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PEDAGOGY AND LOVE: PRESERVICE TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

by

ELENI STELLATOS

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Pedagogy and Love: Preservice Teacher Perspectives

By

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This thesis argues for the inclusion of positive discipline, culturally relevant pedagogy, and love in both preservice teacher and educational leadership programs. The significance of fostering relationships in a school community are discussed with qualitative data gathered from recent teacher preparation program graduates.

Keywords: hidden curriculum, critical race theory, positive discipline, culturally relevant pedagogy, love

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Introduction

What is the purpose of education? This was a question that was not posed to me during my teacher preparation program, nor during any job interview. This question was posed to me during my last year at the CUNY Graduate Center as I completed my masters in the MALS program with a concentration in Urban Education. A criterion of maintaining a teaching certificate in NYS is to complete a master's degree. Many teachers choose to fulfil this criterion by completing another certification program or continuing to study in the same content area as their undergraduate degree. I, however, chose a path which potentially may halter my path to maintaining certification; Urban Education is not officially recognized as a subject connected to social studies education, my area of certification. I was not aware of what I was looking for as I set on this journey, but I knew that another teacher preparation program would not help develop my pedagogy in the way I would have hoped for. I was on the search to discover what the purpose of education was for me.

When my parents moved from Greece to the United States all that they could talk about was the importance of school. I really did not engage in any other activities, and I only really saw other friends during school. I grew up this way because my mother feared everything. Therefore, the only place outside my own home I really knew was school. It was supposed to be the place that would save me. However, it was not before long that I realized, "This hologram of education is deeply connected to, if not sourced directly from, the national narratives of meritocracy, social advancement, and more fundamentally, progress and discovery" (Patel, 2016, p. 398). My parents fed off this idea that through formal education my brother and I would find ourselves in a higher social standing. The reality, just as Patel's family experienced, was not the same. School did not change me in the ways they had hoped. I did not

come here and become a doctor. I came here and could not dream about anything else other than teaching.

Students spend most of their time in school buildings, and in the classroom was where I found my role models, or those who I presumed to be role models. I never questioned any of their intentions until I found myself at the Graduate Center. It was then that through my course work and discussion I began to wonder if their love was authentic¹ or simply aesthetic². What does it really mean to love and care for others? Perhaps my own intentions when beginning my journey into the teaching profession were merely aesthetic. I was an immigrant child who faced challenges in my own ways, but I was aware of my privilege and knew there was hope for me; how can I push this realization further to make a difference for my students and colleagues? Each day presents new challenges, but this is a component of the roots which feed into a potentially blossoming love. A true love of all humans. People inevitably have biases, but acknowledgement is a crucial step. As my work progresses, I think of bell hooks as she writes, “The choice to love is a choice to connect - to find ourselves in others” (hooks, 2000, p. 93). This year I have been reflecting on how much of myself I see in my students. Their fear, their anxiety, the stress virtual learning brings them is all too familiar to me.

I attended a four-year undergraduate program and graduated with a bachelor’s in Secondary Social Studies Education. My experiences in my teacher preparation programs, discussions with peers and their anecdotes, and the years shortly after I graduated were guiding forces behind this project. During my student teaching I taught 8th grade for one semester and then high school seniors the second semester. The 8th grade placement consisted of two honors classes and one general education (which also had a very large population of English Language

¹ Authentic care “emphasizes relations of reciprocity between teachers and students” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 61).

² Aesthetic care is abstract (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 61).

Learners). The second placement consisted of two United States government classes, both of which were entirely composed of English Language Learners at various stages in their language acquisition. It was an invaluable experience to work with a spectrum of ages, abilities, and backgrounds before I even began my career. I am currently a 6th grade humanities teacher. My first full year teaching was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and I have spent the better part of my teaching these last two years remotely.

It was while I sat in my own masters' classes that I realized what it was like to have my peers see into my life and struggle to cut into discussions. In an in-person classroom, discussion can flow easily and you can speak and take turns without having the extra time that it takes to unmute yourself in a video call. Through remote learning I also realized the new ways that students were able to participate in discussions and have their voices heard. The power of the chat in a video call is profound. While the students who are at ease to participate out loud are speaking, the rest of the class has the power to agree, disagree and make new points in the chat. The revelations and implications of the pandemic and remote learning are undeniable and will be examined further through my personal experiences and those of the participants of this project.

The purpose of this project was to uncover current practices in working with diverse students in teacher education programs by unpacking my personal experience, as well as those of colleagues. On May 25th, 2020, George Floyd was killed by a police officer who sat on his neck. This horrific tragedy spurred protests not only throughout the United States, but around the world. Shortly after these events, many schools began to actively discuss race head on. Courses combating racism should be an integral component of school curricula and taught to preservice teachers in their graduate studies. In this project, I investigate the extent to which

teacher preparation programs address numerous identity factors, such as race, sexuality, and gender in the classroom through reviewing existing literature. In addition, this research is enriched through interviews conducted with three teachers who recently completed teacher preparation programs. Through the literature review and their interviews, these teachers reflect on their positionality and ponder ways to improve current teacher preparation programs.

Background: Cultivating a Diverse Teacher Workforce

The impact of having a teacher from the same racial composition on educational outcomes is indisputable. As Figlio (2017) indicates, minority students who have the same race as their teachers are more likely to succeed in testing and have better attendance. These teachers have faith in their students and do not inherently see them as “failing.” This high standard that are held to encourages them to actually perform at their best. According to Figlio (2017), “...black students comprise around 13 percent of all school-aged children, black teachers represent only around 8 percent of all young teachers, and while Hispanic students comprise around 24 percent of all school-aged children, Hispanic teachers represent only around 9 percent of all young teachers” (2017, para. 1). He goes on to explain that Black³ teachers had the lowest percentage of all races to even hold a bachelor’s degree.

The teaching profession needs to be strengthened and should have educators that reflect the student body. Yet, curriculum often neglects to account for diverse perspectives, and it is necessary to produce teachers who will become principals and superintendents that will ensure these perspectives are not left out (Horsford 2011). We often want administrators and those creating curriculum to change their ways, but the teachers are the ones who are doing the

³ Race labels that have been quoted directly from sources have kept the source formatting. However, within my own writing I have chosen to capitalize race labels.

groundwork and often do acquire leadership positions. Therefore, by properly training them and ensuring that people of all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic status and genders are given access to teacher education programs then we are investing in the future of education.

Understanding that a diverse workforce is critical to maintaining a strong education system, the New York State Department of Education was directed to create a survey in 2019 to determine the extent to which the teaching force in New York State is diverse (2019). Diversity in the report focuses on race, ethnicity, gender and age. The report does not account for linguistic, cultural, religious, socio-economic, or sexual identities. The findings of the report concluded the following: “As New York’s student population has become increasingly diverse, the racial and ethnic background of the teacher workforce has remained constant” (p. 16). About 80% of the teacher workforce in NYS is White (2019, p. 16). This means that most students who sit in a classroom in New York City are taught by teachers that do not look like them or have had similar life experiences.

Conceptual Framework

In this section the conceptual framework that guides the research of this thesis will be discussed. The following theories in educational research will be discussed: the hidden curriculum, culturally relevant (responsive) pedagogy, critical race theory, intersectionality, and pedagogy of love. Each of these theories has been integral in developing an understanding of what teacher preparation programs

The Hidden Curriculum and Culturally Relevant (Responsive) Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (1995) proposed a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, which argued for three criteria: “[A]n ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of sociopolitical or critical consciousness” (p.

483). The premise of culturally relevant pedagogy is for educators to build upon and take into consideration their students' culture as part of their teaching practices. Despite acknowledging Haberman's (1991) conclusion that teachers are unlikely to change student outcomes without recruiting more capable candidates, Ladson-Billings argues that re-education of candidates can have significant outcomes.

There have been many terms that have branched out from culturally relevant pedagogy that further emphasize the considerations posed by Ladson-Billings. Culturally responsive pedagogy focuses on teachers' ability to control how they respond to student behavior (Warren, 2017). Warren argues that a major way to configure teacher dispositions is through empathy. One of the most effective ways to embody empathy is through perspective taking.

