparency.

**Transparency.**

*I tell my students that their classes in the school of education should be the best taught classes on campus. Not that I think that we are always are but we should strive for that, and everything that we do should be transparent, and they ought to be able to ask at any given point, why are we doing this ...what does this have to with who we are going to become as educators. So, I have to open up my own pedagogical practice to questions, and do that explicitly...We can not act in a way that is not empowering for our teacher candidates but expect them to go and be*
Critical teacher educators are explicit about their goals and provide students with opportunities to make sense of how the practices and approaches they use in their courses model their commitments. Critical teacher educators make their pedagogy visible, revealing their thinking and decision-making about the complexities of teaching. As critical teacher educators, we explain how course readings, assignments, and other aspects of curriculum are choices that reflect our own personal commitments, professional interests, and political beliefs.

Dr. Thomas, Dr. Au, and Dr. Jones all include a section in their course syllabi where they introduce themselves to students, but Dr. Thomas takes this a step further. In all of his syllabi, he includes a section that explicitly explains the “guiding philosophies and theories of the course” (furman.blogspot.com). He describes how his approaches to his courses represent commitments to “critical pedagogy, critical constructivism, and authentic assessment,” and he explains how these are ideals that he has honed over thirty years. Critical teacher educators do not pretend to be purely objective or value free. Instead, they clearly state their own biases, assumptions, and experiences.

Education is often considered to be separate from life beyond the classroom, but engaged pedagogy demands that teachers are transparent about themselves with students. Engaged pedagogy transgresses the common view of teachers who limit their classroom selves to a one-dimensional focus on content. Critical teacher educators bring their whole selves to teaching; they integrate the pieces of their lives, and they understand and make
clear the ways their personal and public lives are pieces of their teaching lives. In describing the selves he shares with students, Dr. Au makes these connections: “I share some stories about my work with Rethinking Schools and about the articles that I’ve written for them and stories about my personal life, certainly about being a father…I have a four-year-old, so I definitely have lots to share around dealing with kids and about how I think about education now as a parent. (Personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Critical teacher educators are “authentically present” (Palmer, 1997) in the classroom by sharing their mistakes, experiences, and stories. When teachers and teacher educators are willing to share their own personal thoughts and experiences, it humanizes them and demonstrates the teacher’s honesty as well as their vulnerability and willingness to take risks. Dr. Gorlewski and Dr. Thomas both described how they share stories with their students that show them learning from mistakes. When I asked Dr. Gorlewski about the ways she brings herself and her experiences to her teacher education students, she described how she divulges her mistakes: “These [stories] show me screwing up. The more I do, the more questions I have. I mean, I’m always trying to get better. So, the stories I like to share most are the ones where something didn't work out the way I had expected” (Gorlewski, August 14, 2014). Dr. Thomas had a similar response. He said, “I tell them [students] a lot of stories about stupid things I did… Because they see me now, having taught for 31 years, and it all seems rather polished to them” (Thomas, personal communication, August 20, 2014).

Participants’ honesty and vulnerability – and their willingness blur the lines between teacher and learner and to give students voice and choice in their courses – illustrates how they reveal themselves as complex humans with lives beyond the
classroom and how they realize the fullness of their students’ lives, experiences, and wisdom. The conception of teacher as authoritarian and dispenser of knowledge is widely accepted and often goes unchallenged. The approaches described here offer a stark contrast to that view. In this way these approaches offer an alternative to many of the strategies and beliefs that are a part of the corporate reform paradigm.
Chapter 6
Ongoing Conversations

Findings from this study reveal how critical teacher educators’ stances toward the corporate reform paradigm of education influence their pedagogy and how they confront this paradigm in their scholarship, activism, and teaching. Some of the key tenets of critical teacher education are addressed in this study: scholarship, engagement, advocacy, and reflection. Analysis of these themes suggests recommendations for teacher educators and approaches to undergraduate teacher preparation. Findings indicate how and why critical teacher educators might take up some of the issues associated with corporate reform in their personal and political stances, and how they can take up these issues in their practices and pedagogies.

The findings and the recommendations described in this chapter also have implications for preservice teachers and their experiences as beginning teachers. I focus on recommendations for teacher educators and teacher education in this chapter, but I operate under the assumption that these recommendations will impact preservice teachers and transfer to their teaching. This assumption is debatable, but there is research to support it. Despite increasing attacks on the relevance of teacher education, research shows that undergraduate teacher preparation can have a powerful impact on beginning teachers’ knowledge and dispositions (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Beginning teachers, prepared in programs with an explicit commitment to social justice and equity, reported that their preparation influenced their ability to teach for social justice in K-12 contexts (Cochran-Smith, 2009; Early & Shagoury, 2010). The goals and commitments that are emphasized in teacher preparation can have an impression on beginning teachers.
This study sheds light on a question that should always guide the work of undergraduate teacher preparation: How do we prepare prospective teachers for the current sociopolitical context of education? Sociopolitical context refers to the conditions of teaching and education and how those are impacted by social and political factors such as policies, practices, traditions, and ideologies. In the current sociopolitical context, that means addressing the challenges and promises of preparing the next generation of teachers for working in a context that is dominated by the corporate reform paradigm. This study shows how critical pedagogy to politicize and humanize teacher education can provide opportunities for prospective teachers to make sense of the corporate reform paradigm and to envision alternatives to it. Because the discourse of the corporate reform paradigm presents itself as objective and neutral, we must politicize teacher education. Because the corporate reform paradigm positions teachers as technicians and reduces students to test scores, we must humanize our teaching and prepare teachers to fight for their students’ humanity in the current sociopolitical context.

This research illuminates a conception of teacher preparation that is counter to a conception that emphasizes technical training, compliance, and increasing standardization in this era of neoliberalism. In this chapter, I will outline recommendations for critical teacher educators and undergraduate teacher preparation. Then I will provide an analysis of how these recommendations are tied to essential philosophical questions in order to explore how we can begin to rethink the ways we define teaching and learning, the purpose of education, and the work of teachers. Based on this research, I make recommendations to continue the conversation through increased awareness, activism, and collaboration among critical teacher educators. And, I suggest ways to change the
conversation by making the corporate reform paradigm an explicit topic in undergraduate teacher education. The title of this study implies that there is much to be learned from conversations with critical teacher educators. As the recommendations that follow indicate, those conversations and the learning are ongoing. This research inspires enduring questions that warrant further investigation. In this chapter I explore those questions along with the implications of this study.

**Recommendations for Critical Teacher Educators**

Recommendations for critical teacher educators include increased engagement in resistance to corporate reform, including public scholarship about the issues. I also discuss recommendations for an expanded commitment to understanding the impacts of corporate reform and making connections with other teacher educators and other cultural workers to explore these issues. Teacher educators need to take up the role as “civic intellectuals” (Giroux, 2012) through activism, public scholarship and collective alliances.

**Take action.**

*One of the things that I get very frustrated about is this idea that we should be educating students to go out and change the world while we sit complacently in our offices, and that is just bullshit. We can't expect them to go out and change the world if we aren't showing them what we are doing. And, I could not in good conscience teach future teachers to aspire to activism if I weren’t engaged in it. What kind of hypocrite would I be?* (Dr. Gorlewski, personal communication, August 20, 2014)
As reported in the findings, Dr. Gorlewski, along with Dr. Au and Dr. Jones, spoke about how they model civic engagement and show their students what it looks like to be politically active. They reported sharing information about the actions and organizations that they are involved in with their students. Critical teacher educators need to do more than critique; they need to take action in order to bring about the changes they desire. They need to “view themselves through the lens of civic responsibility” (Giroux, 2012, p. 6) in order to connect teaching with the broader world and to work towards alternatives to neoliberalism’s impacts on public education in the U.S.

There is growing resistance to the corporate education reform paradigm, especially to high-stakes standardized testing. There is growing momentum for taking a stand for public education, as evidenced by increased awareness and engagement in the parental opt out movement. National organizations and state chapters have galvanized parents who are opposed to high-stakes testing, the most pervasive and discernible policy of corporate education reform. This year, 2015, marked a significant increase in parental opt outs; preliminary reports in NY indicate that up to 14% of students in grades 3-8 in the state of NY opted out of the tests in April 2015, up from 4% who opted out in the previous year (Wallace, 2015).

More students and teachers are joining this movement as well. In addition to individual students who opt out, there have been large, organized student protests in several states. Hundreds of students in New Mexico rallied and walked out in protest over the new Common Core aligned test there called Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (Contreras, 2015). At Nathan Hale High School in
Seattle, the entire junior class opted out and refused to take the new Common Core aligned Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test (King, 2015).

Teachers at that same high school in Seattle passed a resolution against the test earlier in the school year, and there has been an increase in reports of teachers who take a public stance and refuse the tests. In May 2014, thirty teachers at one public elementary school in New York City school “refused to administer the exam citing professional and ethical concerns” because the test failed to recognize the needs of their linguistically diverse student population.4 There have been publicized stories of individual teachers’ refusals in New York, Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Two teachers, who gleaned a lot of publicity in Fall 2014, are Karen Hendren and Nikki Jones, first grade teachers in Oklahoma, who sent an eloquent letter home to parents that explained their opposition to administering the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) because they “accepted responsibility to uphold ethical practices and do what is in the best interest of children” (quoted in Strauss, 2014, para. 27)5. These were highly acclaimed teachers in their district, but they were reprimanded for their actions. Still, their actions were met with approval from many parents, and they did put some national attention on questions about the developmental appropriateness of testing first graders.

And teachers are organizing against the corporate reform paradigm in other ways as well. The Badass Teacher’s Association (BATS) is a group that organized in July 2103

---

4 For more information about this story, go to the MORE (Movement of Rank of File Educators) website http://morecaucusnyc.org/2014/05/01/teachers-boycott-test/

5 You can read their letter and learn about other teachers who have refused the tests in this article: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/11/18/your-kids-deserve-better-than-this-first-grade-teachers-tell-parents/
and has grown largely through its presence on Facebook. As of this writing there are 55,600 members in this group that proclaims it is “for every teacher who refuses to be blamed for the failure of our society to erase poverty and inequality, and refuses to accept assessments, tests and evaluations imposed by those who have contempt for real teaching and learning” (http://badassteachers.blogspot.com). Members of BATS engage in actions and “swarm” any time they find an opportunity to realize their purpose: “to push back against so-called corporate education reform, or the Educational-Industrial Complex and the damage it has done to students, schools, teachers, and communities” (http://badassteachers.blogspot.com).