Warren's support of culturally responsive pedagogy is necessary due to the implications the hidden curriculum has on students. When students are in school, they are taught content based on a "formal" curriculum. This consists of the lessons and activities which are deliberately taught. Simultaneously they are taught a "hidden curriculum." This consists of learning how to interact with others based on gender, sexuality, race, dis/ability, socioeconomic status. The hidden curriculum often encourages the reproduction of the status quo. This unfortunate reproduction is why it is crucial for teacher preparation programs to incorporate the hidden curriculum.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory stems from critical legal studies. Some insights provided by CRT are that "racism is a normal fact of daily life in U.S. society that is neither aberrant nor rare" (Taylor, 2009, p. 4). A second component of CRT is the theory of interest convergence (as cited in Taylor, p. 5). According to this theory, Black rights have only gained racial equality when the

rights of Whites have converged with theirs (Bell, 1980). CRT is grounded in the experiences of people of color. It also focuses on the intersection of identities which are subject to oppression.

Narratives and, specifically, counter narrative, are crucial in challenging the status quo of white experiences (Taylor, 2009). Dominant narratives typically benefit from focus on deficit stories of Latinx and Black students. Those in power continue to benefit from continuing to believe that systems of poverty are hindering student achievement. Counternarratives can serve as a pedagogical tool where students can hear their own experiences and can help disrupt perpetuating the oppression of dominant narratives.

Gay and Kirkland argue that teacher preparation programs must contain material that “[develops] personal and professional critical consciousness about racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity” (2003, p. 181). This means that CRT should be explicitly taught in teacher preparation programs. Part of the process is teachers examining their own privileges and biases in order to become effective educators. This is a difficult process to engage in without guided practice. As Gay and Kirkland point out, teaching is a “contextualized process” and there is no single set of practices that can be applicable to all student populations (2003, p. 182). The study conducted by Gay and Kirkland discovered that most preservice teachers recited previous trends in how students performed based on their backgrounds, but did not question the social context that influenced these achievement gaps.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality focuses on how race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and class connect to create our identities and lived experiences (Collins, 2019). Through intersectionality we can explain our world, explain systems of oppression, and address social problems. By analyzing the dynamics between each of these aspects of one’s identities we can identify power structures and

sources of inequality. Crenshaw (1993) introduced the term intersectionality. She addressed how focusing on just race or gender limited our ability to address social problems. Crenshaw described the term intersectionality as “just a metaphor” (Crenshaw as quoted in Taylor, 2009, p. 26). Despite her loose use of the word metaphor, this way of viewing the word provides a whole new depth when considering how metaphors shape the ways in which people understand things.

Intersectionality is a theory which is crucial to study in teacher preparation programs to understand student experiences and their overlapping identities. Reflecting on the intersectionality of your students helps teachers understand both the current lives of their students and the barriers they may face in the future.

Pedagogy of Love

The question of whether love belongs in the classroom is interesting to consider. Part of the reason why the idea can be controversial is because we all have a definition of love in our minds which may contradict what we believe should occur in the classroom. In order to evaluate how love can take place in the classroom, a teacher has to engage in a self-reflective process. When I think of love in my classroom it begins with my commitment to my school community. I consider my pedagogy of love as a set of ethics, as bell hooks (2000) describes it, “Embracing a love ethic means that we utilize all dimensions of love—“care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect and knowledge’-- in our everyday lives” (p. 94). This love ethic requires self-sacrifice and commitment.

Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* provides the basis of current conceptions of pedagogical love (1968). In his work, Freire argued that teaching with love is necessary for liberation. Freire (1968) writes, “Only by abolishing the situations of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world—if I do not love

life—if I do not love—I cannot enter into dialogue” (p. 77) His work describes love as an act of humanity that is critical for dialogue. The traditional views of love we may have are not exactly what are envisioned in the classroom. In her article, “Teaching: What’s Love Got to do with it?”, Linebaugh outlines the key components and questions of pedagogical love: “1) what do we need to understand about the world *today* and 2) how can we practice understanding across differences? Love becomes necessary because of the difficulty and pain that answering these questions can produce” (Linebaugh, 2019, para. 5). These steps are especially crucial in the dialogue we engage with our students in regards to racism, sexism and other systems of oppression.

In their article, “In the Name of Pedagogical Love: A Conceptual Framework for Transformative Teaching Grounded in Critical Youth Research,” Caraballo and Soleimani argue that pedagogy enlightened by love has a positive influence in the classroom (2019). They have gathered research from the experiences of students in a youth participatory action research course, journal articles, and Soleimani’s student teaching experience to formulate their argument. The article effectively captures the affective aspect of education and the need of students to connect to both the activities they are introduced to at school and the character of their teachers. Their article effectively captures their audience through their connections to personal experiences most readers would have. For example, they describe the imprint that at least one teacher has had on all of us and how this memory is largely impacted by the way they made us feel.

The argument of Caraballo and Soleimani article is grounded in the following aphorism by Maya Angelou, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel” (Booth and Hachiya 2004, p.

14). They elaborate on this saying by calling attention to students' perceptions of themselves and their school environments being directly linked to how they have been made to feel throughout their education. Caraballo and Soleimani bring to question the traditional relationship between student and teacher.

Caraballo and Soleimani effectively base their arguments through reference to key current education policies, such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*. They highlight the inefficiency of these policies at addressing inequities. Such policies further gaps in educational outcomes by measuring student achievement through standardized tests and emphasizing quantitative results. They argue these policies diminish the autonomy teachers have in the classroom leading to curriculum focused on assessments rather than having the ability to differentiate instruction according to student backgrounds. Caraballo and Soleimani argue that demonstrating love, especially in pedagogy, is not innate, but rather requires practice. Students who are socially deemed to fail require teachers who practice a pedagogy of love.

A large component of pedagogical love is a reflexive process. Teachers must identify and evaluate their biases so they may put students at the center of their work and nurture their critical consciousness (2019). During student teaching, Soleimani's cooperating teacher used a rap from a movie to indicate the value of a counter argument and how it can be formed. The students were highly engaged in the lesson and made personal connections to the culture in the video. Her student teaching anecdote supported the value of placing student experience at the center and recognizing their cultural capital. Strategies such as these do not come naturally to many; they must be taught and followed by askesis (exercise). Through their study of a YPAR (Youth Participatory Action Research) seminar, Caraballo and Soleimani exposed the dynamic spectrum

of traditional classroom roles. Students and teachers worked as co-researchers to create projects which placed student interests at the forefront.

Caraballo and Soleimani ultimately indicate teacher education programs as a starting point to launch a movement for pedagogical love. By rethinking how teachers are trained, student nurturing can become a priority. Preconceived notions about student achievement based on socioeconomic and racial backgrounds can be dismantled. The ideas set forth by Caraballo and Soleimani are influential in examining long-held educational ideologies.

Literature Review

This section will review literature that enriches the focus of this study. Methods of accreditation for traditional teacher preparation programs will be discussed, as well as, alternate pathways to teacher certification. Culturally responsive school leadership and positive discipline will be examined to understand how student behavior and is directly impacted by school policies.

Teacher Preparation Programs, Accreditation, and Alternate Pathways

Educator preparation programs are commonly evaluated by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). As of 2018, the New York State Department of Education reviewed their policy for accreditation and determined that institutions can also apply to be recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the United States Department of Education (USDE) (“Higher Education Accreditation Requirement”). The CAEP is one of the most popular methods institutions receive accreditation. There are seven standards schools are held accountable for: Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge, Standard 2: Clinical Partnerships and Practice, Standard 3: Candidates Recruitment, Progression, and Support, Standard 4: Program Impact, Standard 5: Quality Assurance System and Continuous Improvement, Standard 6: Fiscal and Administrative Capacity, and Standard 7: Record of

Compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act. Prior to this year, there were only five standards which were approved for 2013. The two additional standards are not for the majority of institutions seeking accreditation (Monaco, 2020).

The CAEP is required to review its standards every seven years and make edits to their program (Monaco, 2020). A Stakeholder Focused Revision Model was used to edit the standards this past year. The Board has standing committees that reviews the cases and standards. The reports are given to a task force that revised the standards. They make sure that the changes are approved by their state partnerships and other stakeholders. The Board approves the changes for public comment and then the task force reviews them once again and the Board votes one final time. Stakeholders consist of the following groups: CAEP Volunteers, State Partnerships, EPPs (Spring 2022), Current practicing P-12 teachers, External Groups (ATE, Branch Ed, SREB, and Public Comment (open to everyone from September 16-November 2). It is crucial to have a public comment window; however, it is a very small time frame for others to review the proposed edits. Due to COVID-19 and the increased level of online learning, standards for technology were added into the revisions (CAEP n.d.).