Their organization, in spite of some its initial trials and shortcomings, has made significant contributions to the movement against the corporate education reform since it started less than two years ago. In Summer 2014 they organized in Washington DC and gained a meeting with Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. The results of a recent study about teachers and stress, which was released in May 2015, was sponsored, in part, by BATS and their research team. Other organizations, such as the Network for Public Education (NPE), which was founded by Diane Ravitch and Anthony Cody, also focus on resistance to corporate education reform. At a May 2015 meeting of NPE, both major teachers’ unions – National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers – publically announced that they will stop accepting money form the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Eli Board, and the Walton Foundation as a way to show that will not let corporations take over public schools.

While parents, students, and teachers are organizing in their resistance to corporate education reform, a gap persists in the connection between teacher education
and the burgeoning activism of parents, students, and P-12 educators. There have been recent calls for teacher educators to join forces with P-12 educators who are organizing and resisting (Cody, 2013; Kohn, 2013; Kumashiro, 2010; Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013). What about an opt out movement in teacher education? As I described in chapter 4, more teacher education programs and states are taking up high-stakes tests for teacher candidates, and there has been some scholarship, along with position statements, and other responses in opposition to these.

The pendulum is shifting, and my study illustrates how critical teacher educators can contribute to that shift. An important outcome of this research is that it might prove useful as a rallying point to encourage solidarity and action among critical teacher educators who want to raise awareness about corporate reform and engage in challenges to it. Even if it’s not with a bullhorn or outward refusal to administer one of teacher education’s high stakes tests, critical teacher educators, who are committed to public education, need to come down out of their ivory towers and join the movement. As Dr. Gorlewski reminds us in the quote above, we need to join the fight to save public education and show our students what activism and engagement with these issues looks like.

Teacher educators from many institutions did organize and unite in January and February of 2015 to support a letter writing campaign and a petition regarding the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Teacher educators used their voices to register their opposition to changes that would draw connections between K-12 student test scores and teacher preparation programs. There was certainly some momentum and shared zeal for these actions, and a significant number of teacher
educators wrote letters or signed the petition crafted by Dr. Kevin Kumashiro. Still, this initiative seemed fractured and fleeting, especially in light of recent organization shown by parents, students, and teachers. Dr. Kumashiro (2015) sent an email to everyone who signed the petition and called on them to “continue to raise public awareness” (personal communication, May 11, 2015). He called on those who signed, mostly teacher educators, to engage in actions such as writing more letters and organizing community and campus events in order to “raise public awareness of what the research says about high-stakes testing as well as more effective ways to approach school reform” (email, May 11, 2015). Teacher educators, all academics, need to do more to educate the general public about our research and our areas of expertise. One way teacher educators can do this is through their writing – in the topics they write about, where they publish, and the audiences for whom they write.

**Use your outside voice.**

In addition to organizing, an increasing number of teachers are contributing to the movement by blogging and engaging in other forms of public writing about the challenges and complexities of teaching in the current era. There have been many public resignations, but there are also many who are writing to change the prevailing narrative of corporate reform and to inform the public of the good work that teachers do. The title of this section, *Use Your Outside Voice*, is inspired by one such blog. Beth Shaum, a middle school English teacher and social media coordinator for NCTE (National Council
of teachers of English), maintains a blog by this title because, she proclaims, “teacher’s voices deserve to be heard” (http://useyouroutsidevoice.blogspot.com/).

Another way that teacher educators can “assume the role of civic educators” is by sharing their ideas with “the wider public by writing for a variety of public audiences in a number of new media sites” (Giroux, 2012, p. 7). In this way they can combine “scholarship and commitment” and engage in writing that clearly speaks to a wider audience without being reductive or “theoretically simplistic” (Giroux, 2012, p. 7). These types of authentic writing assignments described in chapter 4 are exemplars of this kind of writing, and we can share our own models by engaging in similar writing. During our interview, Dr. Thomas (2014) talked about his public writing and described how he is “making the argument that my public work is on par with my scholarly work” in his application for full professor; he maintains that teacher educators need to “build both of those” (personal communication, August 14, 2014) in order to educate the public and to show our students how to do that.

Teacher educators need to foster an understanding of the sociopolitical complexities of teaching, and they, along with the teachers they prepare, need to know how to inform the public and policy makers about these complexities (Kincheloe, 2004). Dr. Thomas described how difficult public writing is; he noted how people argue and attack in their rebuttals and comments. Still, he insists that we need experts to educate the public. Across all disciplines, professors need to get their voices out into the public in order to be more relevant and to influence opinion, and more importantly, to influence policy. Scholars in academic disciplines can be more influential if they broaden the types of writing they do and the audiences for whom they write (Kristof, 2015). Typically,
scholars write for other scholars in peer-reviewed journals, but writing commentaries and publishing in other sources would make expert views and research more accessible to practitioners and the general public (Biswas & Kirchherr, 2015).

**Collaborate and connect.**

Another recommendation for critical teacher educators is that they find ways to collaborate and connect to share their commitments and how they address those in their public stances, and especially in their pedagogy. Critical teacher educators need to work with colleagues within their own departments and colleges to ensure that big ideas, like some of the key themes and concepts discussed in this research – advocacy, equity, engagement, critical pedagogy – are introduced early in a program and revisited through its entirety. A shared vision and coherent goals can contribute to the effectiveness of teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kincheloe, 2004) because preservice teachers can start to make connections within their own programs. In this way students can gain a more sophisticated understanding of these complex concepts.

This sort of program coherence, with a sustained focus on shared commitments and goals, is difficult to cultivate, and most teacher education programs struggle with what Zeichner and Gore (1990) call “structural fragmentation” where individual courses are taught without an explicit connection to other courses or as part of a holistic program design. However, building some consistency is not impossible. A sense of “collective vision” (Jones, 2014) is evident in the syllabi that I reviewed for this study. Participants
included detailed descriptions of program objectives and explicitly stated how the course objectives and assignments align with program goals.

This “collective vision” was especially evident in Dr. Jones’ and Dr. Gorlewski’s syllabi. For example, in a section of her course syllabus titled “course description and alignment with conceptual framework” Dr. Jones explains to students how the course aligns with the school of education’s goals to “develop reflective educators, competent researchers, educational leaders, and change agents” (Jones, 2013, p. 6). Dr. Gorlewski’s syllabus describes similar shared “values and commitments” aimed at “inquiry, intellectual growth, professionalism, appreciation of human diversity, advocacy for students, and democratic citizenship” (Gorlewski, 2011, p. 1). In her syllabus for Foundations of Secondary Education/English, Gorleswki (2011) notes how the course assignments are designed to provide students with chances to get started on “Program Portfolio” requirements. This attention to the ways that one course is a piece of a holistic design demonstrates how teacher educators can collaborate to logically sequence courses, to reiterate key concepts in all courses, and to build a shared vision toward teacher preparation.

These built-in connections support students. When we build on these topics and goals, students understand them better and may be better equipped to realize them by the time they face the challenges and realities of field experience and practice. Critical teacher educators should work with colleagues to ensure that the ideals and goals of developing teachers as scholars, leaders, advocates, and reflective practitioners are introduced early in the program and repeated throughout in order to build upon the concepts over several courses. A programmatic approach with a shared conceptual
framework is ideal (daring-Hammond, 2006), but even without it, critical teacher educators with shared goals can collaborate and work to build connections among the courses they teach. In this way they can reinforce commitments and improve students’ understanding of particular concepts through a shared vocabulary and a reiteration of shared goals.

Critical teacher educators can also look for support and collaborative partners outside of their departments and programs. We need to have conversations with our critical colleagues about how they are addressing these issues and take up these commitments in their own disciplines. As critical teacher educators, we need to see ourselves not as isolated individuals working toward these goals, but as people engaged in a community of committed individuals who are working toward political and cultural transformation. Giroux (2012) argues that we should build alliances and “new forms of solidarity” among educators and “cultural workers such as artists, writers, journalists, academics, and others who engage in forms of public pedagogy” in response to the “unprecedented reach of global capitalism” (p. 8). Connections and solidarity are approaches that reclaim collective civic responsibility in order to confront and challenge neoliberalism’s emphasis on individual responsibility.

Teacher educators need to tap into networks and teach the future teachers with whom we work how to locate and join networks. Networks sustain us. Participants in this study described how they felt connected through organizational affiliations and by locating scholars and fellow activists who shared their commitments. One of my goals as a critical teacher educator is to encourage my students to become connected educators, and I share resources for them to find support and resources for professional development.
and making connections. Teacher educators need to do this for ourselves as well. Critical teacher educators can make connections with other educators, and they can reach out to folks in other disciplines who share critical perspectives and commitments to social transformation. In conducting this study I had the opportunity to learn with and learn from colleagues around the country who have a shared passion for critical teacher education. The benefits of connection and questions about how to foster ongoing conversations among teacher education practitioners are topics that warrant further investigation.

**Recommendations for Undergraduate Teacher Education**

Based on the findings, I recommend the addition and exploration of three topics in undergraduate teacher education. First, I recommend that course content should give explicit attention to the impacts that corporate reform has on public schools and education in the United States because teacher candidates need opportunities to grapple with the underlying assumptions and sociopolitical factors that contribute to schools as they are in order to formulate their own stances and to develop visions for schools as they could be. I also recommend that teacher candidates are given opportunities to think about the ways that critical educators work simultaneously within and against the system and to explore approaches like “strategic compromise” (Lloyd, 2007) for coping with the challenges and uncertainties of teaching in the current sociopolitical context. Finally, I recommend the inclusion of and/or an improved or enhanced attention to education
philosophy and education foundations in teacher education as a way to prepare teachers who can articulate connections between practice and theory and explain how their philosophy of education supports their practices.