The New York Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NYACTE) is the state partnership that is affiliated with CAEP in New York (NYACTE). There are 108 teacher preparation programs in New York State. Every college within the City University of New York (CUNY) system is a member of the NYACTE.

A form of accreditation for teacher preparation programs is necessary because teacher preparation programs are widely unsuccessful at preparing future teachers to serve marginalized populations or ensuring to recruit future teachers from varied racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. The CAEP is directed by administrators who do not have a background in

education (Schwarz, 2016). This alone begins to unravel the inconsistencies with this accreditor program. The CAEP gave probationary accreditation to the college of education at Roosevelt University in Illinois. Tom Phillion, the program's dean, describes the interaction between the school and the CAEP by stating, " 'What we found from our recent [site] visit is we did not receive very useful feedback [from CAEP],' he said. 'There wasn't anything about how we should improve our curriculum, how we should improve our instructional strategies. ... Those are the kinds of questions I have as a dean; the responses to those questions will help us get better as a college of education' " (Will, 2018, para. 19). The irony is that the same board which determines whether or not schools should continue to recommend teachers for state certification is unable to provide clear feedback to institutions.

The CAEP has made sure to include the term "diversity" in all of its standards, but does not clearly describe how it should be addressed or included. For example, Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge states the following: "The provider is intentional in the development of their curriculum and clinical experiences for candidates to demonstrate their ability to effectively work with diverse P-12 students and their families" (CAEP, 2021, p. 1). This means that colleges can interpret how they will do this. When setting requirements, it should ideally be the minimum done; however, it is often interpreted as the maximum needed to be done. This is evident through the interviews conducted for this project, which will be described in detail in the Findings section. All three participants could not describe any significant experiences during their teacher preparation program that helped them understand what it means to work with a diverse population. Even the word "diverse" can be problematic because it gets used to cover the spectrum of individuals that teachers encounter without directly bringing issues of race, gender and sexuality directly into conversation. Schwarz (2016)

critiques teacher educators for writing articles, but not working to create alternatives to the CAEP.

The focus of the second standard of CAEP is on the clinical experience teacher candidates experience. Standard 2 has the following sub-standards:

R2.1 Partnerships for Clinical Preparation Partners co-construct mutually beneficial P-12 school and community arrangements for clinical preparation and share responsibility for continuous improvement of candidate preparation.

R2.2 Clinical Educators Partners co-select, prepare, evaluate, and support high-quality clinical educators, both provider- and school-based, who demonstrate a positive impact on candidates' development and diverse P-12 student learning and development.

R2.3 Clinical Experiences The provider works with partners to design and implement clinical experiences, utilizing various modalities, of sufficient depth, breadth, diversity, coherence, and duration to ensure candidates demonstrate their developing effectiveness and positive impact on diverse P-12 students' learning and development as presented in Standard R1 (CAEP, 2021, p.1).

Each of these sub-standards fails to address what an effective clinical experience should look like. According to Dr. Singh (2017), each teacher preparation program has varied clinical experiences. There is no specified length of time that teacher candidates should partake in clinical experiences. This guided his research to address the following question: "What is the impact of field experience on teacher preparation as perceived by teacher candidates?" (Singh, 2017, p. 180).

Teacher preparation programs are crucial to training teachers and retaining them in the profession. In their article, "Teachers' Education, Teaching Practice and Retention: A Cross-

Genre Review of Recent Research”, Cochran-Smith et al. (2011) conducted a study to understand the connection between teacher education and retention. The study concluded that “teacher characteristics and school workplace conditions influence retention” (p. 28). In addition, in another article about teacher preparation programs, Camera describes the decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs constantly progressing in the last 8 years (2019). She states, Black and Latinx students have decreased by 25%. In addition, even as many teacher preparation programs have decreased the requirements needed this is not helping increase the amount that enroll.

In addition to the traditional teacher preparation programs, there are alternative methods for obtaining certification. One example of such a program is Teach For America (TFA). The goal of TFA is to provide individuals who do not have a background in education the chance to be certified and work in “underserved” schools. According to Kretchmar et. al, “TFA teachers are trained in a 5-week summer institute before being hired for 2 years by school districts across the country” (2018, p. 424). Kretchmar criticizes fast-track programs for teachers. Prior to this excerpt she describes that “no excuse” models include direct instruction, where students simply learn to do things without understanding why. These programs allow for teachers that cannot afford to be a part of teacher preparation programs at universities. This might allow for what might seem as a diverse set of teachers. They also provide many incentives to recruit “diverse” teacher candidates. However, as Kretchmar states, “Yet, even as TFA has been able to recruit a more diverse pool, the ways in which the organization deprofessionalizes teaching, as described above, may exacerbate the national challenge of recruiting a diverse pool of teachers” (p. 430). Kretchmar seems to argue that these programs attempt to make almost anyone a teacher and, in fact, make it harder to keep diverse teachers in schools. It also supports an educational

model where the students and teachers seem to be like robots and lack the ability or permission to think critically. This inevitably makes it impossible to retain teachers from these programs for long-term because who would want to live this model on a daily basis? As evidence of this, Kretchmar informs us that, on average, TFA recruits exit the teaching profession within two years.

While searching for teacher preparation programs that addressed race, culture, gender and sexuality, Boyd and Noblit's (2015) self-study of their Social Justice in Education courses stood out. The purpose of the course was to have preservice teachers reflect on their education and sociocultural standing. The course was taught to students who were primarily White. Throughout their course they had students evaluate how their perspectives of gender, sexuality and race evolved through self-reflection. They also focused on having students understand their own privilege and allowed them to critique the structures that maintained power. The results found that many students did change perspectives. However, many were stubborn in their views. Part of their final assignment is to discuss how they would want to be a social justice educator. Boyd and Noblit reflected that in the future they would require a preservice teacher not only to write about how they would want to be, but have to enact the elements in their assignments to be social justice educators. This study was particularly enlightening because it is an example of a teacher education course that really teaches preservice teachers how to reflect on their own privilege and how to develop their pedagogy with these ideas at the core. Many teacher preparation programs do not have courses like this available.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL)

Culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) is a critical lens of evaluating education because it goes past looking at only teaching methods and focuses on how "responsive" the

overall environment of a school is to the needs of minority students (Khalifa, 2016). “Responsive” is key in understanding this term; it indicates that action is necessary. Khalifa indicates that research has revealed “good teachers will eventually leave schools where there are ineffective school leaders especially in urban educational environments” (Khalifa, 2016, p. 1274). Teachers cannot handle being in environments where they are not supported. They cannot help their students if they are not in a safe space. Students are ultimately the ones who pay the price by consistently losing valuable educators. Khalifa’s article aims to address effective school leader practices.

CRSL means that school leaders know the community they are serving. A good school leader should follow the demographics of their student population and as they shift, make changes to the curriculum and host professional development activities geared towards the current students (Khalifa, 2016, p. 1274). Teachers are the ones in the classroom on a daily basis, but they need their administrators to provide opportunities for them to better engage with their students. This means that programs that prepare administrators are just as critical in the process as teacher preparation programs are.

Positive Discipline

Teacher education and administration programs should maintain curriculum that also works to address classroom management and discipline. Vavrus and Cole (2002) conducted a study which looked at the sociocultural components that influence a teacher to remove students from their classrooms. Suspension or removal from school for a time period has been applied to schools who promote “zero tolerance policies.” With this policy students receive predetermined punishments without regard to the context (“School discipline support initiative,” n.d.). Rather than create positive changes in behaviors, these policies promote further disparities in

educational outcomes. Spending prolonged periods of time outside of the classroom means students are missing out on social interactions with their peers. In addition, they are missing school work which only sets them further back. This makes it more likely for them to “misbehave” when they return due to the frustration of feeling left out and not understanding.

In 2014, the Obama Administration launched the Supportive School Discipline Initiative to address the disproportionate number of Black and Brown children who were suspended (Lustik, 2017). The assumption was that if there were alternatives to suspension it would combat the racial targeting of students; however, according to Lustik, the same patterns are seen even in positive behavioral programs. Disciplinary moments occur between students and teachers and are dependent on the sociocultural context of a classroom (Vavrus and Cole, 2002, p. 89). Students can be suspended because they have caused a “disruption,” but the meaning of this word is not the same for all. Through positive discipline, students learn social-emotional skills and “share their perspectives of a disciplinary moment before consequences are determined” (Lustik, 2017, p. 684). By facilitating such discussion, the hope is that punishment will not be necessary. Gregory and Ripisky (2008) conducted a qualitative study to determine the relationship between student behavior and the level of trust they have for the teacher. The study concluded that students who trusted their teacher were less likely to “disrupt” class. The study also highlighted that the impact of this trust on African American students was more prevalent than their White peers. Therefore, adapting a pedagogy of love and care in the classroom means that students are more likely to trust a teacher. This bond will reduce the potential of disciplinary moments. Despite the significance of positive discipline, teacher education literature and pre-service programs neglect to address it. Lustik states, “[W]hen teachers write about anti-racist

education in their own classrooms [they] focus on curriculum and pedagogy rather than discipline” (Lustik, 2017, p. 689).

A report conducted by the Center for Civil Rights Remedies determined that “[B]lack students lost 103 days per 100 students enrolled, 82 more days than the 21 days their White peers lost due to out-of-school suspensions” (Camera, 2020, para. 5). This gap is more than double throughout the nation. Dan Losen, the lead researcher on the project, said, “These stark disparities in lost instruction explain why we cannot close the achievement gap if we do not close the discipline gap” (Camera, 2020, para. 9). In a study conducted by the Research Alliance for New York City Schools, researchers compared school suspension rates to the way students felt about safety (“Suspensions are down,” 2021). They calculated the rate of suspension for 769 secondary education schools in New York City in the 2014-15 academic year. Then, they compared those results to the responses received on questions related to safety in the school survey students fill out each year. The study has many limitations; however, a key finding was that schools who had an above median suspension rate also tended to be schools where students felt less safe. In addition, an interesting finding was that 306 of the 769 schools did not suspend any students. This was not a complete sample of the entire New York City Department of Education, but the statistics do indicate the possibility of other alternatives being used rather than suspension.

The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) has a Discipline Code that contains the framework for student conduct in NYCDOE schools. After a hearing in 2018, the DOE implemented a new discipline code in September 2019. This new code supports searching for alternate methods before reaching the suspension of a student:

The Discipline Code establishes a framework for responding to student misconduct. It provides that every reasonable effort must be made to correct student behavior through counseling and other school-based interventions such as restorative practices. It further provides that appropriate disciplinary responses should emphasize prevention and effective intervention, foster resiliency, prevent disruption to students' education and promote a positive school culture. It includes a range of progressive age-appropriate interventions and supports, and disciplinary responses that can be used to respond to student misconduct ... Intervention and prevention approaches may include guidance conference(s); parent outreach; conflict resolution; short-term behavioral progress reports; development of individual behavior contracts; intervention by counseling staff; referral to pupil personnel team; restorative practices; collaborative problem solving; individual/group counseling; individualized support plan; referral to counseling services; mentoring; social-emotional learning; and referral to a community based organization. (NYCDOE Code of Conduct, Oct 2020).

The changes to the code of conduct were necessary to ensure students of color are not continuing to be removed from the classroom at higher rates than their white peers. The reason students engage in behaviors which may socially be perceived as misconduct typically stem from an underlying issue. Counseling and finding the root of the "misbehavior" are essential to helping both the student and the school staff members understand how to work together to manage the There are still major improvements needed. The name of the document itself, "Discipline Code" already implicates an unsupportive stance.

The Code of Conduct and District-wide Safety outlines the following about discrimination and bullying in school: "All students and staff must be provided with training on

the requirements of Chancellor’s Regulation A- 832. OSYD provides multiple resources, including lessons and curricula, and a detailed implementation guide, to help schools provide this information to students” (DOE, Oct 2020). After informally discussing with peers at other schools, I discovered many schools have yet to complete this training or directly teach lessons about the discipline code to students. The reasons behind this neglect are undetermined. Schools may have students deemed to be “well-behaved” and have not deemed it necessary, or there may not be an official enforcement policy in place.

Methods

This research project began with an in-depth look at current research on teacher preparation programs and how they address or fail to address components of the love, empathy and the hidden curriculum as it relates to intersectionality. To enrich this study one-on-one interviews were conducted to gather information on the experiences and views of the participants based on their preservice training and practice. Participants completed teacher preparation programs in New York City within the last five years. Recruitment emails were sent out to a convenience sample. Those who chose to be included in the study were emailed a consent form prior to the first interview session. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately forty-five minutes. They were conducted at the convenience of the participants via Zoom video conferencing. Audio from the interviews was recorded and then transcribed in order to be used as data for this research.

All participants were asked the same core questions: 1) What is the Hidden Curriculum? If yes, what do you know about it? 2) Do you feel that your courses prepared you to work with students who were sexually and racially diverse students? 3) How does love look in the classroom? After these questions were addressed, the interviews were conducted in an informal manner to

allow for participants to delve into discourse about their personal perspectives and suggestions for the teacher preparation program they completed.

The interests of the participants and many of their ideas prompted further research and will be included in the analysis. The limitations of this study are that the participants are part of a convenience sample. Many attended the same institutions, but completed different educational preparation programs. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the institution; however, it does not allow for a comparison to be made with other institutions.

Participants

In order to maintain the confidentiality of participants, each member of the study was assigned a randomly generated three-digit code to identify interview files. Interviews were coded as such: Participant-assigned number_date. For the purposes of including the interview in this paper, each participant was given a pseudonym. All three participants are White, two female and one male.

The first participant, Nick, is currently a 6th and 7th grade middle school social studies teacher. He completed a pre service program in 2018. He received a history bachelor's degree and then completed a post baccalaureate program that awarded him with an initial Social Studies Secondary Education teaching certification. He currently teaches remotely, one general education, two honors, and two Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes. Due to the implications of COVID-19, despite having these official titles, the reality within the classes is very different. His general education class has students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and his ICT class does not have a co-teacher. These are some of the realities teachers and students are facing during the pandemic. His honors classes are composed mainly of White and some Asian students. His general education class is mixed. The ICT class is composed mostly of

Hispanic and Black students. Most of his students were born in the United States. Some were born in other countries, such as China, Bangladesh, and Uzbekistan.

The second participant, Zarah, completed a bachelor's degree in English and English Secondary Education. She completed a preservice program and student teaching in 2018. During her student teaching she taught at a high school in Queens, New York. She then completed a master's in English Education. Based on her experiences her plans for the future involve career options outside of the New York City classroom and she is planning to pursue a PhD in Literature.

The third participant, Maria, is currently an English Language Learner teacher in Jackson Heights, Queens. She completed an elementary teacher preparation program, and then a Master's in Teaching Students of Other Languages. Her first year teaching she covered a teacher who was on maternity leave. In this placement she taught an ICT course with ten students who had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) because of speech or language impairments due to their ELL status. The majority of the students in her class were Hispanic. She is currently working under her ENL license and serves students from kindergarten to fifth grade. She teaches students from various Spanish-speaking countries and Arabic-speaking countries such as Egypt and Yemen. She also has Albanian, Polish, Russian and Chinese students. The language proficiency of her students ranges from entering, having just started learning English, to expanding, or has an extensive understanding of English. The realities of planning for such a wide range of ages and levels on a daily basis provides many challenges to her planning.

Findings

In this section, I present my findings from the interviews conducted with the three participants, as well as, my own personal experiences. Through the interview process it was evident that their experiences were valuable in determining the effectiveness of the teacher preparation programs they completed. They provide suggestions and personal examples of how love and care can have a tremendous impact on students.

Learning From Preservice Teachers and Graduates

During my research and the interviews conducted I searched for ways that could help improve current teacher preparation programs so that they can include components of the hidden curriculum for preservice teachers. Many of the professors and clinical experience supervisors are retired teachers that are no longer aware of school demographics and were taught to be educators at a time that the inclusion of marginalized students into the curriculum was only being introduced. From the interviews conducted it was evident that current teachers and former students of these programs are a great source to obtain ideas for improvement. They are the ones that have recently finished the programs and are working in New York City schools. During the informal interviews I conducted, I began by asking participants if they were familiar with the hidden curriculum. Below are the three different responses I received at each interview:

Maria: No, I don't think I've heard of it. It sounds kind of shady.