Explicit attention to the current sociopolitical context.

Preparing teachers in this historical moment means preparing teachers for the realities of schools that have, in many ways, succumbed to the corporate reform paradigm. It also means preparing future educators to think about how they can engage in the debates and challenges to corporate education reform. It requires that we discuss the political and moral issues of teaching and learning among ourselves as well as with our students. My student, the one I told you about in the opening paragraphs of this dissertation, said that she “knew” her professors were against testing and charter schools, but she didn't understand why. Perhaps her professors didn't even fully understand why. One question that merits additional discussion is: To what extent are (critical) teacher educators “aware of neoliberalism and its profound impact on public schools and university-based teacher preparation programs?” (Groenke and Hatch, 2014, p. 5). If the answer is not much, we need to begin there.

It has taken me years to begin to make sense of neoliberalism and the corporate reform paradigm and how those impact education. I am still making sense of it. As a teacher, I was frustrated during the last few years of my career at what I believed were the negative impacts of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). I experienced a narrowed curriculum, increased standardization, rigid tracking of students, teachers shamed for
their students’ test scores in front of the entire faculty, professional development that focused on data collection and “what works.” As a teacher, I thought that NCLB was the sole problem. I naively blamed NCLB for what I viewed as detrimental impacts on schools, teaching, and learning. As a beginning teacher educator, I added two other policies to my list of problems in education – Race to the Top and Common Core State Standards.

As a researcher and scholar, I am finally beginning to realize that these policies are only part of the problem. I now see them as pieces of the bigger threats to public education in the United States and globally – neoliberal ideology, marketization, and privatization. I have also started to make sense of the ways that these threats to public education are social justice and equity issues. I don't want our beginning teachers to have to get out there and figure this out on their own. Critical teacher educators need to make sense of these issues for themselves and then be transparent and explicit with students about their commitments, their politics, and their beliefs – and how they came to them. Critical teacher educators need to foster a sophisticated understanding of these issues rather than denounce a few policies without any nuanced discussion or explanation. In this way, “teacher educators can help our graduates not only to survive in the profession but also to challenge the larger neoliberal forces that are waging war for control of public education.” (Apple, 2006, p. 1132).

Another question we need to ask is: How are teacher educators building knowledge about the corporate education reform paradigm in teacher preparation? Powell (2013) suggests “focusing teacher preparation work more explicitly on helping
prospective teachers understand these impacts so they may be empowered to address them effectively” (para. 1). He concludes that it is worth asking:

How much attention do critiques of testing and no child left behind - connected to the established educational research - play in the teacher education programs we know or are affiliated with? If the answer is not much, the time is now to start changing the conversation.” (Powell, 2013, para. 11)

There are two key ideas for recommendations in this quote; the first is that critical teacher educators do need to change the conversation – by adding the information and issues described here into our coursework. The second is one that was echoed by participants in the ways they described their political commitments in chapter 4. Critical teacher educators need to share the current research about standardization, testing, and other issues related to corporate education reform. Current research overwhelmingly demonstrates how neoliberal policies are failed experiments that have not been successful in meeting their expressed goals (Ravitch, 2013). It is not enough to share our passion and model with our engagement. We need to demonstrate the detrimental impacts with research that will arm our beginning teachers with informed opinions.

Raising awareness about the ways that the current era of standardization and accountability in education reform is built on neoliberal policies, privatization, and a market ideology are essential components to teacher preparation in the current political climate (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2012; Sleeter, 2008; Picower, 2011). Understanding the current rhetoric of reform and the ideology of neoliberalism are necessary for understanding the “politics of education” (Apple, 2001, p. 186). Critical teacher educators need to make sense of how the issues of the corporate reform paradigm are
political and moral issues and explicitly address these in undergraduate teacher preparation.

I was recently asked by a fellow teacher educator, “But, are our students ready for all of this?” By “all of this,” he meant heightened awareness and conversations about the challenges of teaching in the current era of corporate education reform and the ways that the corporate reform paradigm threatens public education. My reply was that, whether they are ready or not, they will face it. As such, a recommendation of this research is that teacher educators explicitly address these issues so that prospective teachers can begin to develop the conceptual schema they need to make sense of the topics and begin to develop the language and knowledge they need to form educated arguments and to discuss these issues (Kincheloe, 2004). Open, consistent attention to these issues is essential in order to prepare our students for schools as they are and to prepare our students for alternative thinking about schools as they could be.

**Working simultaneously within and against the system.**

There are inherent tensions in trying to balance the conflicting goals of preparing teachers for the reality of today’s public schools, and, at the same time preparing them as change agents. To be a critical teacher educator demands that we “confront the tension that emerges from a false dichotomy: whether to prepare students to adapt to the harsh realities or, conversely, to encourage future teachers to be change agents in schools or society” (Bursztyn, 2004, p. 252). One way to consider the goals and outcomes of critical teacher education is in terms of resistance and compliance. Rather than a dichotomous
view, either/or, critical teacher educators explore these as both/and when we consider how teaching often means “working simultaneously within and against the system” (Cochran-Smith, 2006 p. 203). Dr. Gorlewski reminds us that as critical teacher educators, “we are agents of change and agents of the state” (email communication).

During our interview, Dr. Gorlewski expanded on this idea:

One of my colleagues was talking about how when her teacher candidates feel frustrated with all of the things we’re fighting against…She tells them to be like the fish and swim under the waves. And, I said no, no! ...What I should say is, yes, there are times when you have to be the fish and swim under the waves and there are times when you have to swim to the top and go against them. Both of those are true. And certainly for new teachers. (Gorlewski, personal communication, August 2014)

Dr. Gorlewski addresses this tension and the false dichotomy of either/or by describing how she encourages both. We need to prepare our students to adapt, to swim under the waves, and to change and challenge, to swim to the top and go against the waves.

One way to address these tensions is to prepare prospective teachers for “strategic compromise” (Lloyd, 2007, p. 344). Strategic compromise refers to the ways that preservice teachers navigate the competing ideals of instruction for test prep that are often prescribed by schools and instruction that they feel is more pedagogically sound or more closely aligned with their beliefs. Rather than hope for or wait for teachers to take up some kind of strategic compromise, I recommend exploring this concept with preservice teachers as a way to make sense of the tensions that can arise from their pedagogical commitments and beliefs and the realities of working within the corporate
reform paradigm of education. Preparation for strategic compromise recognizes both the constraints and the possibilities, and it this way it can empower preservice teachers to “reframe their understanding of the teacher as an adaptive expert rather than an expert who must adapt to the demands” of the field, especially to the narrow demands of the corporate reform paradigm (Brown, 2010, p. 488).

This is important because there is a tendency for beginning teachers to adapt, rather than to strike a balance, a strategic compromise, between resistance and compliance. Dr. Thomas described how he sees this happen with his students:

The ugly problem that I’ve found with teacher education is that the power of the field, the day to day teaching, is so overwhelming that most of our candidates go in the field and immediately revert to what the field demands of them. (personal communication, August 14, 2014)

We need to assist our preservice teachers in making sense of these tensions and be explicit with them about how they can learn to negotiate these tensions, so that they don't go out into the field and succumb to “alienated teaching” (McDonald and Shirley, 2009), where teachers forgo their autonomy and resign themselves to a disconnect between beliefs and practice, which can leave them feeling like a hypocrite (Knotts, 2013).

As discussed in the findings, there are ways we can be proactive about this dissonance that beginning teachers often experience. One way, as described in chapter 4, is by encouraging our students to make sense of their beliefs and by equipping them with tools to clearly articulate a rationale for their beliefs. Also, we need to prepare them for facing the realization that their beliefs might conflict with the micro and macro contexts they will work in. This adds another dimension to a question posed earlier. In addition to
asking how teacher educators can develop candidates’ knowledge about corporate reform, we also need to ask how we can foster candidates’ courage to challenge corporate reform. (How) can we inspire their courage to swim to the top and go against the waves – especially if that means that they can stay true to themselves and their commitments?

Another way that we can address this potential dissonance is by being transparent, as described in chapter 5. As critical teacher educators, we also work simultaneously within a system that we are often working against. As such, transparency is an especially important trait for tackling this issue with preservice teachers. We can share our own experiences with difficult decisions and how we work to make ethical choices despite some of the constraints we often face, some of the same constraints that they will face, such as standards, administrative demands, testing, etc. Open dialogue about the ways that we make choices about when to “swim to the top” and when we “stay under the waves” will help our students to see how they too can think about navigating similar tensions. Frank conversations about how we grapple with issues and make decisions can show our students how we accomplish precisely what we are asking them to do as professionals.

Another useful strategy for igniting discussions and modeling how to work simultaneously within and against the system is by sharing case studies that explore dilemmas and examples of teachers who are confronted with decisions about how to resist and comply. We can encourage conversation and share models of how other teachers negotiate these tensions in order to give prospective teachers opportunities to think ahead about how they can meet these challenges in their own practice. This strategy has the potential to build knowledge about the current sociopolitical context of education
and to begin to build courage through a vision for confronting it. In this way, we can prepare prospective teachers to confront the tensions rather than succumb completely to disheartened acceptance.

“Just suck it up”, “deal with it”, “accept it”...these are common refrains in technical teacher training and the top-down discourse of corporate reform. These are not the messages I want to send to future educators. Or, at least, not the only messages I want to send them. I want to counter that, to balance that, with a message of hope and possibility. Certainly we need to prepare students for schools as they are, but I also want to prepare them to think about schools as they could be, to realize infinite possibilities, and to realize their autonomy as professionals. Fostering this sense of hope and possibility can be especially challenging when our students only know one educational paradigm. One way to encourage preservice teachers to consider other paradigms and the purpose of education is by including a renewed emphasis on educational foundations and philosophy in teacher education courses.