Nick: It is what is behind, trying to get them to understand what is behind, like you are adding your own stuff into...I don't remember...I remember learning about it, but it was very vague and it was very briefly touched upon.

Zarah: Yeah, it is like when there are certain things in school that privileged White, or privileged White upper-class students, that are not like literally inherent to the curriculum

but are they are kind of just like uh like they are common knowledge that are, that's not common to students who are not part of that privileged group. Is that it?

Based on the responses received, considering that all three participants had recently completed teacher preparation programs, it appears the curriculum at their universities did not prepare them to understand the significance of the hidden curriculum and its consequences. Even Zarah, who has a strong background in topics of social justice has not been properly introduced to this term. Once hearing their responses, I explained to the participants that according to the Glossary of Education Reform (2015), the hidden curriculum is “the unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values and perspectives that students learn in school.” I went on to explain that my work focuses on these unofficial lessons that are based on race, sexuality and gender and their interviews would be based on their experiences in their teacher preparation programs, as well as, their experiences in the classroom as educators to understand. I explained to them that understanding this concept is important because the components that inform the hidden curriculum are often taken into account when creating policy and influence the school culture.

The second question that all participants were asked was about the amount of focus their preservice program had on race, gender and sexuality. The individual responses they gave while I spoke to each of them separately were the following:

Maria: If you are in class with mixed backgrounds, your books should reflect that. Social issues through literature, divorce, racism. You can use children's books to address sexuality. If a kid comes up to you and asks you about gender, they did not prepare us.

Nick: So that was a lot when I first got to [this school], but compared to what I learned, zero. I learned zero about any of that, compared to what you actually have to do.

Zarah: There was no class on, I mean there wasn't a class dedicated to race or gender, it was embedded in some of the textbook writing and we just kind of read it and glossed over it. We didn't have conversations like how do we deal with students who are from totally different socioeconomic, culturally, linguistically different backgrounds than we do.

From Maria's description, it appears that in the elementary education program, they focus on any issues by using novels, rather than making sure preservice teachers are ready to have direct conversations with their students. Her experience supports the argument Lustik (2017) makes that many preservice programs deal with racism by emphasizing culturally relevant curricula. All three interviewees that I spoke to seemed to feel unprepared for teaching students who did not have the same experiences as they did.

Nick's experience highlights the intersection between race and dis/ability. Intersectionality is a concept that describes the multiple identities that an individual may have and be vulnerable to biases for (Gillborn 2015). His ICT classes are composed almost entirely of Hispanic and Black students. In our discussion, he made it evident he believed race was a component to these students being labelled as having learning disabilities. Gillborn (2015) argues that race is at the forefront of inequity in education. Through the interviews Gillborn conducted he determined that school faculty was more willing to give Black students negative dis/ability labels, rather than working with them to help them. Zarah's explanation indicated that discussions about diversity were kept to a minimum in her teacher preparation program. They

were part of readings she had to complete, but professors never pushed the students to unpack these issues in their discussions.

During my interview with Nick, I asked him about the extent that diversity was included in his preparation program. Our discussion went as follows:

Nick: Um... I took the ENL teaching class. In my methods classes we talked about teaching these students the most and whenever a question would come up, like what if a student doesn't get it or what about this then the teacher [professor] would say, "Oh then you diversify your instruction, you differentiate the instruction."

Me: Were you ever given an example of what that would look like?

Nick: No, so then we would say, "How do you do that?" And she would say, "Oh you give them extra..." And we would just be asking, asking and we wouldn't get anything. There was no answer, there was no example. She would show us sample lesson plans, but there was nothing about scaffolds, like she taught all AP classes.

Nick's experience demonstrates numerous issues that are occurring in the program he was in. The professor in charge of his class was a great teacher, however, she was only skilled in teaching advanced students, therefore, preservice teachers in her class are unable to obtain skills to teach students that may be struggling academically and even socially.

Preservice Teacher Interviews on Educational Preparation Program Experiences

When I began my student-teaching I felt completely lost. There was no guidance from the department and the professor for my methods course rarely asked us about what was going on during our student-teaching. This course was supposed to be paired with the teaching we were doing in the schools, yet never took any time to discuss what we might need. The entire process felt like I was drowning in an ocean and there was no shore in sight to swim to. This made

everything really difficult for me. I had no time to take care of myself, let alone think about my students.

I was teaching 12th grade Government to two classes composed entirely of English Language Learners. I observed my cooperating teacher for two days in the beginning of the year and from then on, she gave me all responsibilities. Throwing me right into teaching and being in charge of my students was her way of demanding success from me. It was the tough love I needed to know I could handle it. I keep in contact with her and her daughter; she also made sure the assistant principal noticed my efforts in the classroom. Through her initiative, the principal and assistant principal came to observe me. I had not realized what kind of relationships I had formed with my students until their visit. The Social Studies assistant principal commended my ability to connect with some of the Latina girls in the class whom other teachers really struggled with. I had been working so much harder to gain their respect. One day one of them came up to me and was so upset she had received a 65 on her report card for my class. She was yelling that there was no point to coming to school, and not working, if she was barely able to pass. She kept working and her grades were not reflecting her effort. She was right; the school policy made tests such a large component that no matter what she did in my class I could not alter her grade to reflect the work she was putting in. The only way to raise her grade would be by increasing her test grades. That was when I tried to explain to her what Patel (2016) describes in her article, we confuse learning and schooling to be the same thing and there are so many things we learn that school is not the place that will give us the merit to demonstrate this.

In a conversation with Zarah about her pre-service experiences I learned that she faced many similar difficulties as I did:

Me: What were your experiences in the education program like?

Zarah: I wasn't learning material that was new to me or at least expanding on my knowledge in class.

Me: Do you think that any part of the program really influenced you or hindered you from the way that you showed love to your students?

Zarah: I don't think the classes themselves had an influence on me, or the teachers, it was more the student teaching experience that really, I guess, put into perspective how I feel about the educational system in general because I almost had no say in what happened during student teaching....And I think of [Staff at Queens College] or people in the certification office, who literally could care less about where you were and what you wanted all they wanted to do was make sure their students were in some school and I think because I saw that lack of care and consideration they were giving to me and to other students I sort of lost faith in the program because I realized their interests weren't in their students at all.

During our interview, Nick described that while student teaching there was a student that had left for some time during the school year and when the student returned, they no longer identified as female. He described that this was something new to him and at times he would forget to use the proper pronoun when referring to this student.

Nick: During student teaching, if I misgendered [student], from they to she, [the students] would be like it's they. I think it is much more accepting because they grow up with it.

Nick's anecdote demonstrates that students can be very understanding, knowledgeable and accepting at a young age. This is something that we must take advantage of. These students already are agents of change, what they need are teachers who will continue to encourage them

and these values. Teacher preparation programs should clearly incorporate concepts of sexuality, gender and race in their classes to prepare future teachers to not only work with people that are different than they are, but to also teach students to work in a loving and caring classroom community.

Nick also found himself very frustrated with the lack of guidance he received from his teacher preparation program.

School [college] is a business and they don't care if you are going to succeed or not, they just want you to take classes. College courses are meant to get people on track for a certain field, they are there to make money. They don't care whether you succeed in that field or not.

This lack of compassion and empathy that preservice teachers, like Nick and Zarah experience are significant components in their lack of ability to give care to their own students. Through their perspectives, the programs they were a part of did not appear to care about any difficulties they were experiencing. They faced many difficulties and there was no one to turn to in their departments. In our interview, Zarah went on to explain that the only time she had a chance to talk about what was going on during student teaching was when she met with her field supervisor every two weeks. This was only a place to vent about experiences, but still no actions were taken to really empathize with us or help us navigate the difficulties we faced. As our discussion continued on this topic, Zarah and I came to the conclusion that we began to burn out before we were ever placed in a classroom of our own.

While speaking to Nick, I asked him to elaborate on his personal experiences during our final semester in the education program. I asked him if any of his courses addressed how to teach students that came from a different background than he did. His responses were:

Race was not discussed frequently in the program. The focus was on getting students to achieve academic goals. Much of the program focused on the theories that could have potential value to teachers but there was not much taught on the practical application of those theories, especially in terms of race and gender. I specifically remember working on assignments regarding memory processing in children and how active short-term memory is turned into concrete long-term memory. The problem is, there was no discussion on how to incorporate those ideas of working memory into lesson or unit plans and definitely no discussion on how memory might be affected by a child's cultural background.

The interview discussions, especially with Nick, brought about a search to discover why teacher preparation programs are not taking advantage of the current social progress and potential of youth. As previously mentioned, a popular method of accreditation by educator preparation programs is through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), whose standards include "diversity" but do not clearly lay the foundations for how education programs should teach about the intersectional identities of their students.

Love in the Classroom: From Being Students to Being Teachers

When I was a student, I was fortunate to have had several teachers take an interest in my education. I had teachers that listened to my stories and despite seeing that I was able to do well on my own they pushed me to work harder. That is how I learned to value high expectations. I was fortunate to have experienced the care of "warm demanders." Kleinfeld (1975) describes warm demanders as a key to having students achieve highly. These educators begin by being warm and gaining a good rapport with their students, and then they become demanding. By expecting students to be able to answer questions with more than an "I don't know" you show

your students that they cannot simply give up without trying to learn. They want to keep succeeding if they see that their success has value to you. Zarah seemed to have a similar experience while she was in high school. She describes an English teacher who through his reactions to students' participation was able to motivate students to continuously reach higher potentials. Katz (1999) describes this relationship between student and teacher as a way to obtain social capital.

Zarah and Nick both seem to have more notable experiences with teachers that took time to help them grow when they were in high school. This was something I did not expect to find. Spending entire days with your elementary school teachers and the stereotypical “motherly” figures that they are thought to be, I believed that Nick and Zarah would describe teachers from their younger years. Zarah describes an English teacher in her high school that appears to be the inspiration for her own love of English and why she pursued education:

So he decided to start an informal book club with me every week where we would both read a book each week or week and a half and we would go to his office and discuss that book for the whole period. And he did this totally on his own accord because he knew I wanted it.

Once describing this experience, she noted that this is only something that she can appreciate now that she has seen the hours it takes to plan a lesson plan and the little spare time there is to do anything else.

Nick describes an English teacher that also motivated him to continue working hard in school:

In my junior year of high school, I had an amazing English teacher. She was a really cool, young teacher. She cared a lot and it really showed. I was diagnosed with Crohn's, so I

missed a bunch of school. When I first came back, she was really supportive. She asked me how I was feeling. She was not asking just to be polite. She wanted to know if I was doing better. I really admired her.

[Teachers] showed genuine love and care for their students. Even if it was a subject I thoroughly disliked, if the teacher took the time to check in, have one-on-one talks with kids who needed help and then actually give that help and they made an effort to see things from my perspective, I would try much harder in that class. They taught me that a teacher can be the difference between passing and failing and that a teacher's encouragement to improve means the world to so many kids who know their parents would say 'great job!' no matter what they did.

What Nick is describing about this teacher who left an impact on him, is her ability to authentically care for his well-being. Valenzuela (1999) makes this distinction between aesthetic and authentic care. Valenzuela describes the mistaken notions that teachers have that students will just care for school work when teachers are just aesthetically portraying care towards them. It is with authentic care that then a relationship can really form between students and motivate them.

I think that you cannot love and care for your students without having empathy. It is hard work to love and care for others and that means that to do both, requires a lot of time. Time that many do not possess or are unwilling to give up for the sake of others. Caring for your students must be demonstrated through critical love. A love that is bound to our commitment to serve the communities we work with.

As Zarah unpacks what love looks like in the classroom she states:

There are a number of factors that can go into this. One, you cannot love your students if

you don't first examine yourself and your biases. And so if you come in with prejudices against your students then there is no space for love in the classroom because you already have a certain mindset of what the kids will love. The first thing you have to do is interrogate your positionality. What is the knowledge you have been privy to your whole life and how can you then reimagine that or reexamine that to assure that when you go into the classroom you are not inherently holding certain students back because you feel a certain way about them.”

It is evident that Zarah's education philosophy stems from Freire's (1970) to question our own values and evaluate our contribution perpetuating these social conditions.

Zarah then goes on to explain the second component of love in the classroom for her:

The second is, once you have done that, just make sure to privilege and leverage the home backgrounds and cultural knowledge that students bring to the classroom. Maybe they are interested in learning a specific topic because it relates to their lived experiences, so like make sure to include that in the classroom, or at least be open to having a conversation about it.

The second criteria that Zarah lists as a part of what love in the classroom entails is what Ladson-Billings (1995) coined as culturally relevant pedagogy. It is by observing students closely that we can then include their personal experiences in the classroom. The only way to do this is by closing the gap between the child's home life and school (1995). I deeply respect Zarah's work and think that she goes far beyond what other educators would do while instructing, however, while talking with her I realized that most of her responses on how to make meaningful connections with students related to the readings or writing assignments she gave them. This is a helpful way of getting to know your students, but there is still something missing from

this. Warren (2017) purposely chooses to use the term culturally *responsive* pedagogy to indicate that despite the unpredictable nature of students, teachers can very much control their own behaviors and responses to them. Warren (2017) determines that a critical component of culturally responsive pedagogy is empathy, which is a smaller part of perspective taking. This is difficult to accomplish as a White teacher of non-white students because our lived experiences are different from our students and when we think of how they feel or behave in certain situations is based on our views.

When asked about the role of love in the classroom Nick stated:

Love is the unconditional desire to be better for somebody else. I think it is almost as important as teaching the curriculum itself. And care is trying to prevent or mitigate harm to another person as much as possible. And I think in a classroom love and care come into not what you teach, but *how* you teach and your student rapport.... My belief is, you need to know your students, have a really good rapport with them, give some really personal details about your life like get to know them, they need to know you.

By relinquishing your power to maintain a distance from students and sharing personal details about your life you are able to gain their trust. Nick's students seem to confide in him, as it will be seen through his narrations, because they know that he trusts them with parts of his own life. Caldwell and Dixon (2009) describe the importance of love, forgiveness and trust in a leader. It is controversial to think of schools in a business model, but it would also be a lie to deny that this is how they largely function. Nick also feels that he can and should show his students his weaknesses, despite being taught to feign absolute knowledge in the classroom. Whenever he is asked something, he does not know he acknowledges this to his students so that

they know they do not have to be perfect. This aligns with Caldwell and Dixon's sixth commonality shared between love, forgiveness and trust, which is "Reality-based and accepting of others' faults" (2009, p.96). This allows students to know that the teacher is the authority figure in the classroom, but creating relationships with them is a priority.

Nick expands on the role of a teacher to motivate their students and validate not only their academic work, but their feelings.

If a student feels supported, they will be more comfortable in asking for help, they will show more interest in what you are teaching because they want to make the teacher proud of them. There is also the matter of self-esteem. Genuine care and encouragement cannot easily be faked, but it is something teachers must learn how to do. For example, even if there is a kid that drives you up the wall, never let them see it. The feeling of having someone believing in you can be an enormous motivator and can create a deeper and more profound rapport between students and teachers. Students will want to try harder and will show more respect to the teacher and their peers. Showing genuine love and support and also teaches students that they can put trust in others without it biting them in the butt. Learning to trust others is a very difficult thing to do and it is a necessary skill in learning to establish meaningful relationships as the students grow into adults.

Nick views trust as a foundation for a strong relationship. He considers it his responsibility to model healthy relationships as he connects with his students. Regardless of how stable or unstable their home lives may be, he wants to make sure that his students feel that once they enter his classroom they will be greeted by a safe and secure environment.

Throughout all the interviews it was evident the participants all agreed based on their experiences that love and care in the classroom are essential. What was difficult to determine was how to make sure that educators and school staff embody these qualities.

Me: Do you think teachers can learn or be motivated to show love for their students?

Nick: No, that is not something that you can easily teach. Can it be taught and instilled over a long period of time? Yes, but in a classroom as a teacher being a student in a classroom, like going to graduate school or something, no. I think they need to physically see something happen to change their mind. Like being in a classroom and having a rewarding experience with a student that affects them to the point that they change. It is not something that...in all the teachers that I met or talked to, even if they are having a hard day there is that caring for the student and there is a desire to see that student succeed. And if they don't have that already then, they should not be a teacher.