Renewed focus on educational foundations and philosophy.

Today’s teacher candidates may have an especially difficult time imagining a different paradigm because they are “children of reform” (Brown, 2010). Dr. Gorlewski addresses this same concern in a video she made for Reclaiming the Conversation on Education; she says, “Student teachers have no other way of understanding school.” Current undergraduate students who attended public schools are the product of this failed experiment. The corporate reform paradigm of education has dominated their own K-12
experience, and it is most likely evident in the schools where they are completing their clinical experience. As such, it is of the utmost importance that teacher educators invite them to ponder alternatives, to understand that just because it’s all they know and the way it’s been doesn't mean that’s the way it has to be. As reported in chapter 5, a focus on the historical context of schools and education foundations is one way to prepare our prospective teachers with the knowledge, courage and hope to imagine something new. We need to teach them that “the educational status quo was formed by human beings and thus can be re-formed by them” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 13).

This study demands a renewal of explorations about the history of public schools in the U.S. and the varying purposes and philosophies of education. Closer attention to foundations and different philosophies and paradigms of education is one way to equip students with the ability to challenge ideas and the ability to make ethical choices. Beginning teachers who are able to clearly articulate connections between practice and theory and how their particular philosophy of education supports their practice will be better equipped to make ethical decisions and provide arguments for the decisions they make. Ball (2012) asserts that teachers need to conceive of their teaching as argument.

Findings reported in chapter 4 indicate the importance of preparing teachers to articulate and support their professional decisions. Exploring philosophy and varying beliefs about the purpose of education is one way to support this goal and can provide an opportunity for preservice teachers to figure out where they stand – and where others stand – and to develop their own language for articulating their own philosophical beliefs. In this way, teacher education can prepare teachers to confidently enter into professional conversations and to argue for why and how they teach.
Because critical perspectives are not only concerned with understanding the world, but also with changing it, another goal of critical teacher education is to prepare teachers as visionaries, who are open to infinite imagined possibilities. Critical teacher education needs to challenge the notion that the main goal of school is to make students “careers and college ready.” The corporate reform paradigm of education includes a discourse of “career and college” readiness and purports that as the main goal of education. This narrow view fails to take into account the richness of education aimed toward wisdom, citizenship, self-knowledge, and the preparation of students to lead fulfilling lives, to fall in love with life, to engage in a civic life.

Achieve, Inc., an organization formed by a group of governors and business leaders, is largely responsible for writing the Common Core State Standards (CCCS) and in doing so, they advanced the notion that the purpose of schools, especially secondary schools, is “career and college readiness.” On their web site, they explain career and college readiness: “a high school graduate has the English and math knowledge and skills needed to qualify for and succeed in the postsecondary job training and/or education necessary for their chosen career” (www.achieve.org). As if the limited focus on two subjects wasn’t discouraging enough, the message here is that the purpose of education is to get a job and contribute to the economy. The suggestion that gaining employment is the ultimate purpose of education is purely an economic one and fails to realize all of the other possibilities, pursuits, and purposes that are derived from meaningful education.

This economic focus is indicative of contemporary society in general and highlights neoliberalism’s pervasive influence. Results of the American Freshman
Survey, a questionnaire given to college freshmen since 1966, indicates the ways our cultural values have shifted toward this economic purpose of education. One question on the survey asks about “objectives considered essential or very important.” In 1967, 86% of college freshmen selected “developing a meaningful philosophy of life,” more than double the number who checked “being well off financially” (cited in Bauerlein, 2015). In the most recent survey results, published in February 2015, only 45% of students selected developing a meaningful philosophy of life, and 82% selected being well off financially. “Finding meaning and making money have traded places” (Bauerlein, 2015, para. 11). This dramatic shift is indicative of a “changing character of entering students and American society at large” (para. 10). Our shifting focus about the purpose of education, and how unquestionably the discourse of “career and college ready” has been taken up corroborates these changing ideals. Hursh (2001) laments that “education is no longer valued for its role in developing political, ethical, and aesthetic citizens” (p. 11).

Another enduring question of this research and of critical teacher education is: What role does teacher education play in “sustaining hope, not only for prospective and returning teachers, but also for society at large?” (Bursztyn, 2004, p. 251). Do our students, our teacher candidates, realize the difference between training for a job and preparing for a professional journey focused on passion, joy, intellectual curiosity, and human relationships? How do we, teacher educators who are committed to a critical, complex conception of teacher education, prepare them for a teaching life rather than a teaching career? How do we encourage prospective teachers to move past their desire for immediate answers, simplified truths, and their search for a single correct method? We need to create classroom communities that make room for exploring questions of
import: What does it mean to be a teacher? What is the job of a teacher? The life of a teacher? And we need to allow room for exploring new possibilities as well as uncertainties.

Looking Forward

Earlier I noted how teacher preparation matters and how it can influence beginning teachers’ experiences. I believe that. Still, I am left wondering to what extent we can prepare teacher candidates for the current context? Future studies are needed to explore how a critical pedagogy of teacher education with explicit attention to the corporate reform paradigm of education impacts beginning teachers. (How) are these commitments in teacher education actualized in practice? Are they realized in the lives of beginning teachers? Perhaps we can’t prepare them fully and adequately for this hostile context. I had advanced degrees and years of experience, and still felt woefully ill-prepared for dealing with the changes that were occurring around me.