Me: Do you think there should be screenings in certification programs for such qualities?

Nick: How would you go about screening that in an unbiased way? It would be up to the person screening to determine. It would be very hard to do something like that. Do i think that it should happen? I think that would be a good idea, but I think it would be incredibly hard to implement. I think it is up to the people hiring at schools to be that screening process and if someone is lacking something in teaching that they did not get in their education that they don't have inside of them somewhere. You need to ask certain questions, or see them model a lesson to see how they would interact or deal with students because if you are the person hiring you need to do the screening. Like if you get a sense from somebody that there is no way they are going to reach a student, even if they might be a good teacher, and if they are not a good fit for the students in your school then

you shouldn't hire them. Or if they don't have this love and caring make them be a college professor. This lies on the administrators.

The interview responses Nick gave about how difficult it is to quantify love or teach it clearly presents a struggle administrators and teacher preparation programs would have if they attempted to include this value as a core foundation to their programs or schools. Nick does point out that regardless of a preparation program's ability to teach educators to care about students, it is an administrator's responsibility to ensure that the faculty they hire embodies compassionate qualities. This would require a thorough interview and application process, which may possibly be the very reason it is not taken into account.

The Importance of Working in Communities

Knowing how to work with students that have different lived experiences than you is very difficult to achieve. Therefore, it is important to have opportunities to engage with these populations. While interviewing Zarah she seemed to struggle with determining the best way to learn about how to work with students who come from different backgrounds:

You work with students who are so unlike you and on top of creating lesson plans you have to think about how do I then capture their attention, or how do I then relate to them? And those are things that we always say, you don't learn that in the classroom [the college classroom]. You only learn it as you start teaching. I think if we had courses where they taught us here are the kind of students you are going to meet or teaching us about student population levels and what to expect. But now that I am saying it, honestly, I am not really sure whether it might be something we only know how to handle once we meet those students. Which is why, again, YPAR was so important because I was actually face-to-face with those kinds of students.

During our interview, Zarah described her own biases prior to participating in a program that was centered around Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). Through YPAR youth are immersed into community-based research on topics that are relevant to them (Ozer 2017); they are trained to analyze and even formulate solutions to issues that they observe. Research conducted about YPAR on the impact it has on adolescents determines that there have been improvements “in psychological empowerment, strategic thinking, health behavior, collective efficacy, and perceived control” (Ozer 2017). There are multiple benefits to a program like this. Preservice teachers engaged in a process such as this one get to know the individual students and learn about their experiences. The students themselves find reasons to be engaged in school, learn to conduct research, and help find ways to improve social, political and/or economic hardships their communities are enduring. Zarah’s program was a part of a College Now class taught by an English teacher and had preservice teachers there as assistants. The program was focused on YPAR, however, from our interview Zarah made it clear that this is not something that has to be done in a separate setting from school, this is a model that teachers can use inside the classroom. It helped her understand what the youth in the program were facing, it broke down biases she was not aware that she had, and it allowed the students to demonstrate their skills through mediums that they felt the most comfortable with. For example, to present their work many students chose spoken word or rap. Zarah believes that forms of YPAR should be a mandatory part of student teaching, so that preservice teachers are able to learn about the communities they will serve prior to beginning the first year of teaching on their own. A theoretical methods course on teaching has limitations in illuminating the reality of being in a classroom with students whose backgrounds are drastically different than yours.

Zygmunt et al. (2018) conducted a study of a community-engaged teacher preparation program in the Midwest. The preservice teachers at this school were mentored by members of the community to understand the culture and the identities of the students they would be working with. Through this program the preservice teachers were able to form supportive relationships, in addition to being able to have the valuable skills they needed to teach the students of their community. This study analyzes a teacher preparation program that has the potential for becoming a model for other programs. By being given care and love within their teacher preparation programs these preservice teachers will be more likely to practice in the same manner in their own classrooms. The models of teaching they are shown are crucial to establishing their own pedagogies.

Instructors in Our Own Classrooms and Suggestions for Teacher Preparation Programs

Despite my student teaching experience being so immersive with having to take on all responsibilities in the classroom, I still do not believe it was enough to prepare me for the realities of the classroom. I was sheltered behind the idea that our cooperating teachers were really the ones to take any responsibility if anything happened. It was when I looked at my own first set of students for the first time that I realized I had no idea what I was doing. I have been treating every day like the first day. Every day I learn something new from each of my students. Most of the time just taking time to talk to them is key. Last year I had a student in my class who I struggled to engage with. He would lose focus very often during class time, especially when certain girls in the class encouraged him to be distracted. It took a really long time to earn his respect. It all started when he stayed after class one day. We started talking, and I told him that I was there for him and he needed to tell me how he thinks I should change the class to help him work better. After that day, he began coming to me with suggestions and telling

me how he felt about whatever happened in class that day. Each student is different and you cannot expect the same things that work for one to work for all of them. The only way to get to know them and understand what clicks for them is to take the time to listen to them, and that means taking a lot of work home with you and not getting a chance to even eat lunch on some days. It is important to take time for self-care to ensure you do not burn out, but with the time restraints in a work day, there are few opportunities to connect with students if you do not make sacrifices.

It is difficult for teacher education programs to prepare you for all the challenges you will face in a classroom because there is no way to know what scenarios may occur in the schools that you teach in. While talking with Nick about what suggestions he would make to the preservice program he was in he stated:

As for preparation for diverse populations, we were told again and again to ‘diversify and differentiate’ but there were no actual examples of how to go about doing this. To improve this, I would want the program to concretely teach how to incorporate inclusion of multiple perspectives in lessons, how the word choice of the teacher and readings can make certain students feel isolated, like only using him and her pronouns and how to incorporate flexibility into lessons so that students from different backgrounds can share their perspectives and students can actually learn from one another.

In many ways I can relate to Nick’s experience. Most courses that I took only had us create just a few lessons and there was no feedback on how to improve lessons because they were due at the end of the semester. Feedback is crucial to student academic improvement and should be given to teachers in training, just as much as it should be given to students.

Nick describes a student in his class who comes up to him every day in the beginning of the day and one time they had the following interaction:

Right at the front of the day she comes and talks to me. I think I am one of the teachers she feels comfortable talking to me, so on Thursday she comes up to me and tells me, “[mister], last night I was feeling so sad and I just felt like I wanted to kill myself.”

After hearing that you can imagine how Nick felt. He automatically told her that together they should do something about this because no one should ever feel that way. The student was very hesitant at first, but Nick called the guidance counselor and by the end of that day she was feeling better. There is no way to teach exactly how to behave at these moments, but being human and truly caring for your students they will see that there is a reason to keep trying and that although it may seem that all odds are against them, there are people rooting for them.

Throughout the day teachers must complete several administrative tasks that only increase their anxiety. In our discussion of these tasks and what feelings things brings about, Nick shared the following:

In schools teachers fear observations and making sure that they do what the school is legally required to do so. They spend so much time doing pointless paperwork just in case maybe someone asked for it ...having two free periods in a day is not enough. If they spend their own time doing all this shit then they aren't going to want to teach.

Nick points out two key things here, fear and time. Freire (1970) believes that fear is stemmed from this split that we have between doing what others are doing and taking a different path that may leave us on our own. By simply letting things continue to be the way they are, by remaining silent we are allowing the oppression to continue.

I asked Nick what he thought was a critical part in ensuring that a school runs smoothly, like a community and has love embodied by faculty members. His response had administrators at the forefront of this responsibility:

I think it is up to the school administrators, they are the ones interacting with students, they know what their schools need, hopefully. It's up to them to make sure that whoever they hire has care for their students... Then, it is up to the teachers to vote on confidence.

To realize this isn't working for students, that's the most important thing so we need to do something about it.

Nick's view aligns with what Khalifa et al. (2016) describe as culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL). Khalifa and colleagues point out that leadership does not only rest in the hands of the principal, something Nick discusses here. He finds that if the principal is not right for the school community, then teachers should not fear to take action to remove them. If leaders engage in behaviors that embody CRSL, then teachers and other faculty members will also be better prepared to work with marginalized students. It is not just the single classroom that a student may find themselves in that needs to feel comforting, but the building as a whole must feel like it accepts each and every student.