Another question for ongoing conversations is: how do we prepare preservice teachers to be unprepared? That is, how can we prepare our students to embrace uncertainty and ambiguity, hallmarks of “thinking like a genius” (Gelb, 2000), that challenge typical expectations about the relationship between learning and certainty. We need to remind our students that they are in a constant state of becoming, and that they are not finished when they leave our programs and our courses. This might sound like a commonly accepted understanding, but I think it is worth considerable exploration with prospective teachers.
It is one of the “student learning outcomes” on Dr. Gorlewski’s syllabus. One goal for students in her courses is to “Acquire dispositions that foster continuous becoming as educators” (2014, p.1). How can we foster dispositions toward continuous becoming? I encourage students to “wallow in the grey areas” and avoid absolutes as they strive to make peace with uncertainty. This way they can make room for infinite possibilities and stay open to alternatives. A crucial message for instilling hope and possibility is reminding our students that to be a teacher is to be a life-long learner and that “teaching is a life-long journey of transformation” (Nieto, 2010, p.184). Dr. Thomas also writes about this:

Teaching isn’t about chemistry or physics, or introductions to education or first year seminars and learning to write. Teaching is about those becomings and beings that truly matter: becoming and being a citizen of communities grand and intimate, becoming and being the only you that you can be, becoming and being a scholar and student. (Thomas, 2014, para. 9)

The more I work in teacher education, the more I realize that I can’t really prepare teachers, but I keep working at it, and I am beginning to understand that the best preparation might be encouraging them to realize that to teach is to be in a constant state of becoming, to remain a life-long learner. In this way, “the new educator can be an initiator of new beginnings; and to act at a beginning is to move towards possibilities, to live and teach in a world of incompleteness, of what we all are but are not yet” (Greene, 2005, p. 80).
References


*Journal of Teacher Education, 58*(1), 21-35.


Retrieved form: http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB113374845791113764


Gorlewski, J. (2014). Walking the talk: The present is the future. (unpublished chapter)


Kvale, S (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*


Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that’s just good teaching! The case for culturally
relevant pedagogy. *Theory Into Practice*. (34)3, 159-165.


http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v23.1706


Powell, D. (2013). Resistance is futile! -- Or is it? Contemplating an end to our national obsession with tests, one teacher candidate at a time. *Teachers College Record.*


Appendix
Interview Guide

1. Briefly describe how you came to teaching.

Think back to your own teacher education program and preparation.

2. Can you recall faculty who inspired you?
3. What do you remember reading?
4. Do you remember what some of the main public debates and sociopolitical issues were about teaching and education during that time? How, if at all, were these issues addressed in your program?
5. What, if at all, do you recall about any sort of political content that was covered in your courses during your preparation program?
6. What stands out from your undergraduate teacher education program? What lessons or ideals stayed with you as you moved into practice?

Describe your transition from teacher to teacher educator.

7. What inspired your move from teaching in P-12 contexts [secondary English] toward teacher education?

Let’s talk about your work as a teacher educator…

8. How do you think your students – current teacher candidates/those in the courses you teach at [INSERT COLLEGE] – would describe you?
9. What commitments do you want students to leave your courses or your program with?
10. Describe some of the lessons or projects in your courses that exemplify your commitments to -------.
11. What are the personal stories or classroom experiences that you most often share with your teacher candidates/ current students?
   a. If needed, follow up…Why those stories…what are the lessons and ideals
inherent in those stories?

12. How would you characterize the socio-political context for education today? And, how, if at all, do you prepare teacher candidates for working in this context?
   a. If I need a follow up… You have written about and been actively engaged in resisting corporate education reform. To what extent do you address resistance to corporate education reform with your students?
   b. Can we – or HOW can we prepare future educators to engage in the education reform debate?
   c. You also write a lot about teaching for social justice… Can you explain how you see the education reform debate as a social justice issue?

Wrap up questions...

13. Who are some current scholars and writers that you turn to for inspiration?
14. Who are you reading? Where are your reading – blogs, journal titles, etc.
15. Are there other English education/undergraduate teacher educators that you know of who are engaged in work to resist corporate education reform efforts?
16. Please send syllabi for courses and/or any descriptions of projects/assignments
VITA

Michelle Knotts

Education

2015 Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction, Pennsylvania State University
2008 M.Ed. Secondary Education, Northern Arizona University
1991 B.A. Speech Communication, Pennsylvania State University

Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 – 2015</td>
<td>Pennsylvania State University</td>
<td>Instructor, Field Experience Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 – 2010</td>
<td>Northern Arizona University</td>
<td>Adjunct Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997 – 2010</td>
<td>Sinagua High School</td>
<td>English Teacher/English Department Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 – 1997</td>
<td>Chinle Elementary School</td>
<td>Sixth-Grade Language Arts Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Publications


Select Research Presentations