When speaking to Zarah about the role of a leader in the school, she found that assigning sole responsibility to them for having caring teachers in their building was not quite simple. It is difficult to determine the educational philosophies of educators based on interviews and demo lessons. It is not until teachers work directly with minoritized students that their true motives and feelings are exposed. Leaders do have the ability to remove teachers from the building, however, using the reason of not portraying authentic love and care towards students may not be easily held as a reasonable cause.

Implications of Remote Learning

On March 15th, 2020, New York City schools transitioned to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From March until June 2020, city schools remained shut. The implications of this development unveiled the drastic inequities within the education system. During this time New Yorkers learned that many students' only meals are eaten while at school. School cafeterias throughout the city remained open and offered meals to anyone who came. The pandemic brought to light the fact that many New York City families do not have access to the internet or devices. The city scrambled to provide thousands of iPads to students who were without devices. It took months before students who had signed up were able to receive the iPads. When September came, the city was still unprepared for how to deal with social distancing protocols and safety measures and how to implement a blended or hybrid learning model. With this model, families had the option to keep their children at home or have them come into the building on a rotating schedule so the schools could maintain proper occupancy levels.

My school was one of the few schools who applied for an exception from the models provided by the Department of Education. The predetermined models were not able to accommodate my school due to the small space and number of students we had. With this method, our school had the opportunity to create the exact plan that our community needed for the circumstances.

In addition to the isolation that students had to face with the pandemic, they were witness to violence and race-based killings. The violence was not unprecedented; the extent to which it was broadcast internationally was. Students sat home every day looking at the news and discussing in their online classrooms' protests permeating the nation and eventually the world. In

June, my school organized a teach-in where high school students taught their peers about race, culture and engaged in discussions about what it is like to be a Black person. This is an example of administration taking charge, by actually giving students the chance to direct the conversation. Rather than hosting lectures about what they deemed were the appropriate discussions to have, they had students facilitate.

During our interview, Nick and I discussed how remote learning has influenced our perspectives about our students and how important it is for us to learn who our students are now more than ever before:

I think the diversity of my students in combination with the isolation of remote learning has made even more clear the need for students to have a space to express themselves, share their stories with others and learn from one another. Making lessons student centered is critical. Too many times I have seen students' eyes drift to their phones, cameras turn off or the 'glazed look' when a lesson is too heavy in teacher instruction or explanation. In a physical school building, teachers have much more control but over remote teaching, we are competing with every distraction imaginable. Shouting parents, crying siblings, access to the internet and television all make it necessary to draw a student into the lesson and keep their attention. By allowing kids to talk about themselves and their perspectives, you can keep their attention.

A tremendous focus of instruction this year, both in my own school, and in others around the city has been around making sure students' mental health is a priority. As Nick states, placing students at the center of instruction is a vital component of instruction. You can begin this process with something as simple as having students work with you to create due dates for their assignments. They will feel a sense of autonomy and will feel their input is valued.

My personal experience this past year with teaching remotely has also enlightened my pedagogical philosophy. As teachers we may thrive with being in control of the classroom, as Nick alluded to during his interview; however, during this time I have realized how little we can control the experiences of our students. My students are often embarrassed to turn on their cameras or microphones, in case any of their classmates heard or saw their home lives. Many of my sixth-grade students stay home taking care of younger siblings while their parents are at work. They struggle to keep up with their assignments because they have younger siblings who need help attending their own online classes. They often find themselves distracted because there are multiple people in the same living space following different schedules and activities.

Discussion and Self-Reflection

The curriculum of teacher preparation programs is critical to helping preservice teachers understand the roles they will play in the classroom regarding the hidden curriculum. Preservice teachers must be explicitly taught about privilege and power inside and outside of the classroom. They must reflect on their own experiences and be aware of biases they have. They need to be instructed to hold all their students to high standards and not maintain deficit thinking. In addition to helping preservice teachers learn how to teach with culturally responsive methods, teacher preparation programs need to actively recruit preservice teachers that are part of these communities. Students need to have teachers that can directly understand their experiences. Their increased inclusion in college education courses can also enrich the discourse that takes place. The interviews conducted for this project demonstrated that teachers who have recently completed teacher education programs are a credible source in evaluating the effectiveness of courses and ways that curriculum can be improved. Their feedback should be actively sought out by education programs for improvement.

A school community is a *community*. This means all members must be a part of the conversation and work together to put students' needs at the forefront of every decision. Teachers and administrators should be aware of and engage with the student body and continuously adapt curricula to fit the needs of their students. In addition to curricula, staff and preservice teachers should be trained to use positive discipline methods which foster relationships rather than remove students from classrooms.

Through the interviews I conducted with the three participants I was able to discover ideas that both challenged and confirmed perspectives I held about teacher education programs and the extent to which they prepare student teachers for the classroom. I was surprised to see how much they each individually thought about race, gender, and love within their classrooms. Despite the lack of emphasis on these topics in their education programs, they were still able to critically apply them in their pedagogy. This process has allowed me to engage in a deeper and valuable self-reflection of my own teaching practices.

Appendix A

Consent Form

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
CUNY Graduate Center, MALS

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title of Research Study: Love, Empathy, and Intersectionality: Perspectives of Preservice Programs

Principal Investigator: Eleni Stellatos, CUNY Graduate Center

Faculty Advisor: Sherry Deckman, Lehman College

Research Sponsor: NA

You are being asked to participate in a research study because you have recently completed a teacher preparation program

Purpose:

The purpose of this research study is to explore love, empathy and the hidden curriculum as it relates to intersectionality. This project seeks to understand the extent to which teacher preparation programs prepare future candidates for the realities of the classroom.

Key Information:

- Consent is being sought for research and participation in voluntary;
- The expected duration of the prospective subject's participation is projected to be 45 minutes.
- There is minimal risk or discomfort projected for the prospective subject.
- There are no direct benefits to the prospective subject or to others.

Disclosure of Financial Interests: NA

Procedures:

If you volunteer to participate in this research study, we will ask you to do the following:

- Engage in a one-on-one interview asking questions about your teacher preparation program.

Audio Recording/Video Recording/Photographs:

To ensure the accuracy of our findings, the interview will be audio recorded for later transcription and review by the research team. You can still participate in this study if you do not consent to audio recording/video recording/photographs.

Time Commitment:

Your participation in this research study is expected to last for a total of *45 minutes*.

Potential Risks or Discomforts:

- Participants may feel discomfort talking with the researcher about their teacher preparation program.
- Participants may choose not to answer any question they do not want to answer. Participants may also leave the study at any point without question. These points will be articulated to participants before they agree to participate.

Potential Benefits:

- You will not directly benefit from your participation in this research study.

New Information:

You will be notified about any new information regarding this study that may affect your willingness to participate in a timely manner.

Confidentiality:

We will make our best efforts to maintain confidentiality of any information that is collected during this research study, and that can identify you. We will disclose this information only with your permission or as required by law.

We will protect your confidentiality by All participants will be assigned a randomly generated three-digit code (using an online random number generator). These codes will be used to identify observation and interview files. Interviews will be coded as such: Participant-assigned number_date. Links to codes will be stored in the master file of identifying participant information in a password-protected Excel file on the researcher's locked, password-protected computer.

The research team, authorized CUNY staff, and government agencies that oversee this type of research may have access to research data and records in order to monitor the research. Research records provided to authorized, non-CUNY individuals will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name.

Participants' Rights:

- Your participation in this research study is entirely **voluntary**. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- You can decide to withdraw your consent and stop participating in the research at any time, without any penalty.

Questions, Comments or Concerns:

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the following researchers:

- *Eleni Stellatos, CUNY Graduate Center Student: estellatos@gradcenter.cuny.edu*
- *Sherry Deckman, Faculty Advisor: sherry.deckman@lehman.cuny.edu*

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or you have comments or concerns that you would like to discuss with someone other than the researchers, please call the CUNY Research Compliance Administrator at 646-664-8918 or email HRPP@cuny.edu. Alternatively, you may write to:

CUNY Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research
 Attn: Research Compliance Administrator
 205 East 42nd Street
 New York, NY 10017

Participant Signature for Audio Recording/Video Recording/Photography

If you agree to audio recording, please indicate this below.

_____ I agree to audio recording

_____ I do NOT agree to audio recording

Signature of Participant:

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

 Printed Name of Participant

 Signature of Participant

 Date

Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent

 Printed Name of Individual Obtaining Consent

 Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent

 Date

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